Roma Girls Expressing Identity, Aspirations, and Voice Through Participatory Arts-Based Research

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Roma Girls Expressing Identity, Aspirations, and Voice

Through Participatory Arts-Based Research

by

Crista Kaye Banks

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction with a concentration in Elementary Education

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Date of Approval:
October 11, 2019

Keywords: collage, Freire, feminist, mixed media, Romani

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Sophia Loren Banks. You are an exceptional Doxie and one special girl. I would not be here without your unconditional love.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family. To my parents, Dean and Kaye Banks, thank you for your patience, guidance, prayers, and never ending emotional, spiritual, and financial support. This journey would not have been possible without you. To my brother Jamison and sister-in-law Sara, thank you for your prayers and encouragement.

To my dissertation chair, Dr. Michael J. Berson, thank you for taking the time to mentor me and for providing guidance and encouragement throughout this entire process.

To Dr. Ilene R. Berson, thank you for your encouraging words and for teaching phenomenal courses that inspired me.

To Dr. Darlene DeMarie, thank you for being available to talk, to share research ideas, and for reminding me that it will all be okay.

To Dr. Jennifer Wolgemuth, thank you for encouraging me to think outside of the box and not be afraid to explore uncharted research territory.

To the Roma Support Group, community liaisons, and volunteers, thank you for allowing me to experience part of your world and for welcoming me with open arms into your community.

To the amazing Roma girls, thank you for inspiring me to continue exploring new ways to construct knowledge.

Last, but not least, my friends who supported me throughout this journey: Monica Gonzalez-Smith, Denise Donahue, and my bestie Shannon Humenansky. I am forever grateful for your advice, late night phone calls, text messages, and never-ending support.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... v

List of Figures ........................................................................................................................ vi

Abstract .................................................................................................................................. viii

Chapter One: Introduction ...................................................................................................... 1
  Background ............................................................................................................................. 1
  Statement of the Problem ......................................................................................................... 4
  Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................................... 6
  Research Questions ............................................................................................................... 6
  Personal Perspective .............................................................................................................. 6
  Significance of the Study ........................................................................................................ 8
  Definition of Key Terms ......................................................................................................... 9
  Summary ................................................................................................................................. 9

Chapter Two: Linking the Literature ...................................................................................... 11
  Participatory Arts-based Research .......................................................................................... 11
    Participatory Arts-based Research as a Human Right .......................................................... 12
    Capturing and Communicating Non-verbal Data ................................................................. 13
    Benefits for the Researcher .................................................................................................. 13
    Participatory Arts-based Research with Roma ................................................................. 14
  Art and Identity .................................................................................................................... 17
  Mixed Media Collage ........................................................................................................... 18
  A Brief History of the Roma People ..................................................................................... 20
  Roma in the Arts .................................................................................................................. 22
  Roma Youth .......................................................................................................................... 24
  Roma Girls .............................................................................................................................. 26
  Roma Identity ......................................................................................................................... 29
  Roma Aspirations ................................................................................................................... 29
  Roma Voice ............................................................................................................................. 31
  Gaps in the Literature ........................................................................................................... 33
  Summary ................................................................................................................................. 33

Chapter Three: Research Methodology ............................................................................... 35
  Location of Self ....................................................................................................................... 35
  Research Questions .............................................................................................................. 37
  Theoretical and Practical Frameworks ................................................................................... 38
    Feminist Standpoint Theory ............................................................................................... 38
    Freire’s Empowerment Education Approach ...................................................................... 40
## Chapter 4: Introducing the Artists and the Finding

Brief Overview of Collage Workshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop 1</th>
<th>Workshop 2</th>
<th>Workshop 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Mixed Media Collage Method

Mixed Media Collage Research Design

Data Collection Methods

Data Analysis

Trustworthiness and Quality

Ethical Considerations

Limitations

Summary
Chapter 6: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion ................................................. 147
  Discussion ............................................................................................................. 147
  Power of Art .......................................................................................................... 148
    Art-making and Identity ....................................................................................... 148
    Art-making and Aspirations ................................................................................ 149
    Art-making and Voice .......................................................................................... 151
  Implications for Marginalized Populations of Children ....................................... 152
  Implications for Learning ....................................................................................... 154
  Challenges ............................................................................................................. 155
    International Locations ....................................................................................... 155
    Building Relationships ......................................................................................... 156
    Acknowledging Assumptions .............................................................................. 157
    Flexibility and Timelines .................................................................................... 159
    Funding ................................................................................................................ 160
  Suggestions for Future Research .......................................................................... 161
  Final Thoughts ....................................................................................................... 162

References .................................................................................................................. 164

Appendices ............................................................................................................... 185
  Appendix A: IRB Certificate .................................................................................... 186
  Appendix B: Parent Consent Form ......................................................................... 187
  Appendix C: Assent of Children to Participate in Research .................................... 194
  Appendix D: Informed Consent to Participate in Research ....................................... 198
  Appendix E: Collage Prompt Guide ....................................................................... 202
  Appendix F: Interview Guide .................................................................................. 203
  Appendix G: Written Reflection Guide ................................................................. 204
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: How the Framework Supports the Research .................................................................47
**LIST OF FIGURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Theoretical and Practical Framework</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Connecting the Paradigm and Theoretical Frames</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Example of Stage 2 Initial Data Sort</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Example of Stage 2 Broad Themes Emerging</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Example of Stage 3 Subcoding</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Example of Stage 4 Overarching Theme One</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Example of Stage 4 Overarching Theme Two</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Example of Stage 4 Overarching Theme Three</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Data Analysis Diagram</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ismena’s Base Color</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Geanina’s Base Color</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Valentina’s Base Color</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Valentina’s Progress</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Geanina’s Progress</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ismena’s Progress</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Collage Supplies</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>More Collage Supplies</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Collage Work</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>More Collage Work</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Valentina’s Mixed Media Collage</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 21: Geanina’s Mixed Media Collage ................................................................. 115
Figure 22: Ismena’s Mixed Media Collage ................................................................. 124
Figure 23: All The World’s A Stage ........................................................................... 145
Figure 24: Windows and Mirrors .............................................................................. 145
Figure 25: Brick by Brick .......................................................................................... 146
ABSTRACT

The methods by which Roma girls are studied and represented, do not account for their individual expressions of identity, aspirations or voice. Experiences and voices of Roma girls have rarely been seen or heard and have been consistently defined and represented by non-Roma individuals throughout history and within academia, which has perpetuated stereotypes. Interpretations of the image and lives of the Romani are permeated with misperceptions, myths, and assumptions based on stereotypical definitions.

This study uses the arts-based method of mixed media collage with Roma girls in London, England, to understand their expressions of identity, aspirations, and voice. This arts-based, qualitative study presents the richness and complexity of arts-based forms of data, offers levels of engagement that are both cognitive and emotional, and provides creative ways to explore the experiences of Roma girls in London. Understanding Roma girls’ expressions from their point of view also offers the opportunity for collaborative knowledge construction.

Using initial coding and subcoding showed the emergence of themes that spoke to Roma girls’ expressions of identity, aspirations, and voice. Some of these themes involved developing an awareness of self through character traits, representing and celebrating culture, identifying personal interests in order to explore aspirations, and using artistic expression to impact others with their voice. The participants’ collages capture the multi-layered nature of their lives, as well as the complexity of each evolving artist.

In the field of education, mixed media collage can be a catalyst for powerful thinking and discussion. Engaging in dialogue is a critical activity to implement in order to learn about aspects
of diversity and identity. Becoming conscious of socially constructed ideas, stereotypes, and our own biases is imperative for teaching and learning in today’s global society.
CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Background

On December 19, 2011, the United Nations' General Assembly met and decided to designate October 11th as the International Day of the Girl Child. This particular day has been created to bring attention to the challenges girls face, before the age of 18. The UN's goal is to enlighten the world about how critical the empowerment and investment in girls is for economic growth. According to the United Nations (n.d.), empowering girls requires breaking cycles of violence, poverty, and discrimination. Girls must be invested in making decisions that affect them. The world’s focus must be to promote and protect the human rights of all girls and women.

According to UN Women (n.d.), The attention garnered from the International Day of the Girl Child has evinced positive effects around the world. Today, equal numbers of girls and boys are receiving primary education in most of the world. However, 75.6 million girls worldwide are still lacking in essential reading and writing skills, and, even though life for girls is improving, there are still many barriers to overcome. Some of these include entrenched gender roles due to customary practices, unequal household responsibilities, child marriage, son preference, ethnic discrimination, and discrimination in food and healthcare allocation.

With the spotlight on protecting and promoting the human rights of girls, came the formation of non-governmental organizations raising money and creating platforms to bring about awareness and change. Education initiatives were launched, and programs were developed and implemented to promote leadership among girls. The most affected parts of the world were
targeted first. Some of those included Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006). Today, these areas are still the focus of many governmental and non-governmental programs. While these initiatives are well-intentioned, they have overlooked excluded subgroups. One of these subgroups is refugee Roma girls from Eastern Europe.

Historically, the Roma have persistently had difficulties fitting into the majority culture. European countries were not welcoming towards them because of their skin color, traditions, and language (Vazsonyi, Jiskrova, Ksinan, & Blatný, 2016). Roma refugees continue to experience discrimination in educational settings, access to healthcare, and employment. They also suffer from higher levels of poverty and unemployment compared to other minority groups (Loveland & Popsecu, 2016; Smith, 2003; Taylor, 2014). After the expansion of the European Union (EU) at the beginning of the 21st century, there was an EU-wide concern that the newly admitted member states were mostly Central and Eastern European countries with high Roma populations (Lame, 2014; Murray, 2012; Pogány, 2006; Rauh, 2018). Despite these concerns, most existing scholarship focuses on adults (Brooks, 2012; Cudworth, 2019; Izsák, 2009; Joncheere, 2015; Junghaus, 2014; Macris, 2015; Pusca, 2015), and very few studies focus on Roma youth (Bošnjak & Acton, 2013; Kurciková, 2017; Marcu, 2016; Pantea, 2014).

There is considerably less scholarship focused on the experiences of Roma girls. The little research available informs us that Roma girls have lower school attendance rates than other minority groups (Aubert, 2015; Marcus, 2015; Rauh, 2018). However, the idea that the Roma communities do not want their daughters educated is a misconception. Studies show that Roma parents want their daughters in school (Kyuchukov, 2011; Chirlesan & Chirlesan, 2015; Cemlyn & Ryder, 2016; Cudworth, 2019). Low attendance of refugee students in the U.K. is attributed to
Roma girls experiencing bullying, language barriers, discrimination, and violence in the schools (Aubert, 2015).

The media contributes to anti-Roma sentiment. VonBurg (2009), reminds us of the July 2008 drowning of two young Roma girls in Naples, Italy. They had apparently been begging and walking around the beach when they decided to go into the water. Their leisurely swim turned fatal, and it quickly became too late to save them. The accidental deaths made headline news because of the horrific aftermath. After the girls were pulled from the water, their bodies were covered with beach towels and left alone for hours until an ambulance picked them up. The photographs of their bodies lying unattended went viral because of the indifferent beachgoers carrying on as if nothing had happened (Popham, 2008).

In the entertainment world, authored shows like *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* illustrate how the production of “reality” tv privileges the viewer and indulges misguided fantasies of the Roma (Jensen & Ringrose, 2014). *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* has recurring footage of young girls in their communion dresses, party clothes, and wedding dresses. Every episode showcases the filmmakers' cameras inspecting the girls' bodies from dramatic platform heels, bare legs, mini-skirts, exposed stomachs in tight tank tops, and heavy makeup (Jensen & Ringrose, 2014). Shows like this situate themselves as authorities on the Roma community, which is deeply problematic as it perpetuates myths and undermines the true essence of this minority group, and their struggles.

In fashion, the same historical "Gypsy" representations seen in old movies, pictures, and costumes are being re-invented today as "boho chic". Film star Sienna Miller dresses in "Gypsy skirts," model Kate Moss does a fashion shoot in a "Gypsy" community (Blaine, 2009), musicians like Madonna throw a "Gypsy" themed birthday party with costumes and decorations
("High points of the noughties," 2009). Clothing designers advertise their "Gypsy" inspired dresses, shoes, and handbags as mythical, magical, fanciful, and romantic (Tremlett, 2013). It seems for the rich and famous, dressing up as one of the most stigmatized, poverty-stricken minorities in Europe connects them to the notion of what Ellingson (2001) and Freire-Medeiros (2009) call authentic "noble savages" capable of seduction and danger.

Considering it is common knowledge that the Roma people are misrepresented, it is staggering that few studies have endeavored to give the authority of representation to the Roma people themselves (Marcus, 2019). This research follows the path of other researchers who believe it is not only essential to give Roma children a voice in social research but believe children's voices are vital in understanding social change (Tremlett, 2013; Marcus, 2019).

**Statement of the Problem**

The concept of identity is very ambiguous and depending on theoretical perspectives can mean different things (Jeznik, 2015). In this research, the complex idea of identity is based on the sociocultural framework and sees identity as an active, ongoing process constructed through social practice. Identity is more than a set of innate characteristics (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Constructing identity comes through language and through a person’s activity (Taylor, 2016). “Identities are lived in and through activity and so must be conceptualized as they develop in social practice. Identities are the key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001, p. 5). It is defined as how one sees one’s self. This study focuses on the participants’ identity and how one sees one’s self as a unique and distinct individual (Burke & Stets, 2009).

The study of identity is an area where arts-based research is gaining ground (Holm, Sahlström, & Zilliacus, 2018). Exploring identity through the use of art becomes a thinking
process that moves one to understand how identity is never fixed or static, but continually in the process of construction through encounters with people, places, and ideas. The process of creating art can be both an artmaking practice and a way of thinking and working that focuses on the lived experience and not just the finished product (Kee, Bailey, Horton, Kelly, McClure, & Thomas, 2016). Art provides the platform to truly delve into the nature of identity, power, and privilege in society (Dewhurst, 2018).

The methods by which Roma girls have been studied and represented, do not account for their individual expressions of identity, aspirations or voice. Roma girls are rarely heard, and they are consistently defined and represented by others, which perpetuates stereotyping. Also, research is conducted on Roma girls instead of with them. One research method that can counteract this issue is participatory arts-based research. Even though there is much discussion on using participatory arts-based research in the literature (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Beyerbach & Ramalho, 2017; Bhattacharya, 2008; Butler-Kisber, 2008; Franco & Unrath, 2015; Kibbey, 2017; Leavy, 2018), there is a paucity of data based, published research on how Roma girls use participatory arts-based research to express identity, aspirations, and voice.

Experiences and voices of Roma girls have rarely been seen or heard and have been consistently defined and represented by non-Roma individuals throughout history and within academia. As a non-Roma, I will address this tension within my study by employing mixed media collage as an arts-based research method that allows for participatory, collaborative, knowledge creation with Roma girls. This method will address the lack of Roma girls’ voices in research and the knowledge around their expression of identity, aspirations, and voice. Mixed media collage also can communicate verbal and nonverbal expression which according to Gerstenblatt (2013), can “provide the researcher and participant with methods to engage
sensitive issues that might be difficult to articulate in words” (p. 306). Creating a collage also has the potential to empower participants by acknowledging and valuing what marginalized populations have to say.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this arts-based qualitative study is to contribute to the literature by exploring how a participatory approach to visual arts improves understanding of Roma experiences to outsiders. Huss (2007) explains that:

> In an arts-informed paradigm, by handing over creativity (the contents of research) and its interpretation (the explanation of its contents) to the research participants, they are empowered, and the content is more culturally exact and explicit, utilizing emotional and cognitive ways of knowing. (p. 308)

Through the use of participatory arts-based research, Roma girls will generate art to create knowledge and express identity, aspirations, and voice while also dispelling cultural stereotypes.

**Research Questions**

- How does the process of art-making function as a catalyst for Roma girls in making meaning of their identity?
- How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their aspirations?
- How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their voices?

**Personal Perspective**

At the age of 15, I had the opportunity to take my first trip abroad to England. My friend in high school was British and we traveled together to the small town in England where her grandmother lived and stayed for a month. Staying with a local family, I was able to experience what everyday life was like. The currency, food, markets, and history were all new to me and I
found this exciting and interesting. That trip ignited a lifelong love of traveling the world and learning about the way people in other places live.

I completed an undergraduate degree in elementary education, but my passion for traveling and culture continued, which lead me to complete my master’s degree in teaching English as a second language. I taught in schools with large migrant, immigrant, and refugee populations. Working with such diverse populations of students enabled me to hone my teaching skills and facilitate the learning of students from different cultures, traditions, and languages. This experience stretched me as an educator and motivated me to provide opportunities for all of my students to become global thinkers and to communicate who they were as people. I learned that one barrier to this goal was communication. Another was immigrant and refugee students’ feelings of alienation and culture shock. As I tried different methods of teaching and communicating with these students, I found that the use of art was effective. Creating “about me” posters, drawing pictures, sculpting, using photographs, theater, and music provided the opportunity students needed in order to communicate to others their lives and experiences. Art enabled us to get to know each other as individual people and build a strong classroom community.

While working on my doctorate degree in elementary education, I taught introductory coursework and supervised teacher candidates in their field experiences. Again, I found art a useful tool in projects that required students to dig deeper and reflect on themselves as educators. Sculpting their vision of their personal teaching philosophy, using theater to demonstrate application of a theory, or using technology to create videos to demonstrate knowledge and learning were all artistic measures that helped teacher candidates express themselves and their experiences to others.
During my doctoral program, I also traveled to India and visited rural and urban elementary schools where I witnessed, first-hand, the gender discrimination of females and female students. Though India now encourages girls to attend school, the infrastructure has not yet caught up. In many rural schools there are still no bathroom facilities for girls and no safe transportation to take them to and from school. Many families that cannot afford the cost of school uniforms, lunch, and supplies will choose the son to attend school over the daughter.

