INTERGENERATIONAL CHILD-DIRECTED ARTMAKING

By

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Abstract

Throughout this study, I investigate the interaction that occurs between a parent and her child when creating a collaborative drawing. The purpose of this study is to find ways in which to change common images of children and their capabilities in forming and making decisions, problem solving and communication skills, and imaginative story telling abilities. This research seeks to answer some of the following questions: In what ways are children and adults influenced by the child taking ownership of the artmaking experience and how does giving the child ownership and control over the experience change the experience for the adult?

I observe two mothers as they collaborate with their young sons (ages 3 and 4) to create a drawing, discuss their experience with them and analyze their final images. Utilizing these methods, I uncover common themes and ideas about the view that adults have of children and ways of shifting these ideas of power and control over to children. I provide my recommendations and implications for the field of early childhood art education and offer a guide for parents when working with their young children.

*Keywords:* intergenerational, child-directed, artmaking, collaboration, and narrative
Chapter 1: Introduction

I have always been interested in working with children in early childhood education, specifically ages birth to 5 years. Over the course of my education, I have maintained my interest in early childhood development and become increasingly interested in those who interact with young children, primarily adult caregivers. As my undergraduate education comes to a close and my career moves forward, I have repeatedly witnessed the way in which children are treated by adults when it comes to making choices and decisions, whether it is creative or otherwise. I watch as young children are underestimated in their ability and as a result, they are unable to make creative decisions on their own. I have heard the words “I can’t” out of the mouths of 2, 3, and 4 year olds. And then, I watch as their adult caregiver immediately jumps in to do it for them, make their decisions, and tell them what to do. Some children don’t have to decide anything – they don’t have to problem solve, and they don’t have to be creative – because adults do it for them.

I have worked with young children most of my life as a tutor, art teacher and caregiver. I have always had strong beliefs about their abilities in making their own choices and forming their own decision-making strategies, even from the youngest of ages. It is in these spaces of working personally with young children where I gained use of the term “intergenerational”, meaning to work in collaboration and harmony across age groups. I am particularly interested in how adults work with children, as opposed to working above them or acting superior to them. This intergenerational work, completed in harmony and collaboratively across generations can be intriguing, informative and inspiring. It is through my experiences with young children that I began to wonder about
child-directed artmaking, allowing them to guide me in the direction they wanted to go in their artmaking, decision making and problem solving abilities – to allow them to be the one in control and power, to step aside and turn the tables.

**Motivation**

Motivation for this research comes from my observations of the children in my life, families that I have worked with over the years, and personal experiences I had as a young child. I have worked in preschools, summer camps, elementary schools, and I have been a nanny for numerous families. All of these children have inspired me to become an art educator. I see the light in their eyes and the passion for learning that motivates me to move forward in my education and my research. They allow me to question how learning can be better for them, how creating can be better for them, how we, as adults, influence or determine their experiences. Growing up, my parents pushed me in the arts. They saw from a young age that it is where I thrived, where I was inspired, and where I learned best. The visual and musical arts were where I found my confidence in my decisions, where I learned life lessons and where I found passion. These experiences as a child, and belief that my parents had in me to “do it myself”, are what has pushed me forward as an adult and it is what has pushed me to have that same belief in young children now. I suppose I can thank my parents for my belief in young children. It was because they believed in me, forced me to make decisions and choices on my own, both creatively and in life, which helped me to grow into a better adult. It was what took place in my early childhood that shaped me. These experiences have brought me to art education and especially to early childhood art education.
Issues evident in art and visual culture education (AVCE) and early childhood education (ECE) that I wish to confront in my study are those of the adult directing children in a way that is pleasing to the adult rather than guiding children to form their own decisions from a young age. I have begun to explore the approach of not only guiding children to form decisions and take ownership of their own work, but also to connect and guide adults to work in collaboration with children.

Research Question

During this research, I looked specifically at the ways in which the child and the adult are influenced by the child taking ownership and control of the artmaking experience. This research sought to answer some of the following questions: In what ways are children influenced by taking ownership of the artmaking experience? What is the adult/caregiver's response to following the guidelines of the child without interference? How does giving the child ownership and control over the experience change the experience for the adult?

Relevance and Theoretical Framework

As a developing art educator, the purpose of this research is to articulate and connect literature on early childhood art in intergenerational artmaking experiences and to gain a better understanding of the influence that young children have during these experiences on an adult. As such, I hope to create a better understanding in my approach to child directed artmaking and investigate how the adult is influenced by a child directed, intergenerational artmaking experience. Brent Wilson (2007) discusses collaboration and that of the “other-than”, (p. 9) where the artwork becomes other than child/other than adult, meaning it is no longer just the work of the child and no longer just the work of the
adult. When artwork becomes other than child/other than adult, it is a “joint production of an adult and children” (p. 9). This is also of great interest to me and my research in collaboration. I have also been greatly influenced by Lev Vygotsky (1978) and the Social Development Theory, which states that “social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition” and the Zone of Proximal Development, which is defined as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978). Jean Piaget had similar research regarding children’s learning by doing, known as discovery learning. These theories have been a jumping off point for me in my approach to early childhood art education. These works have been integral in guiding me to further the research on collaboration between children and adults and artmaking.

**Methodology overview**

This qualitative research case study took place at the University of Arizona Museum of Art on December 9, 2015 and January 30, 2016. Participants met me at the museum at 9 am, which was the original time of the ArtSprouts program that they regularly attended during previous months. The participants consisted of two adults and two children between the ages of 2 and 5. Each set of participants were observed on a different day and participated for that one day. Participants met in the front lobby of the museum where I had a table set up with paper, markers, crayons, pens and pencils.

For this research I used various qualitative research methods including observations of the child/adult collaborative drawing, documentation of the child/adult artmaking experience, analysis of recorded narrative and drawings, and interviews with
both child and adult. Qualitative Research is exploratory research, used primarily to gain a better understanding of underlying reasons within the research itself. Merriam (2009) describes qualitative inquiry as, "richly descriptive... [using] words and pictures rather than numbers to convey what the researcher has learned about the phenomenon" (p. 16). This methodology provides me with an opportunity to gain deeper insights about collaborative work with young children and how adults interact with and engage with young children during collaborative work. It provides an avenue for developing strategies on how we as adults can better understand young children’s communication and problem solving skills.

Observation. I spent a total of one hour with each pair of participants. During this hour, I observed the interaction, collaboration and conversation that took place between the adult and child while they drew together. I had no influence on what took place between the child and adult during their artmaking experience. During my observations, I was particularly interested in seeing what the response of both child and adult were to the experience of child-directed artmaking and the narrative that took place between them.

Documentation. To document the interaction between child and adult, I audio recorded the conversation as well as took written notes and observations. I also photographed the process of drawing and the final drawings. I audio recorded and took written notes from interviews conducted with the children.

Analysis. The audio recordings have been transcribed and appear in full length later in this paper. All images have also been uploaded and analyzed. The audio recordings are studied based on the narrative between the child and adult caregiver, conversations had and how they respond to each other. The images are analyzed based on their content
and as a reference to the process. The images are a visual representation of the recorded and transcribed narrative.

**Interview.** Verbal interviews were conducted with the children and audio recorded. I asked them questions about their feelings about drawing with their mothers, what it is like to be in charge of their work, and if they liked to do art in this way. The adults filled out a questionnaire about their experience in collaborating with their child during an artmaking experience. They answered questions about their experience, if they have worked with their child in this way before and if they would do it again.

**Limitations**

Limitations are used to explain what the study is outside of the control of the recorder. The scope of the study is a very clear limitation. I was only able to study two children and two adults, making it impossible to determine a generalized idea about child-directed, intergenerational and collaborative artmaking as a whole. The scope would need to be much greater in order to gain a fuller understanding of the topic. My final outcomes cannot represent comprehensive ideas about a majority of families or relationships between parents and their children when creating art together.

The location was another strong limitation. I think that the study could have been expanded further if it was not limited to one location. This study may or may not provide greater quality and more accurate documentation, observation and analysis if it took place outside of the University setting and into people’s homes, where children and adults are in a familiar and comfortable setting.

The interviews with the children show limitations in that they are 3 and 4 years old and they are both male. After an hour, their attention span wanes and they are ready to
move on and verbally they may not be able to explain the complexity of their ideas. The interviews with the adults became more important to the study.