Inspired by this journey, I immersed myself in literature on arts-based research with undervalued populations (Catterall & Peppler, 2007; Delgado, 2015; Henry & Verica, 2015; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; Shah, 2015; Sinha & Hickman, 2016). I discovered a gap in the literature because there was literature using arts-based research with undervalued groups of girls all around the world, however the literature lacked research with one of the most stigmatized groups of refugees in the world, the Roma. There were several pieces of literature about Roma girls (Aubert, 2015; Bošnjak & Acton, 2013; Casey, 2014; Hasdeu, 2008; Kyuchukov, 2011; Macris, 2015), but none of them were from the Roma perspective and none of them were arts-based. I decided to integrate my two research interests, visual arts and undervalued groups of girls, which led me to the participatory arts-based methodology that is used in this dissertation.

**Significance of the Study**

The body of literature on arts-based methods with Roma girls is non-existent when compared to the body of research on arts-based methods with other undervalued groups of girls. A review of the literature on Roma girls revealed most research is conducted on the Roma, not with the Roma and the aim of the literature does not include collaborative knowledge construction or opportunities for Roma girls to explore and express their experiences. This study aimed to fill a gap in the literature by offering a qualitative study on how three Roma refugee
girls used participatory visual arts-based research, mixed media collage, to express identity, aspirations, and voice. Findings from this research offer new insights into collaborative knowledge construction and presents the richness and complexity of arts-based forms of data, offers levels of engagement that are both cognitive and emotional, and provides creative ways to explore the experiences of Roma girls in London.

**Definition of Key Terms**

The following are working definitions that will be used in my dissertation research.

*Gadze.* Plural for non-Romani people (Hancock, 2002).

*Gadzo.* Singular for non-Romani person (Hancock, 2002).

*Gypsy.* Common English word for person of Romani descent. Intensely disliked by some Roma and tolerated by others (Hancock, 2002).

*Mixed media Collage.* A visual art in which more than one medium is applied. In addition to print-work clippings, items such as found objects, fabric, paint, textured paper, imagery, stitching etc. can be used to attain a wide range of self-expression (Scotti & Chilton, 2018).

*Roma.* A word increasingly used in English as a singular or plural noun or even as an adjective to mean “Gypsy.” Roma and Romani are used interchangeably (Bošnjak & Acton, 2013).

**Summary**

Chapter 1 included a background, problem, purpose and significance of this research. Research questions were discussed and terms unique to the study defined. Chapter 2 will provide information from the literature about art as a human right, data, and the benefits of arts-based research. A brief history of the Roma people including the lack of the Roma's voice in research, issues Roma youth experience, and a particular focus on issues involving Roma girls. Other
topics, such as the Roma's involvement with art and perceptions of identity, aspirations, and voice are examined. Patterns and gaps in the literature are also discussed.
CHAPTER 2:
LINKING THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I will address participatory arts-based research and the concept of art as a human right, non-verbal data, and the benefits of this type of research. Next, I will share the limited, relevant literature on arts-based research with the Roma, how the arts facilitate and foster the expression and creation of identity, and why mixed media arts-based research was chosen for this study. Then, I will follow with literature about the history of the Roma, Roma in the arts, and Roma youth with a focus on Roma girls. The meaning of identity, aspiration, and voice as it pertains to this research is also examined. To conclude, I will highlight the gaps in the published literature to express why this research is needed and to add new understanding to the field of education.

Participatory Arts-based Research

Art constitutes one of the oldest ways of knowing and is present across cultures as a form of communication and expression (Millett-Gallant, 2018). Participatory arts-based research is defined as making or using artistic expressions in any art form as a primary way of understanding and investigating experiences by both the researcher and the participants they involve in their studies (McNiff, 2008). The participants are also generators of data (Mand, 2012). This is a fundamental way to discover innovative and powerful means of understanding both experiences of those we involve in research and our experiences as researchers (McNiff, 1998). One reason participatory arts-based research was developed and utilized was to engage with marginalized populations of society and to challenge the limitations and oppressive features
of traditional scientific research (Clover, 2011). Participatory research with children is not always about the methods, but social interaction. It's the process of making the art, not just having a completed piece of art to analyze (Thomas, 2008). Arts-based data collection techniques are often described as being child-centered because they accommodate children's skills, capacities, experiences, and interests giving them value and status (Carter & Ford, 2013). Involving young people in research challenges power structures and dissuades the social and cultural tendencies to keep children silenced (Roholt & Baizerman, 2019).

**Participatory Arts-based Research as a Human Right**

Art is a fundamental human activity. The justification of children as participants and researchers comes from the basis of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which entitles children to many rights, including the right to have their best interest considered in all actions concerning them, including decisions made about their care and protection. Children have the right to say what they think in matters that pertain to them and to have their views taken seriously (UNICEF, n.d.). Children have the right to do research that empowers them to respond to and challenge the negative narratives told about them (Roholt & Baizerman, 2019). Participatory arts-based research with children aims to balance the power in the relationship between the researcher and the participant. It encourages understanding and experiences of marginalized groups by accepting that children are experts in knowing and communicating their voices. The goal of this kind of research is often to diminish privileges, power, and to break down the insider-outsider barriers to hear the authentic voice (Sinha & Hickman, 2016). "For art is, at its core, about true freedom, about untrammeled speech, unbridled expression of the spiritual, and the relentless search of conscience" (PBS, 2016, p.1).
Capturing and Communicating Non-verbal Data

Participatory arts-based research is a method that enables us to capture non-verbal data. Often, vision comes before words. Artmakers are thinkers who communicate their thinking visually (Franco, Ward, & Unrath, 2015). In contemporary society, the visual is central to the cultural construction of social life (Stopforth, 2015). By representing data in an artistic, non-verbal way, we can access a richer understanding of life experiences, including the aspects of lived experiences that are difficult to verbalize (Stopforth, 2015). Henry and Verica (2015), explain that artistic representations can ignite emotions that make new senses of the self possible because arts engage different sensory expressions than working with the written word alone. Creative interpretations are subjective, whereas textual expression is not free of subjectivity. The arts encourage a subjectivity that is not bound by words or vocabulary (Mishra, 2018).

Benefits for the Researcher

Participatory arts-based research can have benefits for the artist as a person. The creation of artwork serves as a personal act of meaning-making (Noel, 2003). Art can empower children and become a tool for communication and creative expression. Creative expression deepens understanding and creates an imaginative thought process which can communicate different perspectives and lead to self-empowerment. Aesthetic experiences are often driven by life experiences and influences (Brown & Bousalis, 2017). By telling personal stories through art, artist-participants can re-create themselves and change the way they relate to themselves and others (Stopforth, 2015). Artistic creations often foster a sense of pride in the artist-participants' achievements and their cultural heritage (Catterall & Peppler, 2007). It can also build confidence in their ability to reflect on their lives and share, in their way, their constructions of reality.
Participatory Arts-based Research with Roma

Participatory arts-based research with Roma youth is scarcely available. Most qualitative research about Roma girls/women consists of interviews, and a lot of this research focused on issues of access to education (Aubert, 2015; Lame, 2014; Macris, 2015; Rauh, 2018), discrimination (Izsák, 2009; Loveland & Popescu, 2016; Taylor, 2014), health care (Alexiadou, 2018; Belak & Filakovska Bobakova, 2018; Kirwan & Jacob, 2016), affordable housing (Garcia & Haddock, 2016; Prosser, 2017; Winston, Kennedy, & Carlow, 2019), drug use (Hout & Hearne, 2017; López, García, & Martí, 2018), and early marriage (Bošnjak & Acton, 2013; Cvorovic, 2019; Stewart, 2018). However, I did locate several qualitative research articles about the Roma. Greenwood (2012), talks about researching with Roma in a theater project. The research was focused on motivating the participants, ages 6 – 45, to take agency in writing and performing a play for a community get together. She looked specifically at a case in which performing arts was used to study culture and identity. Greenwood (2012), found that there was “a large difference in culture, history and ways of processing the world,” and as the work progressed, she often found the gap overwhelming. The researcher also found an absence of Roma voices in interpreting the work of “putting on a play.” The researcher had issues reaching her goal of enabling the participants to take agency in the drama work, which was informative in terms of revealing constructs of identity and alienation.

Kazubowski-Houston (2011), conducted research with Roma women through a theater and dance production. The researcher intended to study violence experienced by Roma women. The participants, however, wanted to produce a show that celebrated their culture. Kazubowski-Houston (2011), realizes she denied the Roma women’s right to speak for themselves by insisting on identifying with hegemonic forces that perpetuated their oppression.
Casey (2014), constructed narratives through interviews with Roma women in order to find out how “Gypsy” women construct their femininity and culture. Analyzing the interview transcripts through qualitative, inductive methods, Casey’s (2014) findings challenge the popular position that Roma women are “passive and docile subjects of male subordination.” This study also found that because of the stereotypical positioning of Roma women, they experience a disproportionate negative impact of society’s discrimination.

Analyzing photographs and television media, Pusca (2015), argues that stereotypes about the Roma people over the past 200 years have remained intact. However, with changes in the European Union on immigrant and refugee policies, the Roma seem to be at the center of debates on the treatment of ethnic minorities. By comparing current controversial photos in the press and “reality” shows on television with well-respected documentary photographs of the Roma people, Pusca (2015), claims that though there may appear to be a “crisis of representation,” the Roma could use this time in the spotlight to their political advantage. Even though the current representation may not fit in the academic and altruistic agenda, there is an opportunity for the Roma to gain more control over their images and representation.

Allen-Trottier (2013), researched production of identity between Roma and non-Roma “Gypsy musicians” in Canada. The researcher used qualitative and quantitative interview questions to determine that the Roma musicians identified in two main ways. Some Roma see their identity, in a global sense, as an ethnic group and do not feel they are seen as the undesirable “other.” They feel included in the ideals of the Canadian nation. The newer refugees feel they are being situated by the Canadian government and that they have been driven out of their homelands. They have a difficult time defining their ethnicity and identities in ways that validate their position with the government. The non-Roma “Gypsy musicians” create a positive
“Gypsy” identity based on the traditional stereotypes. Some of the non-Roma musicians are aware that they are appropriating ethnic music, and feel that they are accepted by Canadians.

Using qualitative semi-structured interviews, observations, and translating hip-hop music lyrics of five young Roma boys, Söderlund and Warnelid (2008), researched group identity. The researchers wanted to explore what culture meant to them. The group of Roma boys were stigmatized by their peers for their Roma identity and were largely excluded. Data analysis indicated that involvement in hip-hop created a positive group identity for the boys and their aspirations to be someone were realized. The researchers go on to say that the cultural capital the Roma boys gained was not intended to legitimize their Roma identity, but became a way for them to create boundaries for themselves from the negative influences in their community.

Kurciková, (2017), conducted art therapy with children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. This research used drawing with 16 Roma girls and boys ages 9 -12 in order to develop personality, socialization, and creative thinking. Given a body outline, the participants were to draw clothes, body parts, and name their person. The researcher analyzed the drawings and used Urban’s Test for Creative Thinking to verify the effect of art therapy with Roma children. Kurciková (2017), found that through art, it is plausible to improve socialization and deepen self-knowledge. Through the production of visual art, self-expression is represented without words, which is beneficial for those who have difficulty verbalizing their feelings and experiences.

I found only one study of Roma youth using the visual art method of collage (Marcu, 2016). This study included 74 Roma youth ages 11 -24. This study focused on Roma youth’s perceptions of drug use. The participants made collages to represent drugs and were interviewed to explain the collage’s meaning. Metaphorical analysis was also used to reconstruct meanings
and identify themes. This information was intended to be used in order to develop drug prevention strategies. Marcu (2016), determined several trends through data analysis. Tobacco use began at 11 -12 years of age. Drug use was considered more acceptable for boys because girls contend with a stereotype that drug use meant they were promiscuous. Fear of parental violence prompted most of the participants to hide their drug activity in order to maintain the image of being a “good Roma.” The participants also expressed drug use as a way to fit in with their non-Roma counterparts. Using this information, the researcher plans to move to phase two of the project and work with local Roma organizations to pilot drug prevention strategies.

I have been unable to locate any published scholarly research specifically regarding Roma girls using arts-based methods. One exception is research by Marcus (2015), who also recognizes the lack of research with Roma girls. Marcus’ research in 2015 turned into a longitudinal study which she published as a book in 2019. The focus was on Roma girls’ school experiences in Scotland through extensive interviews with Roma school girls ages 15 -19. Through analysis of the interviews, Marcus (2015) found, “multiple voices reflect multiple realities influenced by long-standing institutional, structural, political, and cultural agendas. The girls are caught within these structures” (p. 73). Acknowledging these inequalities is imperative to change the power structures and restore trust in a group of people who have endured centuries of conflict and marginalization.

Art and Identity

“Identity is a concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 2001, p.5). Historically, people in every culture across place and time have used art as a way to document and communicate ideas about who they are and how we relate to one another. It’s a
useful tool for communicating cultural values and talking about and connecting with people across different identities (Dewhurst, 2018). Theorists and researchers from different fields of study have suggested many ways to facilitate positive identity development with children including play, expressive and creative arts, and participating in activities with peers (Fletcher & Lawrence, 2017). Art involves making, discussing, and feeling the benefits of creativity and helps people process their life experiences (Millett-Gallant, 2018).

A child’s identity begins to develop at an early age as they get to know their family, where they live, and how the world reacts to their behavior. The environment in which a child grows, has a large effect on identity development. Eventually, children are answering questions about who they are and where they belong (Kurciková, 2017). Children generally express their participation through play (Gibbs & Cooper, 2014). Through the process of art-making, children can change their story. In life, we use stories to make sense of our experiences and we use our experiences to form our identity of self and our place in the world (Lewis & Wallace, 2006). Identity work is a process, is always fluid and changing, and is an important part of childhood and adolescence that provides the foundation for the rest of one’s life (Kozinets, Gretzel, & Dinhopl, 2017).

**Mixed Media Collage**

Arts-based research uses many different mediums like drawing, painting, sculpting, music, dance, and theater. I have chosen mixed-media collage for this study. Collage is a word that was invented in the twentieth century to describe an activity with an ancient history (Fensham, 2018). It involves gluing items like paper, buttons, found objects, fabrics, and ribbons to canvas or another base. Traditional collage is two-dimensional and uses cut or torn pieces of paper, whereas mixed media collage can be three dimensional and can incorporate almost any
material you can think to use. Mixed media collage offers endless materials, techniques, and methods of expression (Liphart, 2014).

All art can be a vehicle for constructing and sharing ideas, feelings, and activism, but mixed media collage has the unique ability to express layers of thoughts and emotions using many materials (Vietgen, 2019). Just as identity is constructed of many layers, so is mixed media collage. This method appeals to people who may enjoy art but do not have much art-making experience and may be intimidated by drawing and painting (Millett-Gallant, 2018). This particular medium of art-making is befitting any level of art experience and is also appropriate for young children. Children as young as five years old have shown using collage is significant in the development of creativity and improves self-reliance and self-confidence (Fahmi, Santoso, & Sumantri, 2018).

As a researcher, I chose this art form because visual art-making is a method I have often used and found was helpful for me in problem-solving and learning. The materials can be as expensive or cheap as the creator wants because all materials are fair game. One can use whatever is found to create a mixed media collage to create art, make meaning, and create new knowledge. Also, it takes time to complete. It is built layer by layer in the process of aesthetically combining, playing, and experimenting with materials while simultaneously making meaning (Kay, 2016). Mixed media collage is physically constructed and offers metaphorical construction of ideas in research; therefore, it is a powerful means to generate new knowledge where abstract meanings can emerge from art in a research context. Art-making in layers with mixed media collage helps me, as a researcher, examine aspects of identity by interacting with the artist participants as they build their piece layer by layer.
A Brief History of the Roma People

There are approximately 10 - 12 million people in Europe who identify as being Romani (Peleg, 2018). They migrated from India to countries around the world over 1000 years ago, and their language is related to Sanskrit. Though the Roma are a distinct ethnic group and connected by related dialects that indicate their common Indian inheritance, the Roma are an extremely heterogeneous group. The territory, cultural differences, and dialect, which may be due to the caste system and 800 years of migration, divide them. Romani people are often referred to as “Gypsies” based on inaccurate assumptions that they migrated from Egypt (Weyrauch, 2003). There is also a misconception that to be Romani means that one has adopted a particular way of life when in actuality Romani people are a distinct ethnic group with a heritage rooted in India (Lundell & Weiler, 2000). Bošnjak and Acton (2013), explain that research in historical linguistics and genetics suggest that following the tenth century, ancestors of the Romani left north-western India and passed through what is currently Afghanistan, Iran (ancient Persia), Armenia, and Turkey. They entered Europe in the thirteenth century when they were driven out by the invasion of the Ottoman Turks. By the twentieth century, the Roma had found their way to countries all across Europe, America, and Australia.

These days, the term Roma has various usages. It is used politically to cover all populations which speak Romani and those that speak mixed dialects with Romani influence. However, some of these groups, like the Sinti in Germany and Romanichals in England refuse to identify as Roma (Bošnjak & Acton, 2013). Many in the Roma community prefer the term Roma or Romani because the term “Gypsy” is often used in a derogatory manner. However, some current political movements encourage Roma people to use “Gypsy” when referring to Roma. This is done to reclaim the term. Baker (2008) believes:
It is time for us (Roma) to embrace the term, not only because our use of it suggests a resistance to stereotyping by non-Gypsies, but also because it portrays an essence of the historical positioning of continued marginalization from society that is missing from words like Roma, Romani, and Romanichal. (p. 407)

Loveland and Popescu (2016) state that, “Roma marginalization is common across Europe” (p. 332). Taylor (2014) also indicates that “Despite their presence across the world, Roma are some of the most marginalized and vilified people in society” (p.7). The Romani have a long history of slavery in countries around the world. Hancock (2002) explains that King Edward the VI in sixteenth-century England had a law passed that required all Romanies to be enslaved for two years. If they tried to escape, they were to be branded with an “S” and made a slave for life. The first Romanies to migrate to Europe were very different from the European population. They looked different, had darker skin, spoke an unfamiliar language, and wore clothing to which the locals were unaccustomed. The Roma were reluctant to let outsiders know about them and kept to themselves because of past treatment. Inadequate treatment of the Roma is still happening in the twenty-first century. According to Hancock (2002):

Traditional European societies place tremendous emphasis on the concept of a homeland and national territory. A home means stability and permanence; it means being part of a community, where your neighbors recognize you and know exactly where you fit into their social structure. (p. 55)

Taylor (2014) explains that the Roma disenfranchisement is due to being seen as not having a “place” or a country, geographically or socially, which excludes them from mainstream history. This, along with the other factors discussed here, has laid the foundation for the widespread discrimination of the Romani people throughout Europe.
Roma in the Arts

As long as there have been Roma people, there has been Roma art. Many Roma families traveled throughout Europe with the circus, theater troupes, or as musicians and their connection to music and performance is still active today (Hawthorn, 2013). No one specific style of dance or music represents all Roma people. The regions where Roma live(d) influence Roma dance, music, food, and even language. According to Gypsy artist Daniel Baker (2008), the focus of artistic exposure for the Roma is often music, performance, and literature. Literature by the gadze created a cultural narrative that romanticized, eroticized, and demonized the Roma fueling them to mistrust the written word. The unwillingness of gadze to see beyond the stereotyped Gypsy, combined with the Roma's mistrust of outsiders has resulted in a community that continues to be misunderstood and misrepresented. Images can tell a different story. Romani visual art is less established than the Romani music, dance, or literature. Up until the 1800s, all writing, pictures, and music of the Roma are by gadze and represent Romani art as folk art (Acton, 2009). It wasn't until the twentieth century that we find individual Roma creating art and writing. Often, when visual art created by a Roma person is displayed, the artist is labeled as primitive and naïve, and the work itself is categorized as folk art or outsider art (Hawthorn, 2013; Junghaus, 2014). Until recently, Roma art and craft in Britain commonly took the form of carved and painted objects. Generally, every item in a wagon or caravan had to be functional. Being ornamental and serving a purpose made sense for a historically nomadic people. As Baker (2008) explains, “A duality of material opulence and spatial economy occurs in these objects where domestic matter becomes the vehicle for lavish artistic expression.” One of the most identifiable examples of this was the “Gypsy” wagon and in more modern times, the trailer or caravan, where
embellished vehicles had combined functions of shelter, transport, cultural motif, and cultural narrative.

The legitimacy of the term "Roma Art" has been one of the core foci of the Roma cultural movement beginning in the 1970s. In 1971, the first World Romani Congress was organized, funded in part by World Council of Churches and the Government of India, and held in England. Nine different countries sent Roma representatives and it was at this meeting that they agreed on the Roma flag, adopted the song “Galem, Galem” as their anthem, adopted Romanes as their official language, and decided to use the term “Roma” instead of “Gypsy.” There were also sub-committees set up to examine Roma issues related to social affairs, education, war crimes, language, and culture. After the first World Romani Congress, Roma artists started claiming recognition as a group; however, their work was still seen as outsider art and naïve painting (Junghaus, 2014). The 1990s saw more debates and public forums in Central and Eastern Europe on topics of cultural democracy. The focus was on concerns specific to ethnicity, society, gender, and class. Though this brought about interest in exploring the value of Roma culture, they were still experiencing resistance from the international art community. Often, when Roma artists exhibited their work, they were labeled as “outsider artists” causing their works to be displayed in community centers and ethnographic museums instead of fine art museums or contemporary art museums. Excluding Roma artwork from the contemporary art conversation reduced the ability for discourse and removal of stereotypes and prejudices (Junghaus, 2014). By the 2000s, Roma intellectuals began theorizing culture and began writing texts on social injustice, gender issues, the role of media in minority representation, and the examination of Roma representation and cultural participation. Roma artists’ persistence prevailed and it was in this decade that Roma artists began to successfully participate in numerous international contemporary art events.
In 2007, was the First Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, a contemporary visual art exhibition that first began in 1895. This was the first event where Roma theorists and artists proved that it is in the visual arts that the treatment of the Roma is most visible and evident (Junghaus, 2014). Junghaus (2014) explains that today:

> Young Roma artists and intellectuals are building social and artistic networks, they make conscious media and public appearances, and they are creating interactive and community projects using the means offered by computer and mobile technology and online solutions to achieve their highest possible impact. (p.27)

Art has the power to confront long-held stereotypes and misconceptions. The alternative narratives presented by a visual discourse surrounding Roma culture can signal a way forward towards equity. Roma artists have now made an authentic break-through in reconstructing the representation of their people in the contemporary world. In the words of Roma artist Daniel Baker, “As Europe’s largest ethnic minority, this recognition is surprisingly long overdue” (p.415).

**Roma Youth**

Across Europe, the inflexible structure of the postwar national school systems had a detrimental and instantaneous effect on the Romani population. Coming from poor families not used to the rigid classroom structures, Romani children are often ridiculed, bullied, and expelled from school (Smith, 2003). Lack of education solidified to the non-Roma the already present “anti-Gypsy” societal attitudes (Loveland & Popescu, 2016). The latest *Roma Human Rights Report* described a continuation of schools’ detrimental effects on the Romani population. Roma children continue to be bullied in school and racially discriminated against. They are often placed in “special needs” schools or segregated classrooms, which in parts of Europe are run by
low quality and unqualified teachers (Peleg, 2018). In rural areas of Eastern Europe, there are still schools for “Roma-only,” which are typically created because the non-Roma families pull their children out of schools where Roma are enrolled. Roma-only schools are often understaffed, offer substandard quality education, and are located in deteriorating buildings (Pohjolainen, 2014). The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), reports persistent direct and indirect discrimination against Roma children in education across Europe. Dropout rates for Roma children are very high due to discrimination at school (Pohjolainen, 2014). There have been instances where non-Roma parents pressure the school not to enroll Roma children and have even posted signs saying, “No to Gypsies.” Roma children have been turned away from school for a lack of vaccinations. Often, vaccinations are difficult to obtain in some countries due to lack of access to healthcare and knowledge of health issues.

One of the most effective ways Roma youth can cope with conflicting cultural expectations and exposure to racism is to get involved with one of the many Roma led organizations. The Roma Support Group is an example of an organization that takes a holistic approach to working with Roma refugees, migrant children, and young people in an effort to enhance their self-confidence, life aspirations, and improve their health and well-being. Organizations like the Roma Support Group assist with school registration, transitions to new schools, exclusion appeals, and access to education welfare provisions. They also tackle issues of bullying and educate non-Roma professionals about the barriers that Roma children and families face. There are programs in place to provide Roma children and youth with after school activities like karate, orchestra, dance, art, writing, field trips, sports, and homework help. Through the arts and writing, Roma children are given the opportunity to share their creations in exhibitions and publications, which increases their confidence and helps them to cultivate their Roma identity.
The Roma Support Group has used the methodology of the Theater of the Oppressed to enable Roma citizens to communicate the systemic barriers they face, some of which include lack of language support, lack of awareness of police procedures, victim’s rights, school policy, and communication with school personnel. Utilizing Theater of the Oppressed in professional trainings with the community helps the Roma, police, school personnel, and others explore these barriers and replay the scenes until solutions are discovered and recommended. The most effective way to change a community’s misconception about this marginalized population is for the Roma themselves to get involved in community outreach. The Roma Support Group does this through education, publications, films, music, concerts, exhibitions, and talent shows in order to emphasize the positive role of Roma culture (Roma Support Group, 2018).

**Roma Girls**

In this research, I have chosen to use the term “girl” when referring to females under the age of 18. Calling any female, adult or child, a ‘girl’ was once insulting, but now we can choose to use the word ourselves and not have it forced on us. “Girl” is increasingly rehabilitated as a term of relaxed familiarity and confidence. It is the equivalent to “guy” and not a way of belittling females (Kalogeropoulos Householder, 2015). Feminism means I can take ownership of the term “girl.” The word itself signifies a new feminist horizon and the term “girl power” defined feminism’s third wave. Fourth wave feminism takes it a step further and challenges who gets to decide what is good or acceptable (Kalogeropoulos Householder, 2015)? The idea that girls are weak is a socially constructed idea to which I do not subscribe. I also use “girl” because there is a parallel in females taking back this word and giving it power, just as the Roma are taking back the term “Gypsy.”
Many Romani youth face obstacles to their inclusion and participation due to social and economic instability and discrimination (Youth Department, Council of Europe, 2016). Interpretations of the image and lives of the Romani are permeated with misperceptions, myths, and assumptions based on stereotypical definitions. The plight is even more perilous for Romani girls. Brooks (2012) states, “Romani women have been painted as sexually available objects of fantasy and as old witches. We have been portrayed as passive victims of patriarchy who need saving and as thieves and beggars getting rich off of the welfare state” (p. 3).

bell hooks (1981), reminds us that minority women are worst affected as they are frequently doubly oppressed because of their race and gender. Just as there are persistent perceptions in Western consciousness about other types of female minorities (Groot, 2013; Spivak, 1988), there are stereotypical views of the ambitions and aspirations of young Roma women. Romani girls’ voices are also missing from the literature, research, and data, making them not only Europe's most unnoticed minority group, but keeping them silenced as well (Macris, 2015).

Though times are changing and Roma girls’ roles are changing, there are still “old fashioned” gender constructs in place for many Roma families. Roma men are still predominately the economic provider while women are confined to domestic and familial roles (Casey, 2014). Some of the traditional belief systems of the Roma have reinforced gender codes. In some instances, Roma mothers police their daughters’ behavior in order to protect their innocence and virginity. This was often why girls were pulled out of school when they reached menstruation age and expected to help with the household chores and child rearing. Early marriage was also a way to protect a girl’s virginity and prevent her from sexual exploitation. These traditional practices of early marriage and reinforced gender roles are still being practiced
and even protected in some Eastern European Roma communities (Bošnajak & Acton, 2013).

Kyuchukov (2011) explains that there is a clear trend in the change of attitude of Roma parents in regard to their Roma daughters’ education and courting practices. Some Roma are trying to find the balance between traditional Romani culture and contemporary society. According to the Youth Department, Council of Europe (2016), positive measures and awareness raising have helped some Roma communities realize that early marriage prevents girls from their right to an education and their future employment opportunities will be undermined. Though Roma girls continue to take on the domestic and familial roles, there are more Roma girls and women staying in school and/or getting employment training.

Kyuchukov (2011), conducted a survey of Roma parents and children to understand the attitudes of traditional values and educational aspirations of Roma parents and children. The aim of the study was to determine values of Roma with regard to marriage traditions and education among young Roma girls in Bulgaria. The surveys indicated that arranged marriages do not exist in today’s Bulgarian Roma population as they did in the past. There was a clear trend in attitudes towards Roma girls’ education where 100% of Vlax, Kalaydjii, and Tsutsuman Roma parents said they would allow their daughters to attend school and 30% of Xoraxane and Drandar Roma said they would allow their daughters to attend school. Roma girls find themselves creating lives combining elements of contemporary society and traditional values. With education becoming a valuable asset, Roma girls are setting goals for themselves as they search for their place in society.

Marcus (2015), conducted surveys and interviews of Roma girls to understand their views on educational experiences in Scottish schools. The interview data suggested multiple, complex issues. Some of the women seemed, “doubly oppressed by systemic institutional
inequities and fixed gender expectations from within their culture and families, whilst others express strong views and aspirations about their future roles as women, which may challenge stereotypical perceptions” (p. 72). The participants interviewed seemed caught within long-standing institutional, political, and cultural agendas.

**Roma Identity**

In this research, identity is defined as having an awareness of one’s self and an understanding that one’s identity is fluid and changing. Women and girls are the best knowledge source to make claims about themselves and to express their lives as they experience them. Dialoguing about and reflecting on the influences of socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts can help one understand her identity and some of the external influences on identity.

Identity work often involves communicating experiences associated with differences, diversity, and prejudice and seeks to confront stereotypes (Leavy, 2015). Roma children are often associated with having a distinctive way of life which includes low socioeconomic status and lack of education; however, in reality, there is no “typical Roma child.” Roma children come from many different countries, speak different languages, and hold different cultural traditions from each other. In addition to differences reflected by the majority of society, Roma children also see differences among themselves which can complicate and influence their view of identity (Kurčíková, 2017). Hawthorn (2013) explains that, “The Roma have struggled to locate and project their own identity in a world that has repeatedly ignored their histories and denied them space in which to be present (p.4).”

**Roma Aspirations**

In this research, aspirations are defined as a hope or desire of achieving something. This is not to be confused with identity. Whereas identity is the awareness of one’s self in that
moment and time, aspirations involve looking to one’s future-self and goals. Empowering marginalized groups to express themselves and by valuing their experiences and nurturing their beliefs can result in taking control over one’s future and having confidence to overcome obstacles in order to achieve goals (Catterall & Peppler, 2007).

Though I did not find any scholarly work using mixed media collage with Roma girls, there were articles that discussed other methods of facilitating Roma girls’ aspirations. Aubert (2015), conducted a single case study of a female Roma student using Dialogic Literary Gatherings. Dialogic Literacy Gatherings were conducted much like a book study and when implemented in this study resulted in a cessation of bullying by non-Roma peers. The Roma student found that Dialogic Literacy Gatherings became a space where she could relate her love of reading with her peers. The desire to continue strengthening her education and future aspirations to become a doctor were expressed.

Non-profit organizations like the Roma Support Group, have experienced success in their Roma Aspirations Project which supports Roma refugee and migrant children through a combination of one-to-one education advocacy, outreach work, and after school activities. Through this program, Roma children had the opportunity to participate in activities such as karate, art, homework club, sports, music, writing, and museum trips. They were also able to tackle issues of bullying, disabilities, and welfare provisions where schooling was concerned. As a result of the project’s activities, the Roma Support Group’s 2018 Annual Report showed that 59% of Roma children reported enhanced self-confidence in relation to their chosen areas of interest such as sports, music, and arts and 52% felt more satisfaction with their schooling and life aspirations.
Roma Voice

In this research, voice is defined as expressing one’s own ideas in their own words. Doing this can challenge others to see and understand the world through Roma eyes. Aubert (2015), points out a critical issue in Romani studies. Historically, the Romani people have been studied without having their own voices considered in the interpretation of their cultural practices and social behaviors which has strengthened negative stereotyping. Negative stereotypes are also partly reinforced because researchers have not included the Romani in the research process. The Roma community continues to be misunderstood and misrepresented due to the unwillingness of non-Roma to see beyond the stereotypical figure of the Gypsy and is exacerbated by the Roma’s mistrust of outsiders (Baker, 2008). Unfortunately, museums, not just researchers, are guilty of reinforcing incorrect representations of the Roma people. Hasdeu (2008), found in the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, that the museum used one figure of a Romanian peasant to represent all Roma as “authentic.” There was no representation or indication of recognizing the many different ethnic groups of the Roma. A display of “artifacts” consisting of clothing, cushions, tools and the like were presented with no explanation of the layout, no discussion of the ambiguity of the term Gypsy, of the diverse communities, their relationship with the non-Roma, or their deportation during the Holocaust. The museum attempted to represent and celebrate the Roma people, but instead reproduced dominant understandings and stereotypes. As Hasdeu (2008) explains, “This creates an “Us” and “Them” rather than a unifying process overcoming logical, geographical, and historical boundaries” (p. 350).

According to Casey (2014), for well over 100 years, the popular image of the Roma has been seen as “exotic outsiders” and are still seen by the settled community as living on the
fringes of society and largely untouched my modernity. In addition to research and museums, the media continues to fuel these stereotypes and problematizes the Roma way of life by portraying them as refusing to conform with societal norms. Media images focus on topics such as site evictions, alleged costs associated with site evictions, and anti-social behavior. Television shows like *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* present an inaccurate, unrepresentative, and highly artificial portrayal of their lives (Casey, 2014). The continued construction of the Roma image as “outsiders” has propagated their persecution and discrimination over the centuries.

In the art community today, Romani artists are using the international art world as a structure to take control of their own identity construction and representation. Roma artists are attending events like the Venice Biennale, an international art exhibition, to voice their experiences and identity as Roma. The message these artists are trying to convey is that the world should reject the historical myths of the “Gypsy” and identify the Roma as civilized, successful people who are worthy of acknowledgment (Hawthorn, 2013).

Children often lack engagement in dialogue as agents of change in their own families and communities. This is usually due to the perception that issues of importance or topics that are political are “adult only” topics. Expression through art provides a representation of the inner world of a person that we would not normally see through other methods (Trott, 2019). Art is a tool that Roma children can use as a way to express their individuality, develop self-realization and imagination, and express their thoughts and feelings on topics important to them (Kurciková, 2017). Engaging young people in creative processes can act as a catalyst to empower them in raising awareness and advocating for change. It can also shift power relations and give children ownership of voice and more control over decisions (Trott, 2019).
Gaps the Literature

The fact that the Roma people have struggled for centuries to be seen and heard authentically could be a contributing factor in the lack of arts-based research with Roma children and girls in particular. Arts-based research with Roma children (Pusca, 2015; Greenwood, 2012; Kurciková, 2017; Allen-Trottier, 2013; Söderlund & Warnelid, 2008; Marcu, 2016; Joncheere, 2015; Kazubowski-Houston, 2011) often highlight issues of poverty, education, morality, and politics. However, the literature did reveal that Roma youth:

- Have difficulty finding ways to share interests with non-Roma peers.
- They struggle with finding where they belong in the non-Roma aspects of their communities.
- Some are proud and express “Roma Pride” while others go out of their way to hide their heritage in order to “make life easier.”
- They are searching for where they belong in society as old traditions are now being adapted to fit today’s economic, health, and social needs.
- Fixed gender expectations and institutional inequities are barriers for their success.
- Power structures interfere with them taking agency.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided literature about the method of participatory arts-based research, the role of arts and identity, and mixed media collage. This chapter also discusses the history of the Roma people, the lack of Roma voice in research, and issues Roma youth experience. Other topics included the Roma’s involvement with art and perceptions of identity, aspirations, and voice were examined. Chapter 3 will discuss descriptions and explanations of the theoretical and practical frameworks for this study including feminist standpoint theory, Freire’s empowerment
education approach, and participatory arts-based research approach. Chapter 3 will also examine the qualitative research design, data collection methods, data analysis, and the role of the researcher. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the ethical considerations of the study.
CHAPTER 3:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes a description of the research design and theoretical and practical frameworks that will be utilized. An overview of the study includes a location of the researcher and rationale regarding the appropriateness of the chosen design. Population and context will be discussed as well as data collection methods and the data analysis process. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of trustworthiness and quality, ethical considerations, and limitations.