**Structure of the Thesis**

Within the following chapters, the relevance and research questions of this study will be discussed in further detail and depth. In Chapter Two, I review literature that is not only relevant to the study, but also an inspiration for me in further research. I will be drawing on sources from education and art educators, child art and developmental psychology. Chapter 3 consists of further explanation and detail of my methodology within this research. In Chapter 4 I present my findings of documentation and observations. This chapter will provide the transcribed narratives of the conversations between the children and their adults. Chapter 5 consists of my final analysis, implications and reflections. This chapter will provide a guide for parents and caregivers when creating art with young children.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

My research began with an interest in interaction between adults and young children while creating art together. I had started doing this with two children that I nannied for several years. It sparked my interest to find a deeper understanding of what it is to collaborate with young children during an art-making experience outside of my own. I became intrigued by the narratives and conversations that arose from my collaborative experiences and began to investigate further other research regarding collaboration with young children in art-making. In this chapter, I provide an outline of the literature that I reviewed in relationship to my research. I research how intergenerational collaborative drawing has been used as a tool in education and in the home, providing new ways of looking at images of children that we have and offering new ways to work with young children in giving them a voice and power over their own decisions and creative endeavors. I aim to present the images of children that we as adults have and investigate studies in which adult/child collaboration is used in order to change these images. And finally, I explore the ideas of creative artmaking becoming something other than adult work and other than child work, how it becomes collaborative work. Through this study, I hope to learn more about the relationship between children and adults as they collaborate in art making. I draw this review from research about early childhood art education and collaboration, underlying images of children in art education, and communication and connections young children make with and through art-making with an adult.
Images of Children

When we look at a child, an immediate view of what that child is enters into our minds... they are so cute, they are adorable, they need to be protected, they need to be guided, they can't do that, they are too little. Christine Thompson (2009) quotes Loris Malaguzzi, founder of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, in that

There are hundreds of different images of the child. Each one of you has inside yourself an image of the child that directs you as you begin to relate to the child. This theory within you pushes you to behave in certain ways; it orients you as you talk to the child, listen to the child, observe the child. It is very difficult for you to act contrary to this internal image. (p. 26)

For this research, I asked adults to interact with and collaborate with their children in a way that was contrary to their current interactions with their child. Viewing a child as a powerful decision maker is contrary to what many adults believe. Thompson (2009), as influenced by Malaguzzi (1993), continues to say that “above all else, we must acknowledge children’s capacity to reflect upon and represent their own lives and learning” (p. 27) and she continues, “we must be aware of what children think, say and do, the ways in which thoughts and actions are shaped by the culture surrounding them, and the ways in which children themselves produce cultural capital, despite our tendency to dismiss their contributions” (p. 28). This research provides a way for adults to become aware of what their children are thinking, saying and doing as they process everyday activities or events that are happening in their everyday lives. Collaboration with children, sitting down with them and listening to their ideas, thoughts and decisions, is a way for adults to begin to understand and communicate with young children on deeper and more meaningful levels.
In the Occasional Paper Series 31 from Bank Street College of Education, Kris Sunday, Marissa McClure and Christopher Schulte (2015) present *Art and Early Childhood: Personal Narratives and Social Practices*. Within the journal, several articles are written in regards to early childhood art education. For the sake of this research, I focused on Bronwyn Davies (2015), author and art educator, who gives a written account of an interaction and collaboration she had with a young girl, Clementine, over a long period of time. Davies’ work with Clementine was similar to my research in that she was working in collaboration with a child, where the child had a strong and significant role in the art-making experience happening between them.

As discussed previously, adults have preconceived images of children already imbedded; therefore, in the words of Davies (2015) “being open to the new is vital to any art-making endeavor” (p. 12). In research I asked adults to be open to trying something new with their young child. During a session between Davies and Clementine, Clementine dipped a pencil into paint. Davies promptly told her that that wasn’t how a pencil was used. She stated that she was mortified and told Clementine that “sometimes adults have ideas that are wrong” (Davies, 2015, p. 14). Through collaboration and a change in the way we view children, we, as adults and educators, have the opportunity to understand that sometimes adults have ideas that are wrong. We can begin to incorporate new images of children and their capabilities into practices both in parenting and education, thus engaging young children on a deeper and more meaningful level.

**Collaboration and the Other-Than Defined**

During this research, collaboration between the child and adult was of the utmost importance. Yet, what does collaboration really mean? According to Brent Wilson (2007)
"collaboration is a process of mutual transformation in which the collaborators, and thus their common work, are in some way changed. Most importantly, the creative process itself is transformed in a collaborative relationship" (p. 9). In collaborative artmaking experience between a child and an adult, as was this research, each participant will have an influence and an impact on the other. The work becomes what Wilson (2007) describes as the other than, “It would be other than child visual culture and other than adult visual culture” (p. 9).

When discussing collaboration in artmaking, Knight (2009) reminds us to keep in mind that “collaborative drawing is not necessarily concerned with the aesthetic (p. 309). Even Wilson (2009) is not confronting the aesthetics of artmaking when discussing collaboration between the child and the adult. My research is not concerned with the aesthetic. The research is imbedded in the narrative, the relationship, the interactions and the images of children that come out of the process of collaboratively creating art with a child, not necessarily the final product.

Intergenerational Collaborative Artmaking

Perhaps one of the most influential educators to this research is Linda Knight, senior lecturer in Art Education at the University of Canberra, Australia. Although Knight’s research focuses primarily on the educational and classroom setting, her theories and ideas about intergenerational collaboration can easily be applied to the relationship between a parent and child. My research, in line with Knight’s, focuses on the art making practice of drawing. Knight (2013) describes intergenerational collaborative drawing as “a highly potent method for drawing in early childhood contexts because it brings adults and children together in the process of thinking and theorizing in order to create visual imagery
and this exposes in deep ways, to adults and children, the ideas and concepts being learned about” (p. 21). Intergenerational collaborative drawing is also a method that connects the verbal and visual stories that children tell in the process of creating a drawing. The process of collaboration allows for adults to connect with children on deeper levels of understanding process and communication.

Sometimes adults can forget that children have a voice in their work, and most times an extensive story to coincide with that work. We see this most often with young children, as the children in my research, where much of their communication comes in the form of visuals. Knight (2013) explains that “Intergenerational collaborative drawing is important, then, because it exposes to adults the multiple ways in which children disseminate their thoughts and connections to their learning, and it does this by bringing adults and children tighter as they theorize and visualize their worlds” (p. 29). In order for adults to find understanding in the thought processes of young children, they must enter into the world of the child during the child’s process, rather than coming in after the process has already happened. This is the intention of intergenerational collaboration. To be placed as the adult into the center of connection, process and communication with young children.

**Visual Communication and Narratives**

My research revolves around children between the ages of 2 and 5 years, ages when verbal communication skills are not fully developed. Knight (2008) states that:

While communication is the basis of quality early childhood teaching and learning, this is particularly so in relation to providing children with quality drawing experiences... The communication between an adult and a child when they are
drawing, then, is important, even though this is not solely reliant upon verbal forms, which are otherwise seen as ‘instruction’ in the educational context. (p. 307)

As I mentioned previously, oftentimes a child will create a drawing and that drawing is seen after the fact by the adult. At this point, it becomes up to the adult to interpret the scribbles they may see before them. Children use drawing more than any other artistic discipline and it allows us intricate views into the minds of children (Knight, 2008). The way we interpret a child’s drawing can shift from what we perceive as scribbles to intricately woven stories and narratives if approached appropriately thorough collaborative and visual communication. Knight (2008) states that “working collaboratively as the drawing is constructed- working with the child as a co-constructor of the image—can give the [adult] a greater insight into the child's intentions, because they are able to observe at close range how the child’s drawings emerge” (p. 308).

A main point in discussing collaborative drawing and visual communication must be stated here. We must consider the narrative and the dialogue that happens while the child is drawing. To clarify, we can think of the term narrative as the story that is being told during the artmaking experience. We must consider the story. “It can be difficult to interpret a young child’s drawings sometimes unless there has been a dialogue about the work” (Knight, 2008, p. 308). For my research, the collaboration between the child and the adult would not happen if it were not for the dialogue, the narrative or story that develops, and the interaction between the participants. The narrative that goes with the drawing is just as, if not more, important than the drawing itself. To reiterate “collaborative drawing is not necessarily concerned with the aesthetic” (Knight, 2008, p. 309). It is about
communication, a child’s voice, and the story that develops through the act of drawing together.

Ahn and Filipenko (2007) describe narrative as “an essential form through which children describe their own experiences and communicate their views of the world” (p. 279). Narrative and storytelling happens most naturally for children in early childhood, during play, reading, listening, the telling of personal experiences and the visual arts, such as drawing and painting (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007). These stories can be instrumental in understanding the views of children as we see them and hear them. Therefore, the narrative as a form of communication, especially in a collaborative setting, “permits us to use these visual narratives as a way to interact with children, thus serving as a catalyst allowing children to communicate thoughts and concerns” (Ahn & Filipenko, 2007, p. 280). As stated earlier, children in early childhood have not fully developed verbal communication skills. Ahn and Filipenko (2007) explain:

Children expression through visual text is a reflection on their experiences, their knowledge, and what they want to reveal about themselves. Art expression is a modality that allows children to communicate their experiences; it is a form of personal externalization, an extension of oneself, a visible projection of thoughts and feelings. (p. 280)

Lastly, I would like to express that when a child and adult collaboratively create artwork together, we are not just examining the behaviors and actions of the child. Something happens for the adult during these processes. Knight (2008) explains how the observations play an important part for adults in this process: “Collaborative drawing
allows adults to revisit their own expressive behaviors, by engaging in close observation of the multimodal, bodily practices of the children with whom they draw” (p. 315).