Location of Self

I come from a family of artists. My parents, my brother, aunts, uncles, and cousins use the arts as a way to communicate, make meaning, and express ideas. Most of my family members are involved in music and the performing arts, with a few of us using other mediums such as painting, sculpture, writing, and digital art. I have dabbled in a mélange of mediums, perhaps because I am one of the youngest and have been exposed by my family to many different genres of art. My self-expression has taken shape through multiple forms and various mediums. As a child I orchestrated plays with my neighborhood friends, performed in school productions, and played the violin. In my teen years I became involved in musical theater, in addition to singing, poetry, and commercial and film work. As I have gotten older, I find I now enjoy many different “crafting” projects such as assemblage, montage, and mixed media collage. No matter the medium, all of my family members agree that the arts are a way to express ourselves and who we are in a way that no other genre can. The arts allow people to see me and understand me from a different lens. My art products also serve as sources of knowledge and
expression that I sometimes cannot verbally articulate. I believe that blending the arts with social science research using mixed media collage will provide the opportunity to develop unparalleled knowledge and a deeper understanding into the experiences of Roma girls.

My interest in conducting research with Roma girls followed my initial interest in the issues of lack of quality education for girls around the world. After reading *Inexcusable Absence* (Lewis & Lockheed, 2006) and learning that over 60 million girls in the world are not receiving an education, I felt compelled to travel to some of the places I read about. I journeyed to China and India to experience and absorb what I could of the culture there. When I returned home from my journey, my research agenda became clear. I wanted to understand how marginalized populations of girls express their identity, aspirations, and voice, and to dispel myths and stereotypes that limit them. Unfortunately, the north-west area of India I wanted to study was deemed unsafe by the State Department as there had been recent attacks on western women there. As I continued to research the literature, I learned that the Roma population migrated from the exact region in India in which I was interested and they are one of the most discriminated against ethnic minorities in the world. This is how Roma girls became the focus of my study.

As an English Language Learner (ELL) resource teacher in the public-school system, I discovered that art was an effective way to communicate with my refugee students who did not speak English, were in culture shock, had difficulty expressing themselves, and were in the “silent phase” of language acquisition. The more I explored visual arts-based research, the more certain I became that this would be an ideal method for my research with Roma girls. Using the arts-based method of mixed media collage allowed for a participatory means of knowledge making and sharing. I believed that blending the arts with social science research would provide the possibility to develop knowledge and deeper insight into the experiences of Roma girls.
I did have some trepidation about conducting research in a foreign country with a population that I had never encountered. From research, I understood that the Roma were a private group of people and that studying with them may prove to be difficult (Chohaney, 2014; Hancock, 2002; Pantea, 2014). I also acknowledged that my reality was very different from my study participants. My status as a doctoral student and researcher undoubtedly granted me certain privileges and power that I tried to equalize and share with the participants in my study. By working with my participants and taking time to build relationships with them, they were able to focus on expressing themselves through the art instead of being pre-occupied and silenced with thoughts about what I expected from them, judgement of their art collages, or what purpose the art served for them. For this reason, I kept a researcher journal specifically for self-reflection in order to maintain awareness of self and my influence on the research process. I present my reflections of the research process in the form of collages to illustrate and contextualize my experiences of the research and analysis process, which is shared in Chapter 5.

**Research Questions**

My interest in this study was to understand and represent Roma girls’ expressions of identity, aspirations, and voice through their art and our dialogue about their art.

- How does the process of art-making function as a catalyst for Roma girls in making meaning of their identity?
- How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their aspirations?
- How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their voices?

I relied on a comprehensive review of the literature to identify research questions that others had not yet addressed. I also drew from knowledge acquired from discussions with a non-profit organization regarding the Roma’s missing voices in the community.
**Theoretical and Practical Frameworks**

This study is informed by feminist standpoint theories, Freire’s approach to empowerment education, and a participatory approach to arts-based research. These theoretical and practical underpinnings inform the use of this qualitative research.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1. Theoretical and Practical Framework**

**Feminist Standpoint Theory**

Feminist standpoint theory is a critical theory about relations between the production of knowledge and practices of power. Standpoint theory’s innovations bring into focus fresh views on some of the most difficult and anxiety-producing dilemmas of our era (Harding, 2004). Collins (1989) and Sandoval (2004), describe standpoint theory as a way of empowering oppressed groups, valuing their experiences, and pointing toward a way to develop an “oppositional consciousness.” Standpoint theories have roots in Marxian thought and are influenced by the ideas of Marx and Engels which held that the poor can be society’s “ideal knowers” (McGlish & Bacon, 2003). The belief is that the socially oppressed class can access
knowledge that is not accessible to the socially privileged, especially knowledge of social relations. Hartsock (1983), coined the term feminist standpoint in 1983 while developing her work from a feminist Marxist stance. According to Hundleby (1997), Hartsock developed an argument that the position of women as an oppressed group placed them in a position of epistemic advantage.

Feminist standpoint theory is not without controversy. It has historically been presented as a philosophy of both natural and social sciences, an epistemology, a methodology, and a political strategy. These are fields and projects that are typically supposed to be kept separate. Additionally, it asserted that feminist concerns were not only social and political issues, but instead must be focused on all aspects of natural and social orders, including standards for what counts as knowledge, objectivity, rationality, and good scientific method. Feminist issues were not to be seen as only women’s issues, but as useful in informing theoretical, methodological, and political thought in general (Harding, 2004). Conventionalists remain arrogant and are threatened by the thought that women, as culturally diverse groups, could produce knowledge that answered their questions about nature and social relations or that the social location of women or other oppressed groups could be the source of illuminating knowledge claims about themselves and the rest of nature and social relations (Harding, 2004).

“A feminist standpoint is a way of understanding the world, a point of view of social reality, that begins with, and is directly from, women’s experiences” (Brooks, 2007, p.60). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007), feminist thought is a distinctive way of thinking that challenges us to see and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of oppressed girls and women and to apply the vision and knowledge of oppressed girls and women to social activism and social change. Feminist standpoint theory has continued to grow and develop over
the years; however, the main work is still to continue to address the problem of human
oppression, especially as manifested in the ideas, actions, and lives of women historically
excluded from consideration by systematic and institutional power structures (Tong & Botts,
2018). The experiences of oppressed groups can be an important source of critical thought
(Harding, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory requires us to place girls and women at the center of
the research process. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007), women sharing their
experiences provide the starting point from which to build knowledge. Feminist scholars
emphasize the need to begin with women’s lives, as they themselves experience them, in order to
achieve an accurate and authentic understanding of what life is like for girls and women today.

**Freire’s Empowerment Education Approach**

A major theoretical and practical underpinning of this study stems from Paulo Freire’s
empowerment education for critical consciousness, also referred to as problem-posing education
(Capous-Desyllas, 2010). Paulo Freire was born in Brazil and grew up in a climate of severe
economic depression. Freire chose a career in education over law and went on to earn his
doctoral degree in 1959. As the director of the Cultural Extension Service of the Universidad de
Recife he designed an adult literacy program to help educate the illiterate workers. Freire
believed education should be accessible to all people, not just the privileged (Keller, 2014).
Freire’s plans were halted when in 1964 there was a political coupe and he was exiled from
Brazil. He eventually returned to Brazil as the secretary of education and wrote several books on
social theory, philosophy, and pedagogical methods. His claims about education are rooted in his
Christian beliefs and Marxism. Capous-Desyllas (2010), explained that Freire was concerned
with social transformation and awakening a critical consciousness where people perceived the
social, political, and economic contradictions in their life and take action against the oppressive
elements. Freire argued that the goal of education is to begin to name the world, to recognize that we are all “subjects” of our own lives and narratives, not “objects” in the stories of others (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006).

Empowerment education theory surfaced in the 1960s as a result of group reflections of the Brazilian Institute of Higher Studies (Gibson, 1999). Empowerment education theory, through Freire’s works, involved individuals working together in group efforts to identify their problems, critically assess the social and historical roots of the problem, visualize a healthier society, and develop strategies to overcome barriers in achieving goals and aspirations (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988). The goal is to reach critical consciousness of oppressive social and political structures through a process which Freire call “conscientization.” According to Adams and Goldbard (2005):

Conscientization involves breaking through prevailing mythologies to reach new levels of awareness – in particular, awareness of oppression and being an “object” of others. This process involves identifying contradictions in experience through dialogue and becoming part of the process of changing the world. (p. 115)

Freire’s scholarship led him to believe that every individual can develop a voice that champions human rights and affects change through discourse (Ziergiebel, 2016). The concept of dialogue refers to the interaction that takes place between all learners. Teachers and students are seen as equals in a process of mutual communication, where “they become jointly responsible for a process in which we all grow” (Freire, 1970, p. 61). Freire’s dialogic approach emphasizes everyone equally participating as equal learners who co-create knowledge and think critically by framing problems in a way that participants reveal the causes of their status and location in society. According to Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988), critical reflection then begins to focus
on the influences of the socioeconomic, political, cultural, and historical context of their personal lives. This process of thinking and reflecting moves towards praxis. Praxis involves actions that people take to become empowered in their lives and within their communities. Freire (1970), sees critical reflection as the key to transformation in the context of problem-posing and dialogue with others.

The underpinnings of Freire’s approach to education empowerment and feminist standpoint theory have similarities in that they both start from problems identified by individuals and their community. Both use active listening and learning methods through the process of dialogue and engage individuals to take action towards liberation (Capous-Desyllas, 2010). Also similar to standpoint theories, Freire insists on situating educational activity in the lived experiences of the participants (Taylor, 1993). Both feminist standpoint theory and Freire’s approach recognize the power of the oppressed and value their voices. “In the culture of silence, the masses are mute, that is, they are prohibited from creatively taking part in the transformation of their society and therefore prohibited from being” (Freire, 1985, p.50).

Freire’s approach does differ from feminist standpoint theory in that he believes the oppressed are preoccupied with survival which causes them to lack the information needed in order to understand how power structures work. In contrast, Feminist Standpoint Theory gives automatic privilege to the knowledge of those who are marginalized based on their position of holding double-consciousness in order to live around those more powerful (Capous-Desyllas, 2010). Whereas Freire believed the oppressed shared their oppressor’s viewpoint and blamed themselves for their powerlessness, Feminist Standpoint Theory points to the concept of double-consciousness. Double-consciousness is an idea coined by W.E.B. DuBois (1903) that referred to the psychological challenge of “always looking at one’s self through the eyes” of a racist society.
and “measuring oneself by the means of a nation that looked back in contempt.” In this study, I could not assume whether the participants would identify with Freire and share their oppressors’ viewpoint or Feminist Standpoint Theory where they are well aware of their circumstances and double-consciousness.

**Participatory Arts-Based Research Framework**

The benefits of arts-based research discussed in this section are based on research with marginalized populations of youth, however none of these studies include young Roma children. This was another critical reason to conduct this dissertation. Though the studies with youth and arts-based research were not inclusive of Roma children, they were focused on other marginalized populations of children. I am using this data as a guide in my own research. Arts-based research is a term coined by Elliot Eisner in the early 1990s and has since developed into a major methodological genre of research. Creative arts were used in therapy and neuroscience research decades before Eisner coined the term, but developments in qualitative research paved the way for arts-based research. Arts in general are used as a way to make meaning, construct narratives, and to locate oneself (Hand, 2006). Participatory arts-based research also creates and communicates meaning (Chilton & Leavy, 2014).

The visual arts can provide the kinds of opportunities needed to express self, articulate frustration with a system that makes success difficult, and to conceive of alternatives in a society that generally finds adolescents’ needs irrelevant and bothersome (Holloway & LeCompte, 2001). As explained by Holloway and LeCompte (2001), “Participation in the arts has been shown to increase academic achievement, creativity, fluency, and originality in thinking and feelings of self-worth” (p. 388). Participation in the arts gives children the opportunity to express
themselves and “try on” other identities and to develop a sense of voice and agency (Freire, 1970). Eisner (2005) explains:

The arts teach children to make judgements in the absence of rules…[that] problems can have more than one solution… [and that] the goal one starts with can be changed midway through the process. The forms of thinking the arts develop and refine are precisely the forms of thinking that our ever-changing world, riddled, as it is with ambiguities and uncertainties, requires in order to cope. (p. B7)

In this study, visual arts-based activities were created to scaffold the expression of identity. There are many theories and positions on what identity is and how we construct it. The function that identities serve, how they are constructed, and the context in which they exist, all determine the meaning of identity for that particular research. For the purpose of my research, I will define identity as a way to understand and make meaning of ourselves, our world, and where one is situated. Franco, Ward, and Unrath (2015), consider identity a process of meaning making. They embrace the paradigm of constructivism in art as a way for teachers and students to conceptualize and make meaning of themselves. Art is an investigative method where one can construct a visual representation and make meaning from it. Identity is also fluid and changing. hooks (1995) asserts:

Sadly, at a time when so much sophisticated cultural criticism by hip intellectuals from diverse locations extols a vision of cultural hybridity, border crossing, subjectivity constructed out of plurality, the vast majority of folks in this society still believe in a notion of identity that is rooted in a sense of essential traits and characteristics that are fixed and static. (p. 10)
In a society where, marginalized girls often find their living and learning conditions to be unbearable, the arts provide an authentic outlet for a voice against the negative influences in their cultural, social, and economic surroundings. The arts provide an outlet for students to fight back against negative influences on their cultural, social, and economic conditions as well as providing opportunities for children to express self and articulate frustration with a system that makes success difficult (Holloway & LeCompte, 2001). Barone and Eisner (2012) explain:

Art is not an ornament on a form of productive work; it is essential to what it conveys and it critically affects its reception. Arts-based research is, at its deepest level, about artistic and aesthetic approaches to raising and addressing social issues. (p. 57)

Involving children in the research process and focusing on their perspectives versus the adult perspective helps us understand a child’s subjective experience and how children view their world. The growing concern for children’s rights on an international scale has also influenced the inclusion of children’s voices in research (Finnerty, 2019). Creative activity is a basic human right and a vehicle for “talking back” in response to threats to social justice (hooks, 1990). hooks (1990) goes on to explain that the act of “talking back” through art enables us to be empowered and makes new life and new growth possible and Delgado says, “Stories can shatter complacency and challenge the status quo” (2000, p.61).

Educating children in the visual arts teaches them to envision what they cannot observe directly, to stretch themselves, to explore possibilities, and to take risks. A child willing to take risks in self-expression is open to a future where not everything that could be important is known to them (Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan, 2007). The process of making art not only helps children explore their identity, it also facilitates their capacity to become someone and to achieve what they desire for their future. Making art can enable girls to engage in symbolic
action that can disrupt roles they had taken for granted as their place in life. The practice of making art can shift young women’s ideas about themselves and their futures (Holloway & LeCompte, 2001). Catterall and Peppler (2007), add that nurturing the participant’s self-beliefs and self-confidence results in control over one’s future and confidence about overcoming obstacles and achieving goals. Catterall and Peppler (2007), also claim that having control leads to setting and reaching personal goals.

Amalgamation of Frameworks

The theoretical and practical framework supports aspects of identity, aspirations, and voice as displayed in the table on page 47. Feminist standpoint theory, Freire’s empowerment education approach, and the participatory arts-based research approach complement each other in numerous ways:

- Promote the empowerment of the oppressed.
- Value the experiences of oppressed people.
- Support identity construction.
- Help determine where one is situated in relation to societal power structures.
- Support social activism and social change.
- Disrupt power structures.
- Promote the oppressed asserting their voices.
- Challenge stereotypes.
- Encourage critical dialogue as a catalyst for change.
- Focus on creating a better, more just society.
- Support goals and aspirations becoming a reality.
Table 1

*How the Framework Supports the Research*

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<td>Women are source of knowledge claims about themselves. Expressing their lives as they experience them will result in better awareness of themselves, their world, and where they are situated in it.</td>
<td>Dialoguing about and critically reflecting on the influences of socioeconomic, political, and cultural contexts of their personal lives can help the Roma understand their identity and some of the external influences on identity.</td>
<td>Participation in the arts gives children the opportunity to express themselves and “try on” other identities and to develop a sense of voice and agency (Freire, 1970).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voice: People’s own ideas in their own words.</td>
<td>By expressing their own ideas in their own words, the Roma will challenge others to see and understand the world through the eyes of oppressed girls and apply this vision and knowledge to prompt social change.</td>
<td>Through dialogue and critical reflection, the participants can develop a voice that champions human rights and affects change.</td>
<td>Creative activity is a basic human right and a vehicle for “talking back” in response to threats to social justice (hooks, 1990).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspirations: A hope or desire of achieving something.</td>
<td>By empowering oppressed groups and valuing their experiences, Roma will be more likely to realize their goals and dreams for the future.</td>
<td>Expression is a form of praxis that emboldens people, increases confidence, and helps promote goal setting and achievement.</td>
<td>Nurturing the participant’s self-beliefs and self-confidence results in control over one’s future and confidence about overcoming obstacles and achieving goals (Catterall &amp; Peppler, 2007).</td>
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**Mixed Media Collage Method**

This inductive, qualitative study uses the participatory visual arts-based research of mixed media collage to explore and represent the way Romani girls express their identity, aspirations, voice, and improve understanding of their experiences to the outsider with the intention of dispelling myths and misperceptions. This form of qualitative inquiry emphasized an art informed constructivist paradigm. As a constructivist, I intended to gain an understanding of my participants and how they made sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition, it emphasized knowledge construction through lived experiences and through interactions with other members of society. This made it important as a researcher to participate
in the research process with the participants to ensure knowledge production was reflective of their reality (Lincoln & Guba, 2011). Mixed media collage was the catalyst for this.

Figure 2. Connecting the Paradigm and Theoretical Frames

The word “collage” originates from the French *coller*, which means “to glue”. Collage was used over 1,000 years ago when Japanese artists used it to enhance their poetry written in calligraphy. It was used again in the 1800’s in Mary Delaney’s folk-art using paper mosaics (Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). Many artists and scholars believe that its use by French artists Braque and Picasso around 1910 brought about a turning point in modernist art in the West (Greenberg, 1961). Traditional collage is usually a two-dimensional piece created with magazine images, photographs, and paper clippings; however, it may include areas that rise above the surface. Mixed media collage refers to the use of several artistic techniques used consecutively on one surface. For example, it can include the addition of fabric, paint, ephemera, photographs,
and found or collected objects in addition to the magazine and paper clippings (Chilton & Scotti, 2014).

The use of collage in arts-based research began in the 2000s when Butler-Kisber (2008), Davis and Butler-Kisber (1999), and Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010), started writing about collage as inquiry in the discipline of art education. In their seminal article, Davis and Butler-Kisber (1999) acknowledged collage as an arts-based research methodology:

Images, objects, and texts which are designed and presented artistically are made to evoke aesthetic experiences in the viewer or reader – experiences initially characterized by a heightened emotional response and an awareness of personal values. (p.5)

Davis and Butler-Kisber (1999), also explained how collage served as an artistic technique that, as a form of arts-based research, could be a method of inquiry, a tool for researcher and/or participant reflexivity, a means of conceptualizing ideas, an elicitation activity, and could also be used in data analysis and representation (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). Mixed media collage is an approach particularly useful for data collection of perspectives that have been traditionally marginalized. Vaughan (2005), says that collage is useful for “feminist, postmodern, postcolonial inquiry” (p.27), because it is an arts-based practice that allows for discovery of multiple realities and identities. It also is suited for data generation for those who are not verbally articulate (e.g. children, second language learners, and the elderly). Gerstenblatt (2013), added that collage can provide a way to share research findings with participants that can result in feelings of accomplishment and communal pride. Collage can be an avenue to interrupt social oppression and increase participants’ voices and participation in research efforts (Leavy, 2015).

Mixed media collage is built on the theoretical foundations and approaches of Freire’s (1970) empowerment education approach and Feminist standpoint theory. Though these theories
and approaches encompass a defined set of underlying values, they share several commonalities that inform mixed media collage. They recognize there is a lack of participatory research with undervalued populations, which perpetuates the issues of power differentials. Each agrees that political power structures do not value the knowledge and lived experiences of oppressed populations. They promote knowledge creation and representation of groups that are silenced in order to shift control from those in power to those without. The mixed media collage method helps to balance power differences between participants and the researcher. Finally, they all identify the visual image as a means of expression that can initiate critical dialogue.

**Mixed Media Collage Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to gain a richer understanding of Roma girls’ expressions of identity, aspirations, and voice through the artistic method of mixed media collage. Art, as a form of experience, has the potential for helping us to understand social issues imaginatively and emotionally (Eisner, 2008). It was essential to choose a methodology that would provide an opportunity for Roma girls in London to express and represent themselves in a creative and meaningful way in order to reach a wide audience with the potential for empowerment and societal change. To support this purpose, I used mixed media collage because it could provide the possibility to reflect the richness and complexity of the data and produce new levels of engagement that are both cognitive and emotional. The terms participant(s), girl(s), artist(s), and artist participant(s) are used interchangeably to encompass the complexity and range of experiences of each individual who took part in this study.

**Context**

It took over one year to gain access to research participants for the present study. In a study like this one, where the population is challenging to locate, a degree of flexibility was
necessary. I reached out to seven non-profit groups that support the Roma community in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales and received no response after several attempts. I then located and contacted a prominent Roma professor in England. The professor in England immediately responded to me and sent out emails on my behalf to several Roma non-profit organizations. I received responses from two organizations in Wales and one in England. I chose to work with one of the larger, well established programs in London, England, called the Roma Support Group. I established a relationship with the organization and had a contact person I communicated with regularly. My contact worked with me to complete the necessary paperwork for volunteering and research as well as put me in touch with two employees who would become my community liaisons. They helped to recruit participants and with the logistics of my study.

The Roma Support Group is a non-religious, Roma-led charity organization. This organization’s aims and values include, “empowering Roma people, their families, and communities to fulfill their potential and challenge discrimination and inequalities in British society” (Roma Support Group, 2018, p. 2). In its 20 years of operation, the Roma Support Group has assisted thousands of Eastern European Roma through a wide range of advocacy and cultural programs. Roma and non-Roma volunteers work together to promote an understanding of Roma culture. The Roma Support Group offers advice and advocacy regarding issues of employment, housing, debt, welfare, access to health care, and access to education. They also organize programs for Roma youth that have included orchestra, theater, karate, and visual arts workshops and are involved in advocacy and campaign programs to enhance empowerment, civic participation, and social inclusion of Roma refugees and migrants in London (Smolinska-Poffley, 2017). According to the Roma Support Group’s 2018 annual report, they are the first organization in the U.K. to:
Channel the community’s voice through Roma-led campaigns to create the conditions for integration of Roma migrants and shape and inform the policy conversation to ensure that the longer-term needs and rights of the Roma in the U.K. are considered and respected.

(p. 2)

This organization receives no government assistance and relies heavily on private donations, sponsors, partnerships, and volunteerism in order to directly meet the needs of over 3,000 Roma community members across the U.K.

The first three weeks of my study included the opportunity to volunteer with the Roma Support Group. Working with the organization to help with Roma outreach initiatives allowed me to become more involved with the Roma population before my research began. I was able to assist with the Roma Advocacy Project, which included attending and helping to set-up forums for the Roma community where barriers in education, communication with social workers and police officers, and the Brexit process were discussed. By participating in these forums, I was introduced to Roma community members and participated in discussions. I learned about the barriers they experience in accessing social services, cultural differences, traditions and taboos, and heard the Roma people speak about their own experiences with these issues. I tried to remain conscious and self-aware of my etic position when interacting with the Roma community. Keeping an open mind helped me challenge assumptions I may have had about the Roma people and their culture. Learning the historical and sociocultural reasons for Roma traditions and belief systems enabled me to become more aware of my own ideas of what identity, aspirations, and voice “should” look like and to realize these topics may look different to others.
Finding the Artists

A sampling technique, snowballing, was used to recruit the artists (Patton, 2015). My liaisons at the organization explained that flyers and social media have not worked well in the past to recruit participants for projects with the Roma and suggested that we recruit through home visits, telephone, and word of mouth. We went on three home visits to meet with Roma families and my two liaisons made approximately five phone calls each to tell families about the project and invited them to an informational meeting. They also asked the families they spoke with to spread the word and invite others to attend the informational meeting. This strategy worked well because both of my liaisons were Roma and trusted by the Roma community. To be eligible to participate in the study, participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) ages 9 – 16; (b) female; (c) identify as Roma; (d) enjoy creating art. I chose the 9 – 16 age range because I wanted to focus on school age girls who were old enough to participate in the art creation, and were able to answer questions, and have a discussion that may be more in depth than a primary school age child could produce. Also, this is the age range where it is documented that Roma girls begin having difficulty in school, experience bullying, discrimination, and cultural traditions are instituted (Brooks, 2012; Casey, 2014; Loveland & Popescu, 2016; Marcus, 2019; Pohjolainen, 2014; Peleg, 2018; Smith, 2003).

Over the course of two weeks, one of the liaisons and I conducted three home visits. The home visits were casual meetings set up ahead of time by the Roma Support Group. We visited with the parents and the girls, and talked about the research project. I brought the mixed media collage I had created as a sample and brought collage art books with mixed media collage examples for them to examine. I also provided copies of the consent and assent forms and answered questions. We talked to the families about what days and times worked best for them.
Meanwhile, my other liaison made several phone calls and invited families to come to the Roma Support Group offices to meet me and talk more about the research. We decided to meet at the organization’s offices because all of the families have been to that location, know the staff, and can easily take public transportation to get there. At the informational meeting, with the help of my two liaisons, I described the purpose of the study and discussed the risks and safeguards. The artists and parents/guardians were also provided with informed consent and assent forms (Appendix B & C) which also included a description of the study. This allowed an opportunity for the artists and parents/guardians to ask questions about potential privacy issues, the intention of the study, and how the data would be used beyond the context of the project. All of the girls spoke English fluently and all families had at least one adult that could speak English; however, my liaisons were able to explain the project and consent/assent forms in more depth by translating in Romanes, Polish, and Romanian. Artists and parents/guardians were provided with the visual arts workshop dates, times, and location. I also took this time to share my collage sample and the collage art books for the girls and their families to peruse.

Initially, I anticipated four art workshop sessions lasting two hours each. The first session would focus on orientating the artists to the project and mixed media collage and three more art sessions would follow. In reality, due to scheduling and the school year starting during my research, we held the group sessions, however I had to be flexible for rescheduling and also had to hold some one-on-one sessions to complete the project. I was expecting to work with a group of ten participants or less. Initially, there were 10 girls interested in the project. Two girls were over the age of 18 and no longer in school, two girls were ages six and seven, one eligible participant was admitted to the hospital with health issues, and two eligible participants dropped after the first workshop, which left me with three eligible participant artists. The three
participants were ages 9 and 10, which worked to my advantage. This allowed the conversation to be focused at their age range. It also made planning icebreakers easier and enabled the girls to get to know each other. Had there been a mix of older girls in the group, I would have had to be careful to ensure age appropriate conversations were held and it may have taken longer to build trust. My focus would have been split between the age groups and would have taken time and quality conversation away from the group as a whole.

Data Collection Methods

During this study, data collection methods included physical artifacts, artist reflections, semi-structured interviews, found poetry, and a research journal.

Physical Artifacts

Artifacts consist of the mixed media collages the participants created. The collages were used in three different ways as described by Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010): as a reflective process, a form of elicitation, and a piece of data to analyze for themes. Artists focused on questions or topics that I provided (Appendix G) in each session and selected their collage materials to metaphorically reflect their thinking. Unlike the linear process of writing, the collage process starts with feelings about something and moves to the ideas they evoke. The collages were used as an elicitation tool for the semi-structured interviews as well as a data analysis tool to establish themes that may emerge.

Construction of collages took place in each of the four art workshop sessions located in a conference room at the Roma Support Group offices in London. Conducting the sessions at the Roma Support Group provided a safe space for the artists to work. The participants were able to work in an environment occupied by Roma people that are active advocates for their rights. There was one session conducted at a participant’s home due to scheduling difficulties. My
liaisons were present at each session to assist with the project. Though I have traveled regularly to the U.K. for 25 years and understand British colloquialisms, the Roma people are known to use their own vernacular. Coming from America, I may have inadvertently used phrases and idioms unfamiliar to my participants. My liaisons were crucial in helping translate those meanings for me and my participants when necessary. During the creation process and at the conclusion of the collage construction, I photographed the collages and uploaded the images onto my password protected computer in my university affiliated box account, which is also password protected. Artists kept their original works of art.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

During the first art workshop, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the participants (Appendix H). This interview focused on questions regarding their personal experiences with art, how they feel about creating art, and general demographics. I also conducted a second round of interviews after the collages were completed in order to discuss the art pieces in their entirety. This interview focused on the content of the mixed media collage they created. The finished collage as well as photographs I took during the collage making process were used to help elicit responses in interview sessions. Interviews were not timed, so participants could feel free to share their narratives. Ongoing discussion throughout the workshops also promoted better levels of comfort. Though I had a list of possible questions (Appendix H), I did not strictly adhere to asking them verbatim.

I used a semi-structured format described by Thomas (2016). Semi-structured interviews include topics one would like to discuss versus specific questions. The topics do not have to be discussed in any particular order or be formal in any way. Having a list was a way to keep myself focused and to remind me of topics I wanted to discuss. It was also beneficial to have some
potential questions handy for follow-up or probing when I needed my interviewee to say more. I also chose semi-structured interviews because I did not want to lead the direction of the conversation with any participant. I preferred to have a topic set and wanted the participant to have the freedom to answer based on their own volition. This was especially important because I wanted the participants to tell me about their art pieces in their own words without my questions leading them in a specific direction.

All interviews were scheduled with convenience of the participants in mind. Initial interviews were held during the first workshop, which was located at the Roma Support Group offices. During interviews, my liaisons were in the room next to the interview location at the Roma Support Group offices and doors were left open at all times. All interviews were audio recorded on my password protected computer and stored in my university affiliated box account, which is also password protected.

**Artist Reflections**

At the final art workshop, participants were given unlimited time to write a reflection about their collage. Writing prompts were provided (Appendix I) to help the participants write about their collage. Reflecting on the collage and telling the story behind it through the written word in addition to the semi-structured interview, allowed the participant multiple ways to communicate their work and its meaning.

I scanned the written reflections using the CamScanner application as well as photographing them. Scans and photographs of written reflections were stored in my password protected computer and uploaded to my university affiliated box account, which is also password protected. Artists kept their original written reflection to accompany their art.
Found Poetry

Researchers use poetic representations in order to create new knowledge. This method enables research information to become more than qualitative data to be analyzed. Instead, it becomes a research experience that can stimulate thinking (Kay, 2016). Poetry is a useful way to communicate emotions, feelings, and experiences obtained from memory, interviews, observational, visual and textual documents, and research responses. Poetic inquiry creates a third voice that belongs to neither the researcher nor the participant. It is a combination of the two (Grbich, 2013). The expressive use of poetry provides an opportunity to present research findings that may otherwise go undetected and can give the researcher the benefit of a new perspective (Brown, 2018). Found poetry is created by choosing words and phrases from an original text, then re-arranging those words to create a poem that represents the meaning of the original text again in a fresh way. Bhattacharya (2008), used found poetry in her research in an effort to avoid representing and voicing participants through an “academic filter.”

I was honored to be able to work with a well-known British, Roma artist who specializes in mixed media collage and installation art and often focuses her work through a political and feminist lens. In an interview by Junghaus (2014), artist Delaine LeBas says she, “finds the work of Roma women artists especially important because they present a double minority position (being Roma and being women)” (p.36). For this research, the artist agreed to analyze the artist participants’ written reflections and collages to create found poetry. I sent her digital copies of the written reflections and collages which were destroyed once she completed the found poetry process. She created one poem for each participant and I also created one poem for each participant. I completed my found poetry before receiving the artists’ found poetry in order to remain uninfluenced by her work. The poems were mainly used in the data analysis process as a
way to ensure that my interpretation from an etic position was not completely off base compared to an insider’s voice. The found poetry was also used in order to present research findings that may otherwise go undetected and assist me in seeing new perspectives. All found poetry is stored in my password protected computer and uploaded to my university affiliated box account, which is also password protected.

**Researcher Journal**

I am acutely aware that I was an “outsider” in this research process. Though I was an outsider, it was impossible to remain “outside of” the subject matter while I conducted my study (Capous-Desyllas, 2010). Reflexivity urges researchers to explore the ways their involvement with a study influences, acts upon, and informs the research (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999). Lincoln (1995) says:

Critical reflexivity is when one enters into “high-quality awareness” of one’s own psychological, philosophical, and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience for the purpose of understanding the personal and psychological state of others. (p.283)

To capture my reflective process throughout this study, I kept a detailed researcher journal of my thoughts, feelings, observations, and experiences with the artists. I expressed and represented these data in the form of my own collages in order to reflect, illustrate, and contextualize my experiences of the research and analysis process. Creating collages allowed me to incorporate my researcher and artist self. I am accustomed to learning and expressing myself visually and often process iconic information before reading text. I also understand and formulate meanings by interacting with and moving around images. This is the reason I chose collage over other art forms as a way to use creative ways of knowing and self-exploration. For ethical purposes, I kept
my researcher journal stored in my password protected computer and uploaded to my university
affiliated box account, which is also password protected.

Data Analysis

Given that I was interested in the experiences of Roma girls and how they expressed
identity, aspirations, and voice through mixed media collage, I implemented techniques often
used in qualitative research approaches to begin the data analysis process. I chose these
techniques to explore how participants used collage to express themselves and make sense of
their world by focusing on the meanings of their artwork, interviews, written reflections, and
found poetry. My analysis was also focused on trying to understand what their world was like
from their point of view. The analysis of the data involved three main parts: (1) initial coding,
also known as open coding, (2) subcoding in order to detail and determine emerging categories,
which led to (3) Saldaña’s (2013) themeing the data in order to establish the main categories that
correlated with the research questions. Throughout the analysis process I consistently worked
with the data to ensure that the categories, themes, interpretations, and conclusions made sense
and reflected the essence of what I was trying to understand. I visualized this process as an
inverted triangle where the masses of unorganized data are at the widest section of the pyramid
and the final narrowed down themes are at the small tip of the triangle, resembling a funnel (See
Figure 9 on page 82).

Stage 1: Immersion in the Data

I personally transcribed the digital audio recordings of the initial interviews and final
interviews for all artist participants. After completing transcriptions, I immersed myself in the
interview transcripts, photos of artwork, written reflections, researcher journal, and found poetry.
I followed Wolcott’s (2009) suggestion and began by categorizing the data into a few broad
categories in order to sort all of the data. I did this by focusing on one artist participant at a time. I chose to manually manipulate actual pieces of data rather than use a digital platform in order to get a physical feel for what I wanted to accomplish. I also wanted to maintain my attention on thinking about the research and not become lost in a data-entering ritual (Wolcott, 2009). On my office floor, I spread out copies of photographs, interview transcriptions, journal entries, written reflections, and found poetry. After I physically laid out all of the data, I began sorting it into groups based on the participants. I created a stack for “Participant A” that included all data pertaining to that participant. I followed the same process for “Participant B” and “Participant C.” There were three participants, which initially made three groupings of data. Once the preliminary data sort was complete, I created file folders for each participant and placed their data inside. Then, I examined each individual participant’s file and conducted an initial read-through of the interview transcriptions, written reflections, researcher journal, and found poetry. In addition, I examined the photos and copies of collages. The first read-through was done in order to ensure all data was placed in the correct file folder. A second read-through was conducted in order to begin focusing on the information and a third read-through was completed in order to look more closely at the data and to begin thinking about the analysis process. These read-throughs were completed without making notes in order to begin focusing solely on the contents of the data. Next, I began my preliminary analysis.