When I began this research, I expected to be primarily looking at the impact the collaborative experience had on the child. However, through investigating the theories above and observing closely the interactions during intergenerational collaborative artmaking, I have discovered that much research can be done on the behaviors of the adult during these artmaking experiences. The outcomes of my research will be discussed in depth within the following chapters.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter details the qualitative methodology and the methods I used to conduct this case study research. Merriam (2009) states that case study is particularly helpful in situations that are, "anchored in real life...the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences" (p. 51). In this research study I worked primarily with children ages 2-5 years old and their adult caregivers. I utilized narrative inquiry and theoretical analysis to understand the relationship between the child and the adult, the interaction that takes place between them and the narrative that develops through artmaking together. I observed two sets of participants while they created their collaborative drawing, carefully documenting through field notes, photographs and audio recording their conversation, or narrative, that took place between them. I interviewed the children orally and gave the adult a written questionnaire to fill out about their experience in drawing with their child in this particular way and setting. Finally, I analyzed the audio recording and images of the drawings combined in order to understand the relationship between the parent and child, the interaction between them and the narrative of the story that emerges from the drawing itself. I present my findings from this analysis in Chapter Four. In this chapter, I will outline my research structure, methods of data collection (observation, documentation, and interview), and methods of data analysis.

Research Setting and Structure

I conducted a qualitative research case study, the data for which was gathered in an artmaking workshop at the University of Arizona Museum of Art (UAMA). My target
participant group was from the ArtSprouts program that is held on Wednesday mornings at UAMA. The program is for children ages 2-5 and offers them an opportunity to experience the museum and have active community participation in artmaking. I had been participating in ArtSprouts throughout the summer and assisting in some of the activities. I was able to meet and discuss my research prospects with the participants of ArtSprouts. I was given permission by UAMA to send an email to the ArtSprouts email list about my study. During the ArtSprouts session in September of 2015, I had the opportunity to speak with a group of families to explain my upcoming research and invite anyone who wished to join that study. Since ArtSprouts meets on Wednesday mornings, I was able to do my case study during that same time on two Wednesdays over two months that the regularly scheduled ArtSprouts was not offered.

The study took place over a period of two days, over the course of two months, December 2015 and January 2016. During the case study, two one-hour collaborative artmaking sessions were facilitated between the child and adult. Each one-hour session consisted of one child and one adult. I had presented an oral consent form to the adult when they arrived at the UAMA. I had provided a letter prior to the session through email explaining a little about who I am and what the study was about (see Appendix A for the Parental Recruitment Statement).

During the artmaking sessions, the child and adult were asked to create a drawing together. I explained to the parent that the child was the director of the drawing and the adult was to follow the instructions of the child only and mimic the type of drawing that the child was performing. They were asked not to prompt the child in any way during the
course of the drawing. Each child and adult pairing produced two drawings, taking approximately 10-15 minutes per drawing to complete.

The table was set up in the lobby of the UAMA. Participants were offered a variety of drawing materials, including crayons, sharpies (which are always popular among young pupils!), markers, and colored pencils. They were given multiple sheets of 18 x 24 inch paper. After the participants have their supplies, I told the child that they can draw what they want, and that they were going to be their mommy’s teacher, they got to make up the story. It does not take much convincing to get a child to start drawing. I reminded the parent that they were not to prompt their child in any way on the drawing, that they child would give the prompts and they were to follow the instructions of the child. I set up the audio recorder while the participants drew. I quietly sat to the side to take field notes, as to not interrupt or distract from the participant’s interaction with each other. As they worked, I photographed their process of the drawing itself. The child decided when the drawing was complete, at which time I photographed the completed drawing and began the interview process.

I gave the adult a written questionnaire (see Appendix B and C for Interview questions and responses). While the adult filled out their questions in written form, I attempted to orally interview the children. The children were not particularly interested in being interviewed and I was able to gather their experience of the project through the narrative that took place during the drawing. I became more interested in the responses of the parent vs. the child. Each participant was able to take home their completed drawings after I photographed them for my own documentation.
Participants

The participants of this study include two parent/child pairs. The first participants consist of a boy, age 3, and his mother. The second participants consist of a boy, age 4, and his mother. Each pair was observed on separate occasions. The first set of participants had been an active part of ArtSprouts in the past and were familiar with the space and had done art together in the past. The child in the second set had been to ArtSprouts before with a different adult and the mother had not participated in ArtSprouts before; therefore, participating in artistic activities with her child was slightly unfamiliar. Each pair, however, had a new experience unlike others they had had before.

Data Collection

Three methods of data collection were utilized during the course of this study in order to triangulate my findings. These methods included observation of the child and parent drawing together, documentation of my observations through audio recording and photographs and interview with the parent and child. By triangulating my data, I am able to, as Lapan (2004) explains, “generate overlapping evidence rather than obtaining just one perspective” (p. 243). This helps to secure my findings.

Observation. Observation was used to collect information about how the parent and child interacted with each other during the process of collaboratively creating a drawing. Observation is discussed by Thompson (2009) in that:

Just as looking and listening are things that research requires and children demand, it is necessary to take the time to linger, to live within the situation, in order to see those things that begin to occur or perhaps are noticed only when given enough time to become evident. (p. 27)
During my research, observing the relationship and interaction between adult and child is imperative to understanding the ways in which the child and adult each influence the other. Observing patterns in their conversation and the narrative that takes place are also imperative to the study.

Ivashkevich (2006) questions why a child creates a drawing if not implored by an adult. She states that:

What ideas, feelings, and desires inspire the child’s self-initiated picture making—remains open. To my view, the answers to this question can be found only in the particular context of the process of a specific drawing, when we can use the child’s direct comments and behavior to shed light on the form and purpose of a picture. (p. 46)

The direct comments and behavior, or the narrative, of the child and parent provide pertinent and vital information to my study. Answers to my questions can be found during this observation as to the relationship between the parent and child and the difficulties that the adult may have in allowing the child to be the decision maker in their process of creating.

**Documentation.** While observing the interaction between the child and the adult, I employed three sets of documentation methods: field notes, digital photography and audio recording. As the pair draws, I watched carefully, paying extra attention to the conversation that is occurring between the child and the adult. I took notes on the behavior of the child and the adult individually. Additionally, I closely observed the content of the drawing and the decisions that the child makes in the process of the drawing, how they choose to relay these decisions to their adult partner and what the adult chooses to do
with the decisions and instructions of the child. Although the final drawings provide important data, there are particular things that cannot be seen just through a final image, especially when working with children of such young ages. This is where documentation becomes vital to my research. As Thompson (2009) reminds us, “Research is always a process of making choices, including the often difficult choices of what to document among the many events occurring at every moment” (p. 33). For this research, I chose to document what is not visible by viewing the final drawing alone. This includes the child and the adult’s behavior while drawing, the ways in which they make decisions, the ways in which they interact with each other, the kinds of things they say to each other, and the story that goes with the drawing. This is important because to the outside viewer, the final drawing my look like mostly scribbles. Only the people present know the story behind the drawing, unless it is thoroughly documented.

As I observed, I audio recorded the entire session of drawing. I later transcribed these audio recordings in order to gain an understanding not only of the final image, but of the interaction between the adult and child during the process of drawing. I also audio recorded the child interview process, so that I don’t have to immediately write down everything that they say. This allowed for me to revisit my data at a later date.

In addition to audio recording, I took field notes as I observed. I carefully noted specific behaviors and interactions that I saw in the moment. Field notes provide data that I would be unable to gather simply from transcribed audio or final images. Audio recording is great for the narrative transcription later and revisiting the conversation that took place between the child and their parent, but observation and field notes allowed for me to collect data on specific unspoken behaviors that I noticed during the collaborative drawing
process. I also photographed the drawing process and the final artworks produced by the child/parent participants. After the sessions were complete, I was able to go back and compare field notes, audio recording and final artwork in order to have complete documentation of the experience. The three together provided full information of the interaction between the child and the adult. All three methods were vital to a final analysis.

Lastly, I utilized interviews as a form of documenting the experience. In both sessions and with both sets of participants, I was able to gather the questions and answers from the parent, but not the child. Although I had intended to interview the children after the experience, I realized that they were too young to truly answer any questions I had about the process. By the time they had finished their drawings, they were ready to move on with their day. I found that I could answer any questions about the child’s experience through observation, field notes and audio recording. The parents, however, did answer my questions in a questionnaire format regarding their experience with the project (see Appendix B for interview questions and Appendix C for interview responses). This particular piece of data is not as vital to the study as other forms of documentation, however, the answers did prove interesting when compared to my field notes about their behavior and the transcribed audio that I revisited later. The answers to the questions didn’t always line up with the way in which I observed the parent respond to the child and interact with the child during their collaborative drawing.

**Data Analysis.** As I analyzed my data and reflected back on the experience in collecting my data, I tried to reflect back on my original research questions: In what ways are children influenced by taking ownership of the artmaking experience? What is the adult’s response to following the guidelines of the child without interference? And, how
does giving the child ownership and control over the experience change the experience for the adult? It is through each method of data collection, observation, documentation through field notes, audio recording, digital photography and interview that the answers to these questions may be found. My field notes, audio recording and photographs aided in answering my first two questions regarding the influence of the child and the adults visible and verbal response to the process and their child. The interview combined with observation assisted me in my final conclusions of how the child's ownership changes the experience for the adult.