**Stage 2: Preliminary Analysis**

For the first coding cycle, the collages, participant written reflections, and researcher journal in conjunction with semi-structured interviews and found poetry were analyzed using Saldaña’s (2013) initial coding. In this step, I read through all of the data once more before making any notations. Then I systematically read through the data of each individual participant,
and used initial coding. I did this by writing words, phrases, and questions on the left margins of the data as I examined each piece. After one cycle of initial coding, I repeated the process two more times to make additional notations and check for any other information I might want to consider. Once this was completed, I assigned a different color to each participant. For example, “Participant A” was orange, “Participant B” was green, and “Participant C” was yellow. Re-examining the participants’ file folders, I scrutinized all usable data from initial coding in the left margins and highlighted the pertinent notes in the color assigned to that participant. I highlighted all usable data for “Participant A” in orange highlighter, “Participant B” in green highlighter, and “Participant C” in yellow highlighter. Next, I transferred the highlighted data onto color coordinated sticky notes. Each initial code was transferred to its own sticky note. All of “Participant A’s” orange highlighted data was transferred onto orange sticky notes, “Participant B’s” green highlighted data was transferred onto green sticky notes and, “Participant C’s” yellow highlighted data was transferred to yellow sticky notes. All sticky notes were then placed on a 7-foot by 9-foot space on my office wall. This helped me begin to visually process the information and became a “living data wall” in the analysis process.

Figure 3. Example of Stage 2 Initial Data Sort
The color-coded sticky notes provided a way to organize and create a foundation for the initial data. I was then able to begin the process of clustering information based on connections and meanings. In this preliminary analysis, sticky note groupings produced themes that were quite general. As broad themes emerged, I created broad theme labels with blue sticky notes to attach to the data groupings.

Figure 4. Example of Stage 2 Broad Themes Emerging

**Stage 3: Emerging Themes**

In this stage, I looked at the general groupings from Stage 2 of data analysis and continued to mine and sort data and display themes as they began to emerge. I used blue sticky notes to label the general themes that began to emerge. Some of the blue sticky note labels included general themes like: interests, character traits, responsibilities, Roma pride, and deficit language. I analyzed the contents of each general theme one at a time. Then I studied the bigger picture by analyzing all of the general themes as a whole. As I studied the “living data wall,” I began to see, in the subcoding process, general themes break down into multiple groupings with a narrower focus. I also began to see connections between themes. I continued to group and re-group the data on color coded sticky notes into more specific, detailed groupings. As this
happened I would make new, more specific, blue labels for themes. For example, the general theme of “Roma Pride” broke down into sub-categories of music, dance, language, and family. Using this open-ended approach to coding helped me break down the data into parts and closely examine them. I used this method to categorize themes by looking for similarities, differences, and the relationships that existed between them (Gibson & Brown, 2009). This process was constantly fluid and changing and helped narrow the themes that needed more indexing and categorizing (Saldaña, 2013). This stage of data analysis was the most intense.

Figure 5. Example of Stage 3 Subcoding

After using initial coding and subcoding, I was also able to begin comparing the color-coded participant data for similarities and differences between the participants. For example, under the general theme of responsibility, I could easily see that the yellow and green sticky notes were more than double the amount of orange sticky notes. That data indicated “Participant B” and “Participant C” expressed more issues with responsibility than “Participant A.” Interacting with the “living data wall” allowed me to physically manipulate and visually analyze
the groupings of data. Using this method kept my focus on the data and gave the essence that I was still working with my participants even though we were no longer physically together.

**Stage 4: Connecting and Finalizing Themes**

The process of coding and subcoding led to Saldaña’s (2013) “theming the data”, which is also known by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) as “themeatizing.” A theme is an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is about and what it means. It is an “abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent [patterned] experience and its variant manifestations” (Saldaña, 2013). Thematic analysis allows the themes to emerge from the data. Saldaña (2013) explains that “theming the data” is most applicable for interviews and participant generated documents and artifacts. It is also appropriate for exploring a participant’s psychological world of beliefs, constructs, identity development, and emotional experiences, which fits my research and data analysis agenda.

After exhausting the coding and subcoding process in Stage 3, I began looking for overarching final categories. As I looked at the blue sticky notes labeling the themes, I noticed overarching themes that organically fell under the umbrella of the research questions. I brought in my original research questions to assist in the creation of final categories:

- **Research Question 1**: How does the process of art-making function as a catalyst for Roma girls in making meaning of their identity?
- **Research Question 2**: How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their aspirations?
- **Research Question 3**: How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their voices?
I revisited the initial research questions and the definitions of identity, aspirations, and voice and then created headings on the living data wall using the research questions. Next, I moved the themes and their coordinating data clusters under the appropriate research question, recorded on a pink sticky note, on the living data wall. This enabled me to connect the themes and data clusters to the larger themes of identity, aspirations, and voice. For example, the blue sticky notes for themes and their correlating orange, green, and yellow participant sticky notes fitting under identity were moved under research questions one’s pink sticky note focusing on identity. I continued this process for research questions two and three. At the end of data analysis, the three research questions became the main themes and sub themes clustered under these.

Figure 6. Example of Stage 4 Overarching Theme One
This qualitative research design did not address issues of validity as they relate to quantitative research; however, quality and authenticity of the research were considered. There was also an expectation as a qualitative researcher that it was important to conduct and present high-quality research. Quality of research, as I define it, is being a responsible researcher.
Though we do not have code books and numbers to calculate, Stake (1995) emphasizes the fact that qualitative researchers should not settle for “less” when it comes to validity and reliability. In *The Constructivist Credo* by Lincoln and Guba (2016), “It is proposed that the quality and outcome of a constructivist inquiry be determined by bringing to bear certain criteria called authenticity criteria” (p. 70). These criteria include: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity.

**Fairness and Tactical Authenticity**

According to Lincoln and Guba (2016), whatever criteria emerge, they must also reflect fairness and action commitments of constructivism. To achieve this, I will utilize member checking, follow informed consent procedures, and maintain confidentiality.

**Member checking.** As Patton (2015) explains, “triangulation, in whatever form, increases credibility and quality by countering the concern (or accusation) that a study’s findings are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator’s blinders” (p. 647). Maxwell (2013) says that:

Member checking is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed. (pp. 126-127)

Aubert (2015), reminds us that historically, the Romani people have been studied without having their own voices considered in the interpretation of their cultural practices and social behaviors which has strengthened negative stereotyping.

Unfounded assumptions in data analysis are caused partly because researchers have not included the Romani in the research process. This is why I consider member checking an
important practice in my research. In this process, I used data from the written reflections, and interview transcripts to assist in the write up of my research findings. I collaborated with each artist, in a one-on-one setting at the Roma Support Group offices, to examine drafts of my writing where their actions or words were featured. With all artists, I provided a copy of the written draft and read the draft aloud to them. Together, we discussed the draft, and the artists were encouraged to provide alternative language or a different interpretation if they felt that they were not being represented accurately. However, the researcher does have the final say in which version appears in the research write-up (Stake, 1995). I relied heavily on member checking because it was important to me to rule out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of the participants. I also followed informed consent/assent procedures discussed in the ethical considerations section of Chapter 3.

**Informed consent/assent and maintaining confidentiality.** Researcher responsibility extends beyond the mechanics and measures of prescribed interpretations. According to Koro-Ljungberg (2010):

> Responsibility is a priori to knowledge and changes who we are as researchers; it asks researchers to welcome the Other, to continuously stay sensitized to data and unexpected interactions with participants and communities. Even after presentations, publications, and completed study summary reports, responsibility is not over; knowledge projects are continually changing, and more data and new knowledge are being constructed beyond our intentions and efforts as researchers. (p. 605)

I agree with Koro-Ljungberg’s (2010) description of “responsible researchers” when she explains:
Researchers can strive for ongoing and disruptive dialogues with study participants and collaborative communities thus opening spaces for themselves and others to challenge authorities of oppressors, to allow margins to speak, and to disclose decolonizing privilege. (p. 608)

Details of how I follow informed consent procedures and maintain confidentiality are discussed in the ethical considerations section of this chapter.

**Ontological Authenticity**

This requires individual constructions of the participants and researcher to become more informed and sophisticated in order to become more aware of constructions they did not realize they held until the inquiry brought them from the tacit level to the propositional level. This can be achieved through being open about the purpose of the study, explication of the researcher’s etic position, building a caring and trusting relationship with the participants, and reflecting on growth.

**Openness and trust.** Before I held the initial informational meeting after recruitment, I spent three weeks volunteering with the Roma Support Group and working with the Roma community. This helped to build a level of trust and comfort with the population I was researching. At the informational meeting and throughout the visual arts workshops I was transparent about the purpose of my study and explained my etic position as a researcher.

I also implemented proven community building activities from *The Morning Meeting Book* by Kriete and Davis (2014) at the opening of each workshop session. The purpose of implementing these activities, according to Kriete and Davis (2014) is to set a tone for respectful and engaged learning in a climate of trust, build connections among and between the participants.
and researcher, merge social and emotional learning, and motivate participants by addressing the human need to feel a sense of significance and belonging.

As an outsider and a researcher, it was important that I took time to build a level of trust and comfort with the Roma population. I did this by meeting with staff and volunteers face-to-face at the Roma Support Group a minimum of twice a week. I attended forums and workshops for the local Roma community sponsored by the Roma Support Group in order to meet active members of the Roma community and learn about some of the issues they face on a daily basis. Making home visits with my liaison enabled me to be open about my study and build trust and social connections with potential participants.

**Introspection.** In order to become more introspective about my growth as a researcher I kept a detailed researcher journal. At the beginning, middle, and end of the study I critically reflected on my own psychological, philosophical, and emotional states in the research process in order to understand the personal and psychological state of others. Participants also thought critically about their growth and knowledge construction in a written reflection at the conclusion of the art workshop.

**Educative authenticity**

To achieve educative authenticity Lincoln and Guba (2016) suggest the use of an auditor by the researcher in order to demonstrate understanding and tolerance of knowledge construction. Some qualitative researchers, like myself, refer to this as “analyst triangulation.”

**Analyst triangulation.** Patton (2015), describes triangulating analysts as, “having two or more persons independently analyze the same qualitative data and compare their findings”. There was not a second “formal” investigator, however I did have a second person analyze the participant reflections and collages to write found poetry. The second investigator is a well-
known, female, Roma artist in the England who specializes in feminist, mixed media art, installation art, and poetry. I sent the artist digital copies of the reflections and collages via password protected email which were destroyed once completing the found poetry process. The artist and I both created one poem for each participant. It was important to include an insider voice in the research process in order to present research findings that could have otherwise gone undetected. The insider voice was an additional layer used to limit the possibility of an outsider misinterpreting the meaning of the participants and to assist me in seeing new perspectives that I may have unknowingly missed from an etic position.

**Catalytic Authenticity**

Catalytic authenticity is determined by the extent to which action is facilitated by the study. For example, was the issue of focus clarified? Was there a move to amend the problem? Were values sharpened? This can be accomplished by the participants’ and researcher’s collaboration on action to take, providing evidence of practical applications, and final reports that are made accessible to all stakeholders (Lincoln & Guba. 2016).

**Accessibility.** I provided digital copies of all sections of this dissertation that discuss the Roma Support Group to my liaisons and the deputy manager of the organization for approval of content. Participants and the organization were provided with digital access to the final dissertation as well. To assist with the non-profit’s goal of educating the community and dispelling myths and stereotypes, I will provide the organization with digital access and/or citations to additional publications that may develop from the completed dissertation as well as information about any conferences I attend that include my presentation of the material produced from the study. I will provide any data directly related to the Roma Support Group deputy manager, if requested, for use in annual reports and advocacy initiatives.
Taking action. Lack of research funding greatly impacted the time and resources I had available for this study. With the limited time I had to conduct the visual arts workshop, I was unable to coordinate the desired platform for expressing voice. However, it is my goal to continue to collaborate with the Roma Support Group and the participants to ensure their artwork and reflections are presented in a platform with which they are comfortable to effect change in people by raising consciousness about the myths and stereotypes of Roma people. This has yet to be determined, however, some ideas may include participation in a community art show, blog, Roma magazine, and other platforms. In addition, I will be presenting and publishing pieces from this research in academic forums.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to rules set by the Internal Review Board. The core tenets of anonymity, confidentiality, safety of participants, signed and protected informed consent, and the ability to withdraw from the study at any time acted as a critical guide as I navigated through the research process. Using a visual arts-based research method required following and considering ethical standards in addition to anonymity, confidentiality, and consent such as: professional competence and integrity, legal matters, research involving children, and community liaisons. These topics are all discussed in depth in the section that follows.

Professional Competence and Integrity

Rose (2016), asks the question, “What is ethical research?” There are few concrete rules about what constitutes ethical research. Ethics in research are very contextual, requiring each researcher to consider the circumstances of her project in order to decide what is ethical. Creswell (2013), encourages the researcher to think through the project in phases to address ethical issues as a way to ensure no ethical issues are overlooked. There are no hard and fast
rules to ensure I exude professional competence and integrity. However, according to Papademas and the International Visual Sociology Association (2009), I can recognize my limitations and utilize appropriate resources to ensure I am competent in my professional activities. I can consult with other professionals for the benefit of my participants when needed. As a visual researcher, I will strive to be fair, honest, and respectful of others and will not knowingly act in a way that could jeopardize my own or others’ welfare. I will do my best to remain vigilant and to conduct my research in a way that will inspire trust and confidence and will not knowingly make false or misleading statements.

There are a range of approaches to research ethics that serve to guide researchers in thinking through the ethical challenges that may arise. In this research, I found myself using a combination of the non-consequential approach and the ethics of care approach. Non-consequentialist approaches are often related to principles of respect (e.g. informed consent, confidentiality, the responsibility to do good, and the responsibility to do no harm). Combined with this clinical approach, I also integrated the ethics of care approach which entailed making ethical decisions based on compassion and a desire to act in ways that would benefit the individuals who were the focus of the research. This approach is often used in feminist and participatory research due to the relationships developed between the researcher and participants (Wiles, Prosser, Bagnoli, Clark, Davies, Holland, & Renold, 2008).

**Legal Matters**

Who owns intellectual property? In visual arts-based research, ownership of images, art, and the narrative that may accompany them represent possible ethical conflicts that are not usually encountered in other types of qualitative research. Delgado (2015), says that in most cases the participants who create the visual piece and narrative are the owners. Rose (2016),
agrees with this and says that generally the person who made it, owns it. For example, if photos were taken or other visual arts were created by participants, the participants are the copyright owners, and I would need to ask for consent to use the images or art in any publication or presentation.

This research was conducted in the U.K., so in addition to the U.S. laws I also needed to adhere to the U.K.’s laws. Wiles et al. (2008) explains that according to the U.K.’s copyright laws, when researchers use any visual image created by a participant, it is the researcher’s duty to make sure the participant is aware that they (the image maker) are the legal owners. The researcher must have the participants’ permission to use images in publications or on websites. In some cases, the U.K. copyright laws can favor the researcher. For example, if the participants gave consent for me to photograph them during the art workshop or record video of them working on their collages, I would possess the legal rights of those images. This would also apply to the archiving and reuse of the visual images (Wiles et al., 2008). Though this is legal, it does not mean it is ethical.

I am committed to the advancement of knowledge, but not at the expense of my participants. In my research, I erred on the side of caution and closely followed the British Sociology Association’s (2006) ethical statement. Regarding any audio recordings from interviews, written participant reflections, and visual images created by me or the participants, I verbally asked and have written consent and assent forms asking permission for use. Throughout the project sessions and data collection process, I discussed and clearly explained my dissemination strategies. This was conducted in “kid friendly” language and with the assistance of the Roma Support Group liaisons. I am responsible for following the copyright laws for use of images while creating the mixed media collages. The participants hold ownership of any
photographs they used in their collages. Other images used in the collages include cut images or words from magazines or newspapers, ephemera, and images printed and cut from the internet. Scotti and Chilton (2018), explain that copyright issues surrounding images (beyond personal photographs) used in collage art are not straightforward. In most cases, collage falls under fair use because there is no economic gain. As a safeguard, I provided a plethora of copyright free images and assisted participants in finding copyright free images that they were seeking.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality**

When using visual methods, the researcher must consider the fact that images of the participant may be exposed. For example, a participant artist in my study chose to include photographs of herself in her collage. Even though the copyright law may have been discussed previously and consent given by participants for image use, there is a secondary issue involving confidentiality. Rose (2016), mentions an issue many visual methods researchers have grappled with; the assumption that all images identifying participants are in some way unethical. Some researchers maintain that an image of a person or place may convey such a wealth of information and may be important enough to override the right to anonymity. Others claim that obscuring faces and identifiable landmarks is dehumanizing and disrespectful to those in the picture (Wiles, Coffey, Robinson, & Heath, 2012).

In projects like this, that are designed in order to allow the participant artists to articulate aspects of their identity, it is vital for the participants to articulate some form of their identity and it may be important to them to be clearly identified in the images made by them. It is my ethical responsibility to ensure my participants remain protected from harm and maintaining anonymity is part of this process. Included in my consent/assent forms is a clause regarding anonymity. I discussed with the participants the purpose of the research, how the collages will be used to
disseminate data, how and where they would be published, and the long-term use of the collage images. It was the choice of the artist and their parent/guardian whether or not they would like to use pseudonyms, initials, or their first name in the study write-up as well as the capacity in which they would allow me to use their artwork. This issue was communicated continually throughout the research process and through consent/assent forms.