Through narrative and theoretical analysis of the final artworks produced by the parent and child alongside their thoughts and experiences while collaboratively making these drawings, I hope to begin to understand the relationship and interaction that takes place between a child and adult when collaboratively creating together; when given the opportunity, what kinds of decisions does a young child make and how does the adult respond to the child being a director? Part of this research is to see what happens when adult interference and prompting are removed from an artmaking experience with a young child. How does the relationship and interaction between the adult and child interfere with the drawing itself? Is the adult able to turn their control over to their young child? These are questions I hope to answer through analyzing and reflecting on my findings during this research.

**Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the various methods used within the qualitative case study methodology scope of this research. Through observation and documentation of the collaborative artmaking experience between a child and an adult and the interviews with
them, I hope to uncover ideas about both the child and adult experience when working together to create a drawing. These methods of data collection and analysis focus on the relationship and interaction between a child and adult when the child is given the opportunity to make the decisions about the task at hand. It focuses on the expressed feeling and experience of the adult when they are unable to prompt or interfere with their child's creative strategies and decisions.

Chapter Four is a presentation of the data collected through the course of this research. The data is presented in narrative format where I am able to recount my experience in observing the parent/child creating their collaborative drawings. My observations are integrated with the dialogue that take place between the participants and images of the participant’s process and final drawings in order to fully understand their experience.
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data

In this chapter I present the data with a focus on the conversation between the child and the adult caregiver during their collaborative artmaking. The data involves two sets of participants, consisting of one adult and one child. Data was originally collected through recorded audio of the child and their adult caregiver conversing and verbally communicating during their drawing experience together in the museum setting. The recordings were transcribed for use in data analysis. The transcriptions are accompanied with images that coincide directly with the conversation that was taking place during the time of the drawing. The drawing process was followed with a written adult interview about their experience in working their child collaboratively. As the child and their adult caregiver drew together, I audio recorded their conversation and the narrative that began to develop instantly upon the first mark on the page. I also photographed the drawing process as they worked together.

In the next sections I introduce each participant set. The two sets are labeled:

- Participants 1 = 1 boy 3 years old and 1 female caregiver (mother and son)
- Participants 2 = 1 boy 4 years old and 1 female caregiver (mother and son)

I explained descriptively how the session transpired. I included images that were created together by each participant set and the associated narratives that accompanied the images. I also described actions I observed during the collaborative art making experiences.

Participants 1: Child (age 3) and his mother

Participants 1 consisted of a young boy, age three and his mother. They are regular visitors to the University of Arizona Museum of Art and have attended ArtSprouts on a
consistent basis. They are both familiar with the Museum setting and procedures. I had the table set up much like it is during ArtSprouts, so the setting was very familiar for the child to enter into. The main difference was that the participants were alone and there were specific instructions for the adult in the experience.

Upon arrival to the museum, I re-introduced myself and reviewed the study to the parent as the child viewed curiously at the table where they would be working. The child and adult sat down at the table where they had access to 18 x 24 inch paper and a variety of drawing materials, including sharpies, crayons, washable markers, pens and pencils. I asked the child if they would like to make a drawing with their parent and be in charge of the story. The child was more than eager to create a drawing with or without a partner. The mother was instructed to give complete control over to their child during the artmaking process, taking instruction from their child and not prompting their child in any form as to what to draw, when to draw, how to draw or even what colors to use. The drawing session was to end when their child said they were finished.

As the child and his mother sat down, the child went immediately for the sharpie markers. It is not uncommon for young children to go for sharpies when they have access to them because it is rare that they get to use any marker that is not washable drawing materials. The mother was visibly uncomfortable and uncertain in how to approach this form of drawing with her son. She started by asking what markers to use, even though her child had already begun with the sharpies. She then asked what color. The child began to answer “you get to have...” but he didn’t get to finish his sentence before his mother jumped in with more questions. She asked “the same as you or different?” He answered her with “Um, the same as me”. I wonder what color he would have chosen if she had not
interrupted. However, in this moment, she began to mimic is actions, which at the time was simply making dots of color all over the paper. There was no form yet to the drawing. The mother kept looking at me, asking if she was doing “it” right.

As they made dots, the child began the narrative of the drawing. It began to turn into a story. He stated that the dots were a path and that the path was at Lake Havasu. As the observer, I assumed they had recently made a trip to Lake Havasu. This is where his story was beginning, but the mother said to her son “Well, you can do something different than the ones you saw. Your very own story. Not the same as the other ones. Is there something we have been talking about lately that you would like to draw?” It seemed clear in this moment that the mother was feeling very uncomfortable with the dot making. She was ready to move in another direction, so she prompted him in another direction. The child started to scribble all over the paper and said “Now let’s color all of it.”

The mother seemed impatient and had stopped participating in the drawing. She pointed to the drawing and asked “what’s your story?” Her son began to answer with something about his father but she didn’t hear him and asked again, “what is the story that you are drawing?” He had been starting to tell us something about the drawing, but there was no wait time for him to gather his thoughts about his work, so he said “hmm, let’s see. I don’t know.” The mother said “it’s a brand new story” and the story did change, into a “big, fat train”. The child started to scribble wide, fast circles and the mother became uncomfortable and almost agitated. She asked “ok, can you tell me a story now?” Her son seemed to feel her agitation and stated “I am going to tell you… I don’t know”.

The mother continued to prompt him with “About you, a story about you.” She found it impossible to let the process of drawing and storytelling unfold from her son’s
perspective. She could not, in the beginning, turn any control of the process over to her three year old. The son paused and looked at the drawing and yelled out “it’s in a hotel! It’s a hotel!” She answered him with “Ok, there ya go! A hotel. And what’s at the hotel?”

During this time, all that had been put on the page so far were the dots and scribbles. Once it had been established that it was a hotel, the mother immediately started to draw the hotel while her son continued to scribble. She was not prompted to draw the hotel, but she started to anyway.

Establishing what the story was about was a bit of a turning point for the mother. She felt more comfortable know that there was a plan, a point to the drawing and she could begin to draw something that was recognizable. The conversation began to shift from her prompting him to a collaboration when she asked him what was at the hotel:

*Figure 1. Making Palm Trees and Swimming Pools.*
Child: “Me and you and the palm trees. I’m making the dog in there! No dogs can come with us”.

Mom: You’re making the dog? Oh wait, no dog. Dogs aren’t allowed I guess. What is at the hotel?” (This was the second time she asked, even after he had answered her)

Child: Me and You? (He asks her as a question.

Mom: “Ok, what else? Just me and you? And the palm trees?”

Child: and a swimming pool! (Mom starts drawing the swimming pool.)

Mom: How is that swimming pool?

Child: Good!! And now I’m going to make the hot pool. (He grabs a blue marker)

Mom: And you said palm trees (she draws the palm trees).

By having a conversation with her son, the pair was able to begin to develop a collaborative drawing. The problems I watched arise throughout the process were that they mother was only able to not prompt her son for a short period of time. She was impatient and consistently wanted the story to either move faster or in a different direction than it was going. I believe this is mainly because to the adult, the story of the child does not always make logical sense and doesn’t always follow a logical or literary sequence of events. The hotel story conversation continued after the child had grabbed the blue marker for drawing his hot pool, which was more scribbling. The lines of his drawing actually left the page and his actions, movement and visual creation matched his words. As he scribbled he verbally communicated what he was drawing:
Figure 2. Hot Pools, Yucky Pools and Hotels.

Child: *This is the hot pool! The hot pool is ready now! Now I am going to make the yucky pool. Yeah, there is green in the yucky pool.*

Mom: *There’s our palm trees.*

Child: *all done. There’s a yucky pool.*

Mom: *What else is at the hotel?*

Child: *And this pool right here is the other one.*

Mom: *What else do we do at the hotel?*

Child: *This is the Hotel right here! That is the drain pool. It goes round round into the drain all the way to right there. It goes down down down down over here and all the way over to there. That my pool. My own pool.* (He draws a continuous line as he tells this part of the story. He is drawing in blue and his actions match his words.)
Figure 3. The Drain.

The “drain” is a circular pattern and the lines “all the way over here to there” are a continuous line across the page.)

Mom: I like it. That’s your pool? What else is at the hotel?

Child: Oh that? (Makes more scribble marks, lots of action and movement) See all those scratches? That is a bad guy lion!

As the story unfolded and I observed the mother and child drawing together, I noticed how the mother became more and more comfortable with the story that her son was telling. She began to follow his lead and stopped questioning what he was attempting to create. She joined in the story rather than trying to change it, even when it did not make sense to her. For the first time during the drawing she asked him what he was drawing:

Mom: (points to one of his marks) what is that?

Child: It’s a snake!

Mom: In the pool?!

Child: It’s a water snake!!! How do you do water snakes?
Unfortunately, at this point, she immediately asked him what she had drawn. He responded with “a lion!!” And then informed her that he was drawing giraffes. However, she seemed to realize that he had asked her how to do a water snake and returned to that prompt from him. The conversation was freely flowing in a narrative manner at this point:

Mom: *Did you draw the snake yet? Where does the snake go?*

Child: *Right there! (Points to his pool) It’s a water snake!*

Mom: *Well of course it goes in the pool if it’s a water snake! And what does it say? Sssssssssssss.*

![Figure 4. Adding the Snake.](image)

Child: *No!! (In response to Sss) It talks!*  

Mom: *What does it say?*

Child: *It says Ahhhh! (Mom puts a text bubble at the snake head that says Ahh!) And he goes swimming. And he dried off and we go there. And he has a snake towel. (Mom draws the towels next to the pool while Noah observes her) Yup! That’s it!!*

The story ended abruptly. The child felt that he had completed his drawing and the mother was quite surprised at the sudden ending. I think she had just emotionally entered
the story when her son had finished. I asked the child what his drawing was called and he titled the drawing “the Hotel Story”.

It is interesting to look at the final collaborative drawing “The Hotel Story” by participants 1. There is a clear, distinctive line of separation between the adult drawing and the child drawing. They don’t really mingle with each other very often. The drawing from the child and from the adult are on the same page, but they don’t actually coincide visually. The narrative of this image is vital to the outcome. However, it is interesting to see the separation and being the observer, I know the tension that was happening during the process of the drawing, and I know the uncomfortableness of the adult during the experience.

Figure 5. Participants 1, Final Collaborative Drawing, “The Hotel Story.”
The child and his mother did a second drawing during their session with me. This was different experience because they had already been through one drawing, therefore, factors of comfort on the mother’s part played a role in the way the drawing process and experience took place. She was much more content to let her son have the control of this drawing and she was able to follow his prompts and ask subtle questions from the beginning. The title of the second drawing is “The Centipede and the conversation went as follows:

Mom: *What are we drawing?*

Child: *A centipede.*

Mom: *A centipede? That does kind of look like a centipede. It has like a hundred legs.*

Child: *That’s a big centipede!*

Mom: *It is a big centipede. What color are the legs?*

Child: *Black and red*

Mom: *Black and red. Ok where does the black and red go?*

Child: *Right here (he points). Make a stripe for him.*

Mom: *Ok, what’s the centipede doing?*

Child: *He enjoys his stripes.*

Mom: *He is enjoying his stripes? (She colors stripes on the centipede)*

Child: *Hey! I was coloring him first! (He is agitated that his mom took over the stripe drawing) You can’t draw them with me! I did it, yes, yes, yes!*

Mom: *I thought you wanted them black and red? Didn’t you want me to do them black and red? (She stops drawing)*

Child: *No, I did it. Nooo, I had to do it. This is MY job.*
Mom: Can I draw a space?

Child: No, I'm all done.

Mom: You're all done? But what about the centipede?

Child: You just color that.

**Figure 6. Participants 1, Final Collaborative Drawing, “The Centipede.”**

This drawing ended as abruptly as the first one. However, considering the child's age, asking a second drawing was almost too much. The first drawing lasted approximately 15 minutes where the second one only went on for approximately 5 minutes. Visually, you can see the difference in the child's attention to the drawing. There is less detail and the narrative (See Appendix D for additional transcription) is very minimal. There isn't a story.
The interaction it was visibly clear that the child was ready to end his artmaking time. He was running around the museum lobby, ready for a new activity.

I attempted a verbal interview with the child after the drawing was complete, but, being the age he was and considering the time he had just put into his work, he was unable to answer any questions I had for him about his experience. The child was not able to verbally explain the complexity of doing a collaborative drawing with his mother. He just made a drawing. I was however, able to conduct a written interview with the mother. She answered some written questions about her experience, how she felt about it, and if she would participate in this type of drawing again. This process proved very interesting, especially when her answers didn’t necessarily match up to my observations.

On her interview questions she stated that “it was fun to collaborate with [my child] and letting him be the boss.” The second question she was asked was: Does this experience change the way you view your child’s ability in making their own artistic decisions?” Her answer was “No, because I usually try to let him do his own thing when doing creative projects.” This was counteractive to the observations I made. This mother had a very difficult time relinquishing control of the process. She did admit that it was slightly difficult for her in a later question. When I asked her why it was difficult, she answered with “not making suggestions was hard” and had the realization that “even asking questions seems to infiltrate.” And in her case, her questions did infiltrate the drawing and the narrative.

**Participants 2: Child (age 4) and his mother**

Participants 2 are a young boy, age 4 and his mother. I knew this pair prior to the study and the young boy knew me well outside of the study. They were not regular visitors
to the museum. The child had attended ArtSprouts once before this study so he was more familiar with the Museum setting than his mother, who had not attended the ArtSprouts session with him. The child had also participated in the drawing activity before, where his mother had not. This may or may not have had an effect on the outcome of this set of participants. However, it was a new experience for the two of them to collaborate together.

I presented the second set of participants with the same materials as the first set. I observed these participants on a different day and separate from the first set. I reviewed the study and the parameters with the mother, reminding her that she was not to prompt her son in any manner throughout the process of drawing. She was to follow his instruction and guidance. The child in this set is a year older than the first child, therefore, he was able to better understand the activity. I explained to him that he would be drawing a picture with his mom and that he got to be the “boss” and that his mom had to draw what he wanted her to draw. I set up the audio recorder and recorded the conversation between the child and his mother as they collaboratively created two drawings.

The child started the drawing first with markers. The mother was nervous at first and she seemed uncomfortable when her son immediately began to tell her what to do. He had a clear vision already of what he was going to start with and right away, began to give instruction. Even though it was visible that it was a role reversal, the mother followed her son’s instructions:

Child: *Mommy, you have stay inside of these circles.*

Mom: *You want me to draw in the circles? Ok.*
Figure 7. Inside the Circles.

Child: *Make circles everywhere but not here... because this is the one.*

Mom: *Just stay inside? What is it?*

Child: *Do it on the corners. Do the fluffy things, ok, do those.*

Mom: *Ok, where would you like me to put them?*

Child: *Put them all over the circles.*

Mom: *Kind of like I am or in a different way?*

Child: *Like you’re doing it right now.*

Mom: *Ok. You like that?*

Child: *Yeah, that’s what I need, for my drawing.*

This type of dialogue, where the child was truly directing the mother continued for the first several minutes of the drawing.

Mom: *Where would you like me to go now?*

Child: *You can just keep doing that, yeah that’s good, you can keep doing that. Ok, now I will draw the space ship. The Star Wars space ship.*
Mom: *Is it the Millennium Falcon?*

Child: *No... he’s a bad guy. He’s Donald Trump!*

Mom: *He’s Donald Trump? (They both laugh)*

Child: *I cheer you up Mommy.*

Mom: *In a space ship?*

Child: *Yup.*

Mom: *You do cheer me up. Wow, so what is going on with this?*

I was pleased to see that she was asking her son questions about what he was doing. She gave him a lot of time to answer questions and her questions were not prompting him in any way to change his story. She simply wanted to know what he was making.

Child: *This is a drill. And it’s super long. I want you to draw a sky.*

Mom: *Ok, what color would you like?*

Child: *Um, I want you to do that color, because it’s the color of the sky.*

Mom: *I agree. Where do you want the sky to be?*

Child: *Down here (points to the BOTTOM of the paper)*

Mom: *Down here. Ok. Do you want me to make clouds or anything?*

Child: *No. Stop, right here where this line is.*

Mom: *Ok, deal. I’ll just color it in a little.*

Child: *STOP! Ok, you can just do it right here too.*

As they draw together, the story continues to develop further. The mother continuously follows her son’s guidance. It only took her 3 or so minutes out of the 15 minute drawing to become comfortable with the role that she was playing in the process of drawing with her son. The story continues with her son drawing dots (which is a
commonality between the two sets of participants), which start out as snow and eventually turn into the Milky Way. The conversation is now flowing flawlessly. There is no interruption to the story and they are completely in tune with one another.

Child: *Snow falling everywhere! (Puts lots of dots!)* There is no sun. Because it’s a really cold place, there is no sun.

Mom: *Burr.* No sun. There is a sun, it’s just not out?

**Figure 8. Snow and Stars.**

Child: *Yeah, it’s night time. (That statement just changed the story.)* Wait, mommy, can you draw a moon for me?

Mom: *Sure.*

Child: *And stars too. It’s snowing at night time.*

Mom: *I think that is the best kind of snow.*

Child: *And it’s Christmas Eve. That is why it snowed. Right mommy?*
Mom: It's always nice when it shows on Christmas Eve. Do you like this moon? Is it bright enough?

Child: Yeah. I want you to draw a little white mommy.

Mom: You want the moon to be more white?

Child: Yeah, because that is the color of the sun. (She drew the moon yellow)

Mom: Well, the moon is a little yellow in the sky.

Child: Sometimes, right?

Mom: Ok, let's see if this white makes the moon a little more moonlike.