**Participant Consent**

Rose (2016), reminds visual methods researchers that it is important to think about the whole project in regards to consent and not just the data collection stage. Consent forms needed to include a range of options that I may implement with the collages (data analysis, dissertation reproduction, academic publications, public exhibition, etc.). There were instances when verbal consent was acceptable. For example, I took photographs of the visual arts workshop, not for data analysis, but in order to illustrate the process to others. However, in order to protect the best interests of the participant artists and myself, I used both verbal and written consent procedures. Wiles et al. (2008) explains that signed consent forms are viewed as a way to safeguard researchers and their institutions and make issues of consent clear to all parties. Though some authors make note that informed consent can cause problems in cases where literacy skills and language are concerned, that is not the case in my research. I was able to read and discuss the consent forms with the participants and their parent/guardian as well as having the Roma Support Group liaisons there to help if needed. It was also made clear orally and on the consent form that participants may refuse to continue in the study at any time, for any reason, and I would respect that decision.
Research Involving Children

Children under the age of 16 are assumed not capable of making informed decisions about their participation in research projects and are referred to as “vulnerable” research participants. To protect and prevent any risk, research with children often requires the consent of the child and a parent or legal guardian (Rose, 2016). Wiles et al. (2008) explains that in the U.K., the law around the process of consent is complex and utilizes the notion of “capacity” or “competence.” Children who are able to understand the implications of participating in research are considered “competent” or having the “capacity” to consent to participating in research. Parental consent is needed when a child is viewed as lacking the “capacity” or “competence” to consent to the study. According to the British Sociological Association (2006), it is up to me as the researcher to use my own expertise and skills to provide children participating in the study information in a way they can understand. It will be up to my judgement whether or not I believe the child understands what is being proposed. I followed this protocol; however, I also required signed consent from a parent/guardian.

Issues of power structures are already present when studying undervalued populations. I was hyperaware of this in my research because in addition to researching with children, I was studying an undervalued population with compounding issues of poverty, ethnic discrimination, and gender discrimination. According to Delgado (2015), using a participatory research method serves to minimize the power differential and the ethical issues related with it.

Community Liaisons

For this study to be possible, I relied heavily on the help of the Roma Support Group; however, both parties mutually benefited from this study. As an outsider, the Roma Support Group provided me with the opportunity to get to know the Roma people and their community
through volunteer work. Conducting the research project provided a free arts-based workshop for the Roma community. More importantly, both the Roma Support Group and I had the same goal of advancing knowledge.

The British Sociological Association (2006) suggests the researcher and liaison discuss obligations and qualifications. Through regular email communication in preparation for volunteering and conducting the research project, the Roma Support Group liaison and I discussed roles, obligations, and qualifications. I also filled out a thorough volunteer application provided by the Roma Support Group that explained all volunteer opportunities and the skills required for each. On the application, I indicated the volunteer opportunities in which I was interested and my qualifications, available time, and resources I could provide. In addition to the volunteer application, I also completed a student volunteer form for the organization that stipulates their parameters for research ethics. The IRB process my institution requires is more stringent than both the U.K. and the Roma Support Group’s requirements and ethical considerations.

In regards to my dissertation project, the Roma Support Group was willing to help recruit the participants based on our discussion of my research needs as well as to provide a space to conduct the visual arts workshop at their offices in London. My liaisons, also helped me contact participants and scheduled workshops and interviews at the local offices. They were also a helpful presence during the workshop sessions when I needed assistance with supplies or communication with parents/guardians. Before the workshop concluded, the artists, Roma Support Group, and myself discussed options for sharing the art pieces and written reflections.

The non-profit organization relies solely on donations, non-governmental grants, and volunteerism. The grant that funded the arts-based workshops had ended and future funds were
not secured before I arrived. I communicated with the Roma Support Group that I would fund the materials needed to conduct the visual arts workshops and my liaisons confirmed that they could provide the workspace. The workspace was located at one of the Roma Support Group offices where telephones, computers, and printers were also available for use.

**Limitations**

Limitations in this study included making connections with a Romani community in a foreign country, recruiting participants, and creating a partnership with a non-governmental organization. There were also limitations as a researcher in an etic position. I had to discover ways to include insiders in the research in order to collaborate and engage with more authenticity.

**Access**

As previously discussed in this chapter, I experienced difficulty gaining access to a group of Romani people living in a different country. I worked with two liaisons with the Roma Support Group and though I could make suggestions, I relied on their expertise in the recruitment process. They knew and worked with the organization, understand the population, and had prior experience recruiting Roma people for other activities and programs. Romanies are marginalized people who historically keep to themselves. My small sample size will provide enough data when considering the study’s purpose. A smaller group will also allow for ample data without being overwhelming considering the limited time and resources available to me (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Outside Researcher**

Being an “outside researcher” can also serve as a limitation. I must be able to address my own potential influences to avoid reporting from an etic perspective. According to Saldaña
(2013), as a complete outsider coming from a different country, it was important for me to try to collaborate with at least one insider in some way in order to be able to engage more authentically with participants. “Action research seeks to develop and maintain social and interpersonal interactions that are nonexploitive and enhance the social and emotional lives of all people who participate” (Stringer, 2014, p.23). One way I addressed the outsider issue was to include a Roma artist in the found poetry process. I also address the issue of being a researcher and participant from the etic position in the “location of self” section at the beginning of this chapter. This limitation will also be discussed further in Chapter 5 as I reflect, in-depth, on myself as an artist and researcher in this study in order to identify and maintain an awareness of my inner theoretical and emotional states during this process.

Summary

Chapter 3 discussed descriptions and explanations of the theoretical and practical frameworks for this study including feminist standpoint theory, Freire’s empowerment education approach, and participatory arts-based research approach. It also examined the qualitative research design, data collection methods, data analysis, the role of the researcher, and concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations of the study. In Chapter 4, I will present the artists, discuss their artwork, and provide a description of the art workshops. A discussion of findings is also included.
Figure 9. Data Analysis Diagram

Stage 1:
Immersion in the Data
All of the data is gathered, laid out, and sorted into piles.

Stage 2:
Preliminary Analysis
Data piles are read through and initial coding is conducted. Broad themes start to emerge.

Stage 3:
Emerging Themes
Subcoding led broad categories to more narrow themes.

Stage 4:
Themeing the Data
Research questions become overarching themes.
CHAPTER 4:
INTRODUCING THE ARTISTS AND THE FINDINGS

This chapter will provide an overview of the art workshops and include a presentation of the artists, their work, and the findings. Each artist and her work will initially be discussed separately. The overarching themes and sub-themes related to the research questions will be discussed. The research questions include:

- How does the process of art-making function as a catalyst for Roma girls in making meaning of their identity?
- How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their aspirations?
- How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their voices?

Brief Overview of Collage Workshops

All participants were present for the first workshop which took place in the conference room at the Roma Support Group offices in London. Conducting the sessions at the Roma Support Group provided a safe space for the artists to work. They worked in an environment occupied by Roma people who are active advocates for their rights. The second session had two participants, and I conducted the second session with one participant in a one-on-one setting at the participant’s home. The third session had two participants at the Roma Support Group offices and, I held the third workshop with one participant at the Roma Support Group offices in a one-on-one setting. For the fourth workshop, all three participants came to the Roma Support Group offices on different days to finish one-on-one. The organization’s liaisons were present at each session to assist with the project, including the one-on-one sessions. At the conclusion of the
collage construction, I photographed the collages on my cell phone and uploaded the images to my password protected computer and stored them in my university affiliated box account, which is also password protected. Artists kept their original works of art.

**Workshop 1**

At the first visual arts workshop, the parents/guardians and artists reviewed and signed the informed consent and assent forms (Appendices B & C). Copies of the forms were previously provided at the informational meeting and the home visits, so the families were already familiar with them. Assistance was available for those who wanted their consent/assent forms read to them; however, no one requested assistance. Time was allocated to answer any individual questions participants had regarding the form. I emphasized participation was voluntary, and each artist had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

After the consent/assent forms were signed, some parents left for a couple of hours, and some stayed and chatted in the upstairs office suite. The first session began with five participants. Participants Valentina¹, Geanina², and Ismena³ completed all of the workshops and two additional participants dropped after the first session. The session began with an icebreaker activity. Though two of the participants knew each other through the Roma Support Group, the icebreaker provided an opportunity for the participants to become acquainted as an art group and to relax. Icebreakers also assisted in building trust and a deeper connection with the participants. We began by sitting on the floor in a circle with Disney Radio (their choice) playing in the background. One by one the participants went around the circle and shared their favorite Disney

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¹ Participant chose the name Valentina for identification in this study per the assent and parental consent forms approved by the IRB.
² Participant chose the name Geanina for identification in this study per the assent and parental consent forms approved by the IRB.
³ Participant chose the name Ismena for identification in this study per the assent and parental consent forms approved by the IRB.
movie, and why they liked it. They went around the circle again and talked about their favorite Disney song. Next, I transitioned into a conversation describing the concept of the mixed media collage. Each artist would work on creating one collage over the course of the workshops.

Again, I shared the example of my completed mixed media collage to give the artists some perspective into what they would create. I explained that the collage was about me and contained images and materials of things I liked, my hobbies, my dreams and aspirations, my culture, and gave an overall look into who I was as a person. I also passed out six books featuring mixed media collage for the artists to examine. As a group, they discussed the different types of materials they saw being used in the books and, how the artists used those materials to tell a story about their lives. The participants looked at how they could create a collage using textured papers, paint, fabric, photos, images, color, natural materials, and more, to capture thoughts, memories, and daydreams to create their own story. I introduced materials the participants could use for their collages. Art supplies were organized and stored in small plastic bins for easy viewing and access. The participants were encouraged to touch and look through the materials to get a sense of what they liked and to begin thinking about how they would create their collages. The artist participants were also encouraged to bring in “found” items like candy wrappers, photos, and nature; however, throughout the collage process the only items they brought from home were photos or printed pictures.

In the last portion of the session, artists chose their blank canvas and began their collage by painting the background a base color of their choice. They were asked to choose a color that they liked or to which they felt drawn. Though time was spent talking about color meanings, only one participant could explain the meaning of the color she chose. While the girls were painting their collage backgrounds, I was able to conduct their initial interviews. At the end of
the session, and all following sessions, artists’ work was locked in the room being used for the workshop at the Roma Support Group offices in order to keep the pieces safe and to ensure confidentiality.

Figure 10. Ismena’s Base Color

Figure 11. Geanina’s Base Color

Figure 12. Valentina’s Base Color
Workshop 2

Ismena and Valentina attended the second scheduled workshop. Geanina was in the process of changing schools and became sick with a cold. I worked with her one-on-one at her home. For this phase, the girls were to think of at least three words that described themselves. The liaison suggested this because in the beginning, even after community building activities, the participants were struggling with talking about themselves. Words and phrases were printed out in different colors and fonts and the collage reference books were also used to show how pre-cut letter tiles could be used to spell out words in creative ways. The words they chose reflected their personality traits. For example, Valentina chose the words “talented” and “artist” which she discusses in her interview and writes about in her reflection. Geanina put “good” and “strong” which coincides with her interview talking about “good people” and “bad people” and her resilience to being bullied. Ismena writes and talks about her Roma pride, participation in celebrations, and feeling free when dancing. Words she chose for her collage included “celebration,” “Roma,” and “free.” After choosing words to describe themselves, they talked about their aspirations and dreams. I gave examples of my own dreams and aspirations and the liaison did as well. When asked about their dreams and aspirations for the future, the girls were quiet and did not answer at first. After probing and giving think time, Geanina was the first to break the silence and said she would like to be a famous singer or a hairdresser. She explained that one of her family members was a hairdresser. Ismena wanted to be a Roma dancer like her mother, and Valentina said she would like to be an artist or writer. We also talked about hobbies, friends, things they liked and didn’t like (music, food, movies). Next, the participants were prompted to choose materials for their collage that communicated some of their interests. They were reminded that when their collage was completed, it should tell all about their life. At the
end of the workshop, they were reminded to try to bring in a “found item” for their collage.

Examples of what “found items” they might bring were discussed.

![Image](image1.png)

*Figure 13. Valentina’s Progress*

![Image](image2.png)

*Figure 14. Geanina’s Progress*
I reminded the participants that I was from America and was just starting to learn about the Roma culture. I asked them if they could tell me about a favorite Roma tradition that their family celebrated. Just as the prior research indicated, most Roma traditions are heavily influenced by the country of origin. However, there are some overlapping songs and dances. Ismena talked about dancing in the Roma celebration in Poland. Geanina mentioned singing, and Valentina discussed music. In their collages, you can see this communicated through maps of the countries their families are from, the Roma flag, and Ismena’s photo of a Roma woman dancing.
distinct foods or traditions were shared and when they were discussed, they were family celebrations that coincided with holidays like Easter or Christmas.
Workshop 4

In the final workshop, Valentina, Ismena, and Geanina all came to the Roma Support Group offices on different days. This gave me dedicated one-on-one time with each participant. When Valentina came, she finished up a few details on her collage and participated in a final interview. After adding the finishing touches to their collages, the artist participants completed their written reflections.

The Artists

As previously explained in Chapter 3, each artist participant created her own mixed media collage and wrote her own reflection about her collage. Using interview transcripts, I give a short bio and describe each artists’ unique traits. Interactions with the artist participants, perceptions of them, and themes found in their art and written reflections are also discussed.

Valentina

Valentina is a 10-year-old girl who identifies as Roma. She and her brother were born in England, though her two older brothers and parents were born in Slovakia. Valentina is involved in the arts in school and youth programs offered through the Roma Support Group. She is a
published poet and won a local poetry contest. In addition to writing, she enjoys drawing her own mandalas and coloring them. Valentina enjoys studying cultures around the world and recently studied Japan with her father and learned a traditional sword dance. Valentina also enjoys music and plays the guitar and ukulele. She just started taking violin lessons as well. Valentina enjoys creating art because it, “cheers her up and makes her feel happy.” When she grows up, she would like to be a writer.

**Initial meeting.** I was introduced to Valentina through one of the liaisons from the Roma Support Group. The liaison set up the initial meeting in the form of a home visit. I remember being nervous and excited in anticipation of meeting a potential participant when we pulled up to the traditional London row house. As we walked in, I followed my liaison’s lead and removed my shoes. We were greeted in both English and Romanes. Both Valentina’s mother and father were present as well as Valentina. We sat at the dining room table that was placed in the middle of the living room. Furniture and boxes were stacked everywhere in piles. Valentina’s mother explained to me that they were in the process of moving to a smaller place that cost less money. I talked with Valentina and her parents about the research and gave them a copy of the consent forms to look over. The liaison brought art activities with him to the home visit. He said it helped the children relax and open up more. Valentina’s mother served us cake from a local middle eastern baker and coffee prepared in the typical Roma fashion with coffee grounds poured in the cup and then water stirred in. As we talked and ate, my liaison, Valentina, and I painted wooden animals and Valentina answered questions about her school and her hobbies. She was very quiet and answered questions in short sentences, never volunteering information. We talked about the art workshop timeline and learned that Valentina and her family were going on vacation. This opened a door for conversing with Valentina.
Researcher: Oh wow! You’re taking a vacation before school starts? That’s exciting!

Where are you going?

Valentina: We are going to Blackpool.

Researcher: Blackpool. I have never heard of it. What will you do there?

Valentina: There is a beach and a water park and a place with a lot of rides!

Researcher: Who is going on vacation with you?

Valentina: My mum, my dad, and all three of my brothers. It will be my birthday when we are there.

Researcher: Oh wow! How old will you be?

Valentina: I’ll be 10.

Researcher: Very nice.

As we painted our projects, Valentina opened up a little more and talked about her brothers. She spoke proudly of her brother who was two years older. She became more animated when talking about his love of maps. He collected maps, drew maps, and had them hanging all over his room. He also has his own YouTube channel. Valentina’s mom added to the conversation that her son was diagnosed with autism. He needs a lot of one-on-one assistance. She spoke highly of the local schools and their involvement in his education. She explained, “In Slovakia he would not get this help. When I went to school, I wanted to be an architect. I had good grades and a scholarship. When I went to talk to the school, they told me they had no room for me. It was because I was a female and I was a Gypsy.” Valentina also talked highly of her two older brothers. She explained, “They don’t live here anymore because one has a job and the other one is in college.” Valentina’s mom interjected that one of her sons was at college studying history and the other had a good job doing inventory at TESCO, the large grocery store chain.
Researcher: I saw that you were in the Roma Support Group’s calendar. You were dressed in traditional Japanese clothing and had a sword!

Valentina: (Smiles). Yes.

Researcher: Tell me about that!

Valentina: My dad and I like to learn about places around the world. I saw on tv some Japanese dancers and thought it was neat so we started looking on the internet and learned about their clothes, their food, their music, and they have a sword dance. I learned that from the computer.

Researcher: Wow! That’s amazing! I saw the pictures at the Roma Support Group offices.

Valentina: My brother has a map of China. He showed me where it is.

Though this Roma family had experienced discrimination, they were open to learning about other cultures. Valentina, at a young age, was being exposed to other cultures around the world and learning to embrace and accept others. Valentina’s dad explained that Valentina loves to draw, color, paint, and plays instruments. He also shared that Valentina wrote a poem and it was published in a children’s book of poetry. I asked if I could see it, but it was packed up as they were in the process of moving. Valentina’s mom explained that she and Valentina’s dad work nights at a fruit factory. They made decent pay, but wanted to save money for things like Valentina’s music lessons and extra care for her brother. The dedication to do anything they could to enrich their children’s lives in England was evident. They wanted their children to have the opportunities that they didn’t have growing up in Slovakia. Valentina’s mom said that they did not hide being Roma, but when people knew they were Roma they were treated differently. Unless they tell people they are Roma, no one knows because they all have lighter skin tones and
hair. People just think they are from another country because of their accents. Even though Valentina was born in England, she had a mix of British and Slovakian accent.

**First art workshop.** In the first art workshop, Valentina was the quietest of all the girls. When it was time to get started, she sat staring at the blank canvas while the others had already chosen their background color and had started painting. We had talked about the meaning of colors but maybe she was struggling with the decision of what she wanted to represent. Or maybe she was uncomfortable?

*Researcher:* Valentina, what color are you thinking about?