Child: These are a lot of dots and snow, right? You can't even see snow.

Mom: I kind of like how this moon is turning out.

Child: Mommy, you can’t see the white. It won’t work.

Mom: Well, it is kind of working, it’s making it lighter.

Child: I’m tired of making this snow. It has to be lots of snow because it’s Christmas.

Mommy, those are all of the... they look like stars but it is snow. That place is the Milky Way.

As this narrative continues, the story continues to flow and shift. It is clear that they are fully engaged with one another and their dialogue turns into a playful encounter. I listen to the story unfold into a world in within the stars and they turn to a discussion about the big dipper. The child asked his mother why it is called the big dipper and she told him it was because it looks like a big spoon, which lead to a conversation about food. Suddenly, there are hot dogs, marshmallows, graham crackers and chocolate making their way into the story and these things are made visible through the drawing. I began to think it was coming up on lunch time and the child was hungry! The story went back to space
and there was talk of the planets. Then, the drawing and the story came to a close:

![Figure 9. Child explaining his final picture, pointing to his asteroid belt.](image)

Mom: *I kinda like this color.*

Child: *Yeah, it looks like lemonade.*

Mom: *It’s kind of limey. I kinda wanna draw a key lime pie.*

Child: *No! I do not want a pie in my picture*

Mom: *Oh, then we are not drawing it! Where is earth? I thought you were drawing earth?*

Child: *It’s right there. These are all the asteroids. It’s the asteroid belt. There is a hot dog in outer space! I think that is an orange. And this thing… that is all the drawing I made.*

It’s done.
Participants 2 also created a second collaborative drawing and they were as in tune with each other during the second one as they were with the first, if not more. The mother in this set of participants was able to, even though uncomfortable at first, turn control of the project over to her son without prompting him. She asked questions about what he wanted her to do and she was genuinely interested in what he was creating himself. They had an intimate conversation, where nothing else mattered except for the drawing directly in front of them.

Figure 10. Participants 2, Final Collaborative Drawing, “Space.”
As with the first set of participants, I attempted to interview the child about his experience in collaboratively drawing with his mother. I found the same limitation as before, that the child was not able to verbally communicate the complexities of the study or his ideas. I had the mother fill out the same interview questions as before and her answers are in line with my observations. She stated that although it was difficult to relinquish control in the beginning, it was a “more fun way to draw”. When asked if her experience changed the way she views her child’s ability in making artistic decisions, she stated “yes. It made me realize that I had been directing my son more than I thought. My son came up with a really creative story.” I asked her what she would have done differently than her
child and she told me that she would have “put the sky at the top of our page instead of the bottom” and that her “marshmallow would have been white instead of yellow.” She was honest in her interview answers and realized that her child did see things differently than she did, but, she was able to let him have the control and follow his lead, no matter how difficult it was at first.

**Comparison**

From this presentation of data, I was able to pull comparisons from the final images and the narratives that developed during the process of collaborative drawing by each set of participants. Looking at Figures 5 and 10 side by side, we can visually interpret the collaboration that may or may not have happened between the two persons creating the image. In Figure 5 “The Hotel Story”, created by Participants 1, the sections created by the adult and the sections created by the child are quite separate. They do not intermingle very much. The mother in Participants 1 stayed clearly on the right side of the paper, where her 3 year old son stayed mostly on the left. This is different than Figure 10, “Space”, created by Participant 2. In the “Space” image, the drawing produced by the mother and her 4 year old son intertwine. The drawing of the mother enters into the drawings of her son. They were less separated.
These comparisons of the final images would not be complete, however, without having read through the conversation taking place during the creation of each piece and being an observer of the behaviors of each the adult and the child. The final images are a visual reflection of the interaction that took place between each parent and her child. Participants 1, creators of “the Hotel Story” had a very different interaction than Participants 2, creators of “Space”. Participants 1 were more reluctant to give control over to her child. Throughout the collaborative process, the mother in participant set 1 was uncomfortable with silence, struggled to give her son control and prompted him through asking questions that steered him in the direction that she intended for the drawing to go. This was different than participants 2, where the mother was keener to follow her son’s lead and allow him to guide her through the drawing and the story that developed along the way.

This brings me to the point of the importance of not just the final image, but the narrative and the interaction that took place in the process of creating the final image.
Without one, I am completely unable to interpret and analyze the interaction that happened between each set of participants.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the data in a narrative format. I provided a comparison of conversations, behaviors and final images from each set of participants. Although the children and the parents were approximately the same age, their experiences were actually quite different. In the following chapter, I discuss my findings, implications and final reflections. I analyze this data relative to my research questions and make recommendations for the field, ending on questions that will guide my future research.
Chapter 5: Analysis, Implications and Final Reflections

In this chapter I summarize my findings, state the implications of this case study for future research, and discuss my final thoughts about my research. My findings are shaped by ideas about how adults are influenced by intergenerational collaborative art-making experiences with their children, how shifting the paradigm on how we interact and engage with children during collaborative artmaking can change the way in which we view the child in general and how children have vast capability in forming and making their own decisions, even at very young ages. I lay out and elaborate on specific themes that arose out of this study and connect them to other pertinent studies and theories by educators and scholars in the field of art education. The implications for future research that I suggest are based off of my observations and what would be necessary in order for adult images of young children to shift from seeing the child as needing to be protected and have their decisions made for them to seeing children as capable decision makers and problem solvers. This can be done, to start, by giving control of artmaking experiences to the child where we can begin to see their communication and decision making skills on a deeper level. Implications also include guidelines for parents working with their young children in artmaking experiences outside of the educational setting. My final thoughts discuss specifically my research questions and my findings in relation to them.

Themes and Connections

Through my research, I began to discover that although adults often give their young children time to create and draw, they do not often sit down with the child and draw together. Typically, a child will draw a picture, then come running to their adult caregivers
to show them their work, often leaving interpretation up to the parent. Knight (2013) explains, when the parent takes the time to sit with their children and work together “it also engages drawers, and importantly, adult drawers, in an expanded process of cognitive discovery” (p. 23). The process of collaboratively working with a child during artmaking can, and will, change the perspective of the adult. Knight (2013) states that:

For adults who do not draw regularly, not only does this engage them in far more authentic drawing practices, it also helps to avoid situations whereby a child presents a completed drawing to the adult for them to interpret. Visual interpretations of completed drawings is a problematized task for educators who may not grasp that the marks in a young child’s drawing pay attention to specifics such as emotion, movement, smell, taste, etc., or that the image of a figure or detail may not represent a particular meaning. Interpretations therefore leave sizable gaps between the perceived meaning of the drawing and the actual meanings the child wove into it. (pp. 23-24)

Themes that emerged out of these findings were:

1. Learning how children think and a new way of interacting: How adults are influenced by intergenerational collaborative art-making experiences with their children.

2. Learning to shift the paradigm: Adults interacting and engaging with young children during collaborative artmaking

3. Images of the child: How we view the decisions and problem solving skills of young children.
Learning How Children Think and a New Way of Interacting

During my research, I have come to realize that there are many connections with my own findings to contemporary theories in art education and specifically intergenerational collaboration. I have found that collaboration between an adult and a child has been studied before (Davies, 2015; Ivashekvich, 2006; Knight, 2008, 2013; Thompson, 2009; Wilson, 2007), however, not specifically as a parent and child relationship, which is what my research is primarily focused on. Through my time observing the parent and child interact and create art together, I have found evidence of intergenerational collaboration, the influences that both the child and the adult have on each other, and the capabilities of both parent and child to form and make decisions based on the task in front of them. I witnessed frustration and impatience from both the parent and the child, as much as creative flow and full engagement with each other.

I witnessed the child and the adult work together in different ways: almost flawlessly in one set and with struggling to connect in the other. Through my observations it appears that true collaboration is not generally a natural space for adults and children to inhabit. As Malaguzzi (1993) discusses the image that adults have of children, it was clear during my observations that the parents had an image of their child, forcing them to behave in certain ways when interacting and engaging with their child. My intentions have been from the beginning to find answers on how the children are influenced during an intergenerational collaborative artmaking session with a parent. However, through observation, I realized that it was not necessarily the child that was influence the most by the experience. It was the adult.
The adults in my research were highly aware of what they were supposed to do: turn control and power over to her child. They were not to prompt their child in any way. Asking the parents to do this, in a sense, is asking them to go against their parental instincts, which in many ways is to protect their child, make decisions for their child, and be the one in power and control over their child. This is not always a negative thing, however. Children, in many respects, need protecting and guidance. However, the intentions of this research were to, as Thompson (2009) discussed, “acknowledge children’s capacity to reflect upon and represent their own lives” (p. 27). It is about becoming aware of the intentions of the child, what they say, do and think. Adults, very commonly, have the tendency to dismiss the contributions of their children, especially, the youngest children. My research was intended to fight against those tendencies.

One of my original questions was, In what ways are children influenced by taking ownership of the artmaking experience? But, after this research, I realized that the question must shift to, How was the adult influenced by giving ownership of the artmaking experience to their child? Upon entering the museum and the artmaking space, the child was not fazed by being asked to work alongside their parent. When asked later what it was like to not be told what to do, they were not able to answer for two reasons... one, they were not able to verbally communicate the complexity of the study and two, it is not un-natural for the child to take control of their own work. It is unnatural for the adult to give the child control of their own work. This was extremely clear in my observation of the adult during the artmaking process and it became more evident to me as the observer when I read the interview question answers provided by the parent later.
The mother from participant set 1 stated in her interview that she usually gave control over to her child during creative projects (see Appendix C) and that she had fun letting him be “the boss.” However, in my observations of her, she was unable to truly turn the control over to her son. There were long moments of silence and she became so uncomfortable that she had to ask him questions, which in turn, prompted him to change the story he had already been creating. When I went back and transcribed the narrative later, I could hear the frustration in both her tone and her son’s. The moments of silence came directly after the mother had questioned her son multiple times about what he was doing or prompting him to go in a direction that she wanted to go. She was the one uncomfortable in the silence, however, not her son. He was content with what he was doing and he had a plan of what he was creating. I believe that he began to stop including her because she was, unintentionally, making the decisions.

The mother in participant set 2 had honest answers to her questions that coincided with my observations of her son and her. As with the first pair of participants, I observed the parent acting very uncomfortable at the beginning of the drawing. The child, just like the first, wasn’t fazed at all about working with an adult on a project. In fact, both children were very enthusiastic about telling their stories. The mother in the second set was very quiet in the beginning of the drawing, and she was careful only to ask questions of what her son wanted her to do. As the drawing continued, I observed her become more and more comfortable with taking direction from her son, realizing that they had a creative story. She allowed for him to guide her through the process of creating work together.

An interesting answer I found in the interview questions was what each participant stated about what they would have done differently than their child. The first parent didn’t
really answer the question. She stated that not making suggestions was hard, but not what she would do differently. The second parent however, stated that she would have put the sky in a different place and that her marshmallow would have been a different color. This one answer helped me to see some of how the adult was influenced by the child. Adults have a view of what things should be, how they should look, and where things should go. Children, on the other hand, are building their worlds based on what they see and their imaginations, therefore, the sky isn’t always at the top of the page and marshmallows aren’t always white. The mother in the second set of participants went against her natural instinct and followed the direction of her child, even if it was not what she saw as correct. This idea coincides with what Davies (2015) stated that, “sometimes adults have ideas that are wrong” (p. 14). When the sky was put at the bottom and the marshmallow was orange, it made perfect sense to the child and in the moment that the parent decided to go with her son’s version of what something should look like, the work between them became collaborative and as Knight (2009) discusses, not concerned with the aesthetic.

**Learning to Shift the Paradigm**

Studies have been made on the benefits of intergenerational collaborative artmaking (Davies, 2015; Knight, 2008, 2013; Thompson, 2009). However, these studies have been primarily in educational settings, in classrooms. But, the ideas and concepts behind these studies on intergenerational collaboration can easily be transmitted into the home. Knight (2013) states that intergenerational collaboration “brings adults and children together in a process of thinking and theorizing in order to create visual imagery” (p. 21). Although she is discussing an educational setting, parents and their children can be brought together in the very same way.
I understand the fact that most parents give their children time to draw or do other artmaking activities in the home. However, as stated in Chapter 2, the child does this artmaking on his or her own and brings it to the parent at a later time, when the parent must interpret what the work is about. This is very common, especially, in early childhood, because often times, the drawings present themselves as scribbles. Without having been privy to the process, the interpretation will be inaccurate. Even the child’s story after the fact will be different to what was actually happening during the process of the drawing. So, I am suggesting that, rather than having children draw on their own, adult caregivers should sit down with them and let their child guide them through their process of artmaking, storytelling (or narrative) and decision making.

During the course of this case study, I observed adults interacting with their young children during a specific artmaking experience. At first, they seemed uncomfortable. It was, from my observation, an unfamiliar and uncomfortable space for the adult not to be the primary decision maker when working with their young child. One of the questions for this research that I was seeking answers to was, What is the adult caregiver’s response to following the guidelines of the child without interference? This question was partly answered through careful observation of each mother’s behavior and comments throughout the process of collaboratively drawing with her child. After observing the uncomfortableness of the mother’s during the artmaking experience with each of their children, I realized that the question was no longer just about the adult response to the experience, but more about how to shift the response. New questions that emerged are: How are we to better interact and engage with young children? How do adults learn shift the power and decisions over to young children during artmaking?
The answers to these questions are quite simple. Practice. That is how we learn to shift power. If we are to stop and think about how often we give or do not power, control and decisions over to young children, we can possibly begin to see areas in which we as adults can give up power, control and decisions. As much as adults want to protect their young children, and I understand that parental instinct to protect them, there are certain safe spaces in which we can begin to turn some of that power over, to shift the paradigm. Collaborative artmaking is an ideal space for parents to see the abilities that their child has to form and follow through with decisions. Collaborative artmaking is a safe place for parents to begin to understand the thought process of their young child. This sort of practice, could, in a sense, begin to translate into other life areas. Children are vastly capable of having a voice in their own work, their own process and their own decisions.

**Images of The Child: How we view the decisions and problem solving skills of young children**

Changing the way in which we view children is not an easy task. We all have an image of what a child is, what they should be, how they should act. Many adults believe that their children cannot perform certain tasks without their help and as a result, children do not learn how to make decisions based on their own knowledge and learning, they don’t know how to do things or problem solve situations. Adults do it for them so often that they are unable to be creative on their own. I discuss images of children in Chapter 2 and how, as stated by Malaguzzi, “each one of [us] has inside [ourselves] an image of the child that directs [us] as [we] begin to relate to the child” (as cited in Thompson, 2009, p. 26). For this research, part of the focus has been on how that image can be changed. How do we view the child differently, in a way that gives them power, control and understanding of
their capabilities and belief in their own abilities? Changing the way in which adults view children relates back to one of my original questions for this research. In order for the adult image of the child to change, the image of the adult and the role they play must also change. The adult must shift their view of what their role is in their child’s life and decisions in order to shift the way in which they view the abilities and decision making skills of their child.

My final question involved how giving the child ownership and control over the experience changes the experience for the adult. After discussing the process of collaborating with their child, each of my participants stated that they had a better understanding of their child’s abilities to form and make decisions when it came to creating a work of art. They also were able to engage with their child in a different manner, one that was carefree, imaginative and fun. They got to see a side of their child that they did not necessarily know before. Instead of interpreting the story later, they got to be a part of it. They got to see their child go through an emotional, kinesthetic, mindful process that is not evident after the fact. There is life in the artwork of these young children, it is best to be a part of it rather than to watch from the sidelines.

**Implications for Future Research and Final Thoughts**

One of the limitations of this case study, the very few participants in this research study, truly leaves many of my questions unanswered. I would need to work with several other children and their parents in order to get a better understanding of the influences that adults and children have on each other during intergenerational collaborative artmaking. This case study was conducted at the University of Arizona Museum of Art. Questions that arise during the course of the research are would the relationship and
interaction look like if it were studied in the home? Would the setting change the dynamic between the parent and the child? I would really love to continue this research with a larger group of participants in a different setting, outside of the educational or museum setting. I believe that, especially in early childhood, there is a different comfort level and dynamic that occurs between a parent and a child when at home versus in a public space. Also, I only had participants that consisted of a mother and son. Would the study change with a father/daughter combination? Mother/daughter? Father/son?

Lastly, I would be interested in further research about the narrative, specifically in artmaking. There is, from what I could find, very little research about the specifics of the narrative and artmaking in early childhood. I find the narrative to be one of, if not the, most important aspects of artmaking in early childhood. Without it, there can be very little understanding of the meaning behind the works of young children. I believe that there can be much more focus placed on the narrative and what it implies. There is much still unknown after this study was conducted. This was just the tip of the iceberg and there is still much to learn. But I know that it all begins in the youngest of people, we just have to give them the chance to voice it, to tell us what they are thinking, doing and feeling. We have to pay attention. Maybe then we, as adults, will find understanding in the minds of young children and remember what it is to be a young child ourselves.
References


Hello! My name is Sarah Carton and I am an undergraduate honors student in the Division of Art and Visual Culture Education here at the University of Arizona. This year, I am working on my honors thesis and my main interests lie in the interaction and relationship between adult and child while creating art collaboratively. I have had the privilege of attending the ArtSprouts sessions here over the summer and throughout this fall and observe the program and the activities that you all get to do. I even brought a three year old little boy with me and was able to join with you as a participant. He wasn’t the only one who had a great time! The museum has been so kind as to offer me the space to do my research and I can’t think of a better group of people to invite to join me!