*Valentina:* (Shrugs)

*Researcher:* Are there too many colors to choose from?

*Valentina:* I’m just thinking.

*Researcher:* Ok.

*Valentina:* I don’t know if I want to use the lighter blue or the darker blue.

*Researcher:* If you want, you can test them out on some paper first to see the colors.

*Valentina:* (Takes a white paper plate and quirts samples of both colors on the plate.) I think I like this one. (Pointing to the darker blue.)

*Researcher:* Very nice.

Valentina worked much slower than the other girls. She did art projects a lot at home so I assumed that she would be quicker than the others with art creation, however, she was much more contemplative than the other artist participants in this session. When the others were more than halfway finished with their base colors, Valentina was just beginning. She took her time painting her canvas in the cobalt blue shade. When asked why she chose blue, she said, “I just like it. I think it will look good with the decorations I put on.” Thoug
metaphorical meaning, blue represents depth, loyalty, and creativity. In my short time with Valentina I have observed these qualities in her.

While the girls worked, they discussed why they liked making art and what their favorite art form was. Valentina said, “Art always cheers me up.” When she participated in art projects, it brought her joy. Valentina liked drawing, writing, painting, and playing instruments. Having experience with several art outlets, I thought it would be difficult for her to tell me which medium she liked best, but when asked, she didn’t hesitate to say, “drawing.” When asked why drawing was her favorite, she said, “When you draw something, then you can color it or paint it, or just draw it.” She liked drawing because it gave her the opportunity to add other art mediums to it if she wanted.

The other participants had completed their base colors, played with some of the materials and began thinking about what they wanted to put on their collages. It was time to go home, and the other participants left. However, Valentina’s mother gave her permission to stay and finish her base coat without rushing. While she worked, Valentina commented on the icebreaker activity from the beginning of the session.

Valentina: Your movie has the worst bad guy.

Researcher: What? What do you mean?

Valentina: You picked The Little Mermaid. It has Ursula.

Researcher: Oh, you mean from our icebreaker activity?

Valentina: Yeah.

Researcher: Why do you think Ursula is the worst?

Valentina: Wellllll, she takes Ariel’s voice. Ariel can’t tell anyone about what’s going on. You can’t get rid of bad guys if you can’t tell anyone who they are.
Researcher: (Mind blown.) Well...hmmm. (Pause) I never thought of it that way. What would you do if you were Ariel and you didn’t have a voice?

Valentina: I wouldn’t have done it.

Researcher: You wouldn’t have made the deal with Ursula?

Valentina: No! (Smiles.)

Researcher: But she reeeaaaallllllly, really, really wanted to have feet and walk on land.

Valentina: I would rather be a mermaid and sing with the other mermaids.

Researcher: I think being a mermaid would be fun.

Valentina: Yeah, me too.

Did Valentina realize the depth of that conversation? Did she see the parallel between Ariel losing her voice and the struggle the Roma people face in having their voice heard? Did she understand how Ariel losing her voice and becoming powerless was a lot like the powerlessness some Roma people felt while fighting for basic human rights? Valentina thought Ariel should have been happy with who she was, like the Roma Pride movement of Roma people being proud of their heritage and not trying to be someone that they aren’t.

**Second art workshop.** The second art workshop was again at the Roma Support Group offices. One of the girls was absent so it was just Valentina and one other participant. In this session they concentrated on getting into the materials, and feeling and touching them. The participants were encouraged to place materials on the canvas and play with arrangements in order to begin adding layers. They were to think of three words to describe themselves. Multiple pages of descriptive words in different colors and fonts were available. They could also spell out the words with letter pieces, write with marker, or paint the words on. It took the girls a while to
go through the words, play with the printed-out words and letter tile pieces. Valentina continued looking through the lists of words without choosing.

Valentina: I’m not sure what words to pick.

Researcher: There are a lot of words there. Well, let’s see...think of some things you like to do. Or things you are good at. Then see if there are words to match those things. If not, you could use letter tiles to spell it out or even paint the words on.

Valentina: I like making art.

Researcher: Great so would you call yourself an artist?

Valentina: ( Shrugs)

Researcher: Well, you like making art. Artists make art, so I would definitely say you are an artist.

Valentina: ( Finds the words “artist” and begins to cut it out.)

Valentina continued looking through words and in addition to the word “artist” she chose “talented” and “treasured.” When she talked about her word choices, she explained that she chose “talented” because she can do different kinds of art and she chose “treasured” because her mother calls her a treasure, which means she is special. When describing her word choices, Valentina was very reserved, almost like it was impolite to talk positively about herself or brag about her talents.

The girls were also asked about aspirations and dreams for the future. What did they want to be when they grew up? It took all of the participants time to think about this question. It was surprising that not one of them knew off the top of their heads what they would like to do in the future. I clarified and asked if they could do absolutely anything in the world, what would they like to do for a job? Valentina said she would like to make different kinds of art. If she didn’t do
art, she would like to write stories. This made sense since she enjoyed art and has already published writing.

**Third art workshop.** This session was conducted one-one-one with Valentina at the Roma Support Group offices. Valentina missed the third scheduled workshop due to her family moving to their new home. In this workshop, Valentina brought some photos from home to add to her collage. They featured her and her parents painting together. I explained that I was learning about Roma traditions and was wondering if there was a special Roma tradition she and her family celebrated? Valentina talked about spending Easter with her family. She said they went to church, had Easter baskets filled with toys and sweets, and a big dinner with all of her family. When asked if there were any Roma traditions or foods she said, “I don’t think so.” Just as the literature explained, most Roma families celebrate holidays and eat food that originate from their home country. Valentina added the phrase, “child of God” to her collage when talking about the Easter holiday because her family is religious and attends church at Easter. She also added the words: family, believe, and love. She finished off the day by adding some glittered and felt flowers. She talked about what she enjoys doing when she spends time with her family.

*Valentina:* I like painting and drawing. I am drawing mandalas now.

*Researcher:* I love mandalas! I like to color them with colored pencils, but I can’t draw them! You can draw them?

*Valentina:* Yeah. (Smiles.)

*Researcher:* Wow! That’s cool. What else do you like to do with your family?

*Valentina:* Ummm...My dad and I like to learn about places. We learned about Japan.

*Researcher:* I saw the picture of you in the Roma Support Group’s calendar dressed up in traditional Japanese clothes and a sword!
Valentina: Yeah. Now we are going to learn about France or maybe Italy.

Researcher: I just visited Italy! It has big, beautiful, old buildings.

Valentina: Maybe I can put a map of it on my collage.

She used the office computer to find printable maps of Italy and France to add to her collage along with the pictures of her painting with her parents. As Valentina glued the maps to her collage, she mentioned that her brother would love the maps. Valentina continued to add other decorative materials to her collage like lace trim and pom-poms.

**Fourth art workshop.** The final art workshop was conducted one-on-one because the new school year had just started and scheduling became more challenging. Valentina came to the final workshop smiling. This was a first! Usually, she arrived quietly, and once we began collaging and talking she would open up and smile, but this time she entered the Roma Support Group offices smiling, carrying a violin case, and ready to go.

Researcher: Violin?! I used to play violin!

Valentina: (Smile.) I just started taking lessons.

Researcher: Oh wow! Do you take lessons at school?

Valentina: No. I used to take lessons here, but not anymore. I’m bringing the violin back. Valentina’s mom was there, and she explained that the Roma Support Group let her borrow the violin when they had the orchestra for kids. The grant is over and now they are waiting on new funding for it to start again. In the meantime, she is returning the violin.

Valentina: I also play the guitar and ukulele.

Researcher: What?!

Valentina: (Laughs).
Researcher: Which one do you like playing the best? The violin, the guitar, or the ukulele?

Valentina: The guitar. It’s easier. It was the first instrument I learned to play.

Researcher: Niiiiice.

In this last workshop, Valentina was able to add any materials to her collage to show things she liked to do, hobbies, or just decorations she wanted to use to finish it out. She added some cutouts of London icons to represent where she lives and a map of Slovakia to show where her family’s country of origin is. Then she added the Roma flag right next to Slovakia with a slight overlap. Once she indicated to me that she was finished, we talked about how she spent the art workshop sessions creating a collage that told about who she was and the things that were special to her. I went through the prompts for the written reflection and asked her if she could write about her collage for me? Since Valentina liked to write, I knew this would be something she would enjoy doing. We talked about the different ways she could write about her collage: poems, stories, simple paragraph or even a drawing. Valentina had unlimited time to write about her collage. In the end, she created an acrostic using her name.

Before we said our goodbyes, I let Valentina know that if it was ok, the Roma Support Group would like to display her collage at the 20th anniversary event, and afterwards they would return it to her. She agreed, and I let her know how excited I was that her artwork would be displayed at the event and that I would be there.

Summary

By our fourth work session, Valentina was much more comfortable and talked quite a bit about herself and offered information about her interests, her life, and her artwork. Valentina was a thinker and took her time before answering questions. She was very curious about different
cultures and was interested in learning about other places and their traditions. This can be seen in her collage with the maps of Italy and France and was discussed in her interviews and written reflections. She acknowledges her own heritage on her collage through a map of Slovakia and the Roma flag placed next to each other. Though she was born in England, she can speak English, Romanes, and Slovakian and she has a slight Slovakian accent. She is very connected to and involved with her family. Both of her parents were at our first meeting, and her mother attended our other sessions as well. Valentina talked affectionately about her older brother who was diagnosed with autism and how he studied maps and had his own YouTube channel. In her collage you can see photos of her doing art with her family and she talked about studying Japan and learning a sword dance with her dad. When Valentina spoke about creating art, she would become more animated and smile. She explained that, “art cheers me up.” It was an outlet. In addition to visual arts, Valentina talked about learning to play the guitar and ukulele. She had also recently begun violin lessons. When it came to talking about her talents, Valentina had difficulty verbalizing her strengths and choosing word characteristics to add to her collage. She was not one to talk about herself in a complimentary way, though she did not degrade herself either. Coming across as a quiet, humble person, Valentina is able to best express herself and her desires through writing, drawing, painting, and music.

**Found Poetry**

This is the reflection of the artwork and words of Valentina written by Roma artist D.L.B.⁴

VALENTINA
A daughter of God
Slovakia
England
France

---

⁴ Roma artist requested use of initials per the approved IRB consent form.
Italy
Roma – not a country or a city
Held within the heart of my family
Blue – the sky, the water
I believe in beauty
A daughter of God....................

Figure 20. Valentina’s Mixed Media Collage

**Geanina**

Geanina is a 10-year-old Roma girl from Romania. Her mother, father, older brother, and younger sister were all born in Romania and moved to London in 2016. In school, Geanina enjoys math class. Outside of school she enjoys crafts, singing, and talking on the phone with her friends. She had recently changed schools, so she liked to call her friends from her previous school to talk. She speaks Romanian and English, but not Romanes. Geanina speaks English
very well and likes to help two other students from Romania at her new school by translating for them. Geanina was heavily bullied at her last school and is happy to be in a new school, even though she says it can be scary being the new student. Geanina explained that creating art makes her happy inside, and it also helps her to concentrate. When she grows up, she wants to be a singer or a hairdresser.

**Initial meeting.** I met Geanina for the first time at the informational meeting for the research project. Geanina walked in to the informational meeting smiling and full of questions. After the information session, during the meet and greet time, she came to the table with the collage books and looked through them with interest. She examined the sample collage and started to giggle.

Geanina: There are dogs in princess carriage?

Researcher: Those are my dogs. They think they are princesses.

Geanina: (Laughing) That’s funny.

Researcher: Yes, they are divas. They have their own stroller, or pram, as you would say over here.

Geanina: (Raises eyebrows and laughs)

Researcher: This is my collage. It tells about me and my life. That’s what you will be doing if you decide you want to make a collage too.

Geanina: What kinds of thing will we make her with?

The liaison explained that Geanina’s family had moved to England from Romania two years ago. Her English acquisition was amazing for that amount of time. She looked through the boxes of materials we would use for the collages and was immediately drawn to the sparkly materials and glitter pens. She dipped her hands into the clear plastic bins to touch and explore
the plethora of choices. Geanina’s 3-year-old little sister followed her everywhere she went and wanted to be a part of anything Geanina was doing. Geanina was very good with her little sister, showing her the books and how to gently touch the sample collage and supplies. The toddler was also drawn to the sparkly materials like her older sister. When she grabbed a handful of rhinestones, Geanina scolded her and told her, “no.” The toddler began to cry big crocodile tears. “Awe, it’s ok! Would you like to pick a sparkly sticker?” I asked. She stared at me with one last tear rolling down her face and nodding her head up and down to indicate she did, in fact, want a sparkly sticker. Geanina sighed and rolled her eyes, like a big sister would do when her little sister annoyed her. Geanina helped her sister pick a sticker and placed it on the back of her tiny hand so she could touch it and show everyone as she toddled away.

**First art workshop.** Geanina walked into the first art workshop ready to go. Her long dark hair was pulled back into a ponytail that swung back and forth when she walked. She sat down in the circle we had created on the floor and folded her hands in her lap. “Are we doing the painting, Miss?” she asked. “Yes, we are,” I answered. First, everyone chose their blank canvases. There were a few sizes to choose from. At first, Geanina chose a small 8” by 10” inch canvas. She studied it for a moment and then set it down and examined the 11” by 14” canvas. She looked over at the 16” by 20” but kept the 11” by 14” canvas. Next, we talked about colors and some of their meanings. The bottles of paint were set up in the center of the circle as we talked about the meanings of color. When it was time to choose the base color for the collage, Geanina didn’t hesitate. She went straight for the violet shade and began painting her canvas.

*Researcher:* Geanina, why did you choose violet for your canvas?

*Geanina:* Ummmm....She is my favorite color! (Smiling).
Researcher: People who like the color violet are sometimes known to be creative and unique! Do you know what unique means?

Geanina: (Shakes head no.)

Researcher: Unique means you are special. You are one-of-a-kind. No one else is just like you.

Geanina: (Smiles.) Oh! (Continues to paint.)

Geanina may not have completely grasped the concept and deeper meaning of the color violet, but in addition to uniqueness it also symbolizes sensitivity. Later, this part of Geanina would become evident through her art and written reflection. After talking about colors and their meanings, Geanina talked about creating art.

Researcher: What do you like about creating art?

Geanina: It makes me feel happy inside.

Researcher: That’s a good reason!

Geanina: Also, it helps me focus.

Research: I color to help me focus sometimes. Art is good for that.

Geanina: Yes.

Researcher: Do you have a favorite way to make art? Drawing, painting, music, dancing, singing?

Geanina: I love the singing! I sing all the time!

Researcher: Do you sing in a group?

Geanina: No, I just sing. When the radio is on I sing. Sometimes I sing by myself.

Researcher: I like to sing, but I don’t think other people like it when I sing.

Geanina: (Giggles.) You sing bad Miss?
Researcher: I guess so! (Laugh.)

Second art workshop. Geanina missed the second scheduled workshop because she had to enroll in a new school due to a recent move. During the move she also became ill with a cold. We rescheduled and I went to Geanina’s home accompanied by one of the liaisons. When we arrived, Geanina’s mother answered the door. She explained in Romanes that Geanina would be back soon. She had walked to the corner store to pick up some fruit and bread. Geanina’s mother led us into the front room, called a receiving room, in the traditional British row house. The room had been transformed into a bedroom that Geanina shared with her little sister. Geanina’s mom explained that the room was the most private with the most space. There were people sitting on the couch in the family room and the kitchen table was being prepared for dinner. The liaison explained that the people in the living room were Geanina’s dad, grandfather, uncle, and a friend watching sports on the television. They paid us no attention as Geanina’s mother settled us into the bedroom. We sat on the floor in the center of the large space and began to unpack supplies. Geanina’s mother took the toddler, whom I met at the informational meeting, upstairs to take a nap. She said, we wouldn’t get anything done if she saw Geanina doing the project. As the mother took the little one upstairs, Geanina walked through the front door carrying two bags of groceries. She disappeared into the kitchen to drop the bags and quickly reappeared in the doorway of her shared room.

Geanina: Hi Miss! (Gave researcher a hug.)

Researcher: Hi! How are you? I heard you had a cold? The sniffles?

Geanina: Yes. I feel better now. We are going to do art?

Researcher: Yes! I brought your canvas and all of the materials. (Geanina and researcher sit down on floor.) I heard you are going to a new school now?
Geanina: Yes. I been there three days now.

Researcher: Do you like it?

Geanina: Yes. Sometimes people are bad.

Researcher: What do mean?

Geanina: At my old school some people were not nice.

Researcher: Really? I’m sorry.

Geanina: Some girls made fun of my hair. She say, “Do you think you are Ariana Grande?”

Researcher: The singer?

Geanina: Yes. I don’t know why? She say it mean.

Researcher: Well, you have pretty, long, black hair just like Ariana Grande. Maybe she wishes she had pretty hair too!

Geanina: She also say I am fat.

Researcher: That wasn’t nice. Did that make you feel sad?

Geanina: Yes.

Researcher: Are the people at your new school nice?

Geanina: Yes! I am the new girl so everyone want to talk to me!

Researcher: Oh! That’s cool!

Geanina: Yes, Miss. But sometimes it is a little scary. Being new.

Researcher: It can be hard trying to make new friends. Have you met any new friends yet?

Geanina: Yes! The teacher is a good person. She asked me to help with the translate for a new boy. He speaks Romanian like me. So I help him.


*Researcher:* That’s a really nice thing to do.

*Geanina:* Well, when I move here, someone did that for me at my old school.

*Researcher:* I can’t believe you have only been here two years! You speak English very well! You learned fast!

*Geanina:* I learned a little before I came here.

She was a smiling, happy girl, but there was a deeply sensitive side to her that was not a characteristic of the typical 10-year-old children I had previously worked with as a teacher in the U.S. Her life experiences had deepened her compassion for others.

As with the other participants in the second workshop, Geanina chose words that described her. She looked through the letters and words laid out on the floor. True to her personality, she chose: full of happiness, full of goodness, fun, and strong. When asked