To give you an idea of my background:

My main teaching interests are in early childhood, which is considered birth to 9 years. Preschool age is my favorite to work with. As adults, we often have a very clear idea of what something is supposed to look like and we think we know the very best way to get to the final destination. I am keenly interested in collaborative artmaking, particularly between an adult and a child. For this research, I will be questioning what happens when we adults put our ideas aside and leave it all up to the kids? What happens when we give our kids the control and let them take ownership of the
work? What does that feel like for both you and your child? My goals here are to guide you all, adults and children, through two artmaking sessions, where you will be working collaboratively with your child to create drawings in an activity I call “drawing stories” and to create a painting together using a variety of materials with your child and peers. The biggest rule is that the child is in charge of the artwork. Adults must follow the guidelines of the child and mimic them in their actions, something that is hard to do as an adult at times! Trust me, I know!

After each of the sessions, I would like to conduct interviews with both you and the children. Adults, if you don't mind, I will give you a written questionnaire to fill out while I talk to all of the kids, to make sure they understand what I just communicated to you. In the interests of transparency I want you to know that the information I give them will be very much the same as what I just gave you - and of course you would be right here with us so you can observe that for yourself.

Please know that I would also want to record the artmaking sessions just so that I could refer back to the conversations that happen throughout the artmaking process. To be clear, I will not use any names or show any faces in my final documentation. The recordings would be for me alone in order to further my research and it would be destroyed at the conclusion of the project. The only images I may use is of the artwork itself, and if any image of a person is used, it will exclude the face. If you do agree to participate in the project, I'm going to need you to sign a consent form agreeing to this. The main thing I want is for all of you to have an experience with your child that may be different or new. But most of all, I want you all to have fun. Isn't that what art is for anyway? I have written consent forms if you choose to join me in this fun adventure. I am
also free to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for taking the time to read through this description and I hope that we can all make some art together!!

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The University of Arizona reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Graham (age 3), Ellison (age 5), and Sarah (age 35)
Acrylic on Paper
96” x 42”
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ADULT

1. What was your experience in being the one to be told what to draw or paint by your child?
2. Does this experience change the way you view your child’s ability in making their own artistic decisions?
3. Was it difficult for you to give complete control of the project over to your child?
4. If so, why was it difficult and what would you have done differently than your child?
5. Would you participate in this sort of artmaking experience again? Why or why not?

CHILD

1. Does it feel different when grownups don’t tell you what to draw or paint?
2. Do you like it better or not better when you get to tell the grownups what to draw or paint?
3. Why do you like it better or not better?
4. When you get to be the one in charge of the drawing or painting, what does that make you feel like?
5. Would you want to do art like this again?
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW RESPONSE

1. What was your experience in being the one to be told what to draw or paint by your child?

   **Parent 1:** “It’s fun to collaborate with [my child] and letting him be the boss.”

   **Parent 2:** “It was a little difficult at first to relinquish control, but it ended up being a more fun way to draw.”

2. Does this experience change the way you view your child’s ability in making their own artistic decisions?

   **Parent 1:** “No, because I usually try to let him do his own thing when doing creative projects”

   **Parent 2:** “Yes. It made me realize that I had been directing my son more than I thought. My son came up with a really creative story.”

3. Was it difficult for you to give complete control of the project over to your child?

   **Parent 1:** “A little, yes”

   **Parent 2:** “At first, yes. After my son verbalized his plan, it was easier for me to go along with his commands.”

4. If so, why was it difficult and what would you have done differently than your child?

   **Parent 1:** “Not making suggestions was hard, even asking questions seems to infiltrate.”
Parent 2: “I would have put the sky at the top of our page instead of the bottom. My marshmallow would have been white instead of orange. 😊”

5. Would you participate in this sort of artmaking experience again? Why or why not?

Parent 1: “Yes. It was super fun.”

Parent 2: “Yes. It ended up being such a fun way to draw with my son. I will definitely do it again.”
APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL TRANSCRIPTIONS

PARTICIPANTS 1: A Centipede Transcription

Mom: Be a little more gentle with the markers. Oh wait, be as rough as you want with the markers!”

Child is banging the marker against the paper, making dots

Mom: What are we drawing?
Child: A centipede.

Mom: A centipede? That does kind of look like a centipede. It has like a hundred legs.
Child: That’s a big centipede!

Mom: It is a big centipede. What color are the legs?
Child: Black and red

Mom: Black and red. Ok where does the black and red go?
Child: Right here (he points). Make a stripe for him.

Mom: Ok, what’s the centipede doing?
Child: He enjoys his stripes.

Mom: He is enjoying his stripes? (She colors stripes on the centipede)
Child: Hey! I was coloring him first! (He is agitated that his mom took over the stripe drawing) You can't draw them with me! I did it, yes, yes, yes!

Mom: I thought you wanted them black and red? Didn’t you want me to do them black and red?
Child: No, I did it. Nooo, I had to do it. This is MY job.

Mom: Can I draw a space?
Child: No, I’m all done.
Mom: You’re all done? But what about the centipede?

Child: You just color that.

Mom: Ok, what color is his face?

Child: That’s black. (Noah is now running around the museum lobby. He is done but his mother tries to continue.)

**PARTICIPANTS 2: Princess World Transcription**

Mom: What color do you want your castle to be?

Child: This is the grass.

Mom: Ok. Looks like a pretty area with pretty grass. Can I help you with the grass?

Child: I don’t want that color. I want the marker.

Mom: Ok (switches markers) Is it ok if I make a flower? I feel like a castle would have pretty flowers.

Child: Yeah, lots of flowers. They are all gonna be right here. This one is a big one. It’s a giant one. It’s super long. Mommy after this I’m gonna draw a rainbow in the storms. And I’m gonna draw a person. A princess. It’s a grumpy princess.

Mom: Why is she grumpy?

Child: She is a bad guy princess.

Mom: Oh, she isn’t very nice?

Child: Yeah, but she is good when she is happy.

Mom: I think everyone is better when they are happy.

Child: MmmHmm. Look it... (Draws a peepee)

Mom: Eww! Wow!

Child: This is where her little peepee thing is.
Mom: (Child)

Child: This is her belly button. (Laughs hard and loud!)

Mom: What kind of flower do you think this is? (Trying to distract from the peepee!) I’m trying to make it a tulip.

Child: Tulip? What’s a tulip?

Mom: it’s a spring flower.

Child: Wait, here is his forehead.

Mom: Big eyes! What color of eyes does your princess have?

Child: It’s an alien princess.

Mom: Ooh. I like it!

Child: Actually, sisi doesn’t like aliens, I’m just gonna... (Draws a little hair)

Mom: Can I put a bow on her hair?

Child: Yeah, it’s a girl. I want pink to surprise sisi. Actually, it’s just a girl, not a grumpy girl. I need to make the sun. When are we gonna make the castle?

Mom: Whenever you like.

Child: After this let’s make the castle. It’s gonna be the very last ok mommy?

Mom: Ok. Sounds good. I made a little necklace for the princess.

Child: that’s nice. Is that a necklace? Oh. I want it to be a scarf.

Mom: oh ok, then maybe we could put little ends on it?

Child: What is that?

Mom: it is the ends of the scarf flying in the wind.

Child: Mommy, I am gonna draw a hot dog. Where is the little color peach? Oh here it is.

Mom: That’s a big hot dog.
Child: It’s a bread hot dog.

Mom: That looks like a nice hot dog.

Child: Thank you. There is sun on there and it’s gonna warm it up. This is the heater on top of the boat. It’s flying.

Mom: Since she is an alien.

Child: (to his older sister) it’s a princess alien that I am making for you but it isn’t an alien anymore.

Mom: She has egg eyes!

Child: Sisi, I drawed egg eyes because you love eggs!

Mom: Let’s make a bacon mouth maybe. (She says through tears of laughter!)

Child: NOO!!

Mom: you are fun to draw with!

Child: Mommy, here is the little crystal. It’s for the princess. What is that?

Mom: Its bacon. I didn’t put it on her mouth, I just felt like we needed some bacon.

Child: Yeah, we need lots of bacon.

Mom: So, where... you mentioned a castle.

Child: right here.

Mom: What color is the castle?

Child: A rainbow one!!

Long silence...

Child: How did you make that? Mommy, this is a bigger one than yours. This one’s bigger.

Mom: This is a turret.
Child: This is a circle window. This is on top of the roof. This is all the smoke. It’s a really hot fire.

Mom: From a fire?

More silent drawing...

Mom: Oh, your castle is so big. Is there someone livening in yours?

Child: No

Mom: Are they connected or are they not connected? How should we connect them?

Child: Uh, This is the princess. This is her crown.

Mom: Is she a kind princess?

Child: Yeah, she is a good guy princess.

More quiet...

Mom: What is the name of the king and queen that live there?

Child: There’s no king. Her name is Ellison. That is sisi’s name but don’t tell her. I’m going to surprise her. That is hair... and hands.

Mom: does an alien princess have hands?

Child: No, this is not an alien princess.

Mom: Is there a dragon at the castle?

Child: No, but this red thing is fire because the dragon walked away. And it blew fire.

There’s no fire truck. But this red stuff right here is a part of the dragon.

Mom: Oh, ok. His tail? You can tell he is leaving!

Child: Is there a fire truck? How about a police car? This is the window for the bad guy. This is a shadow and that is the siren. The red. The police car will pass all of that flower and that flower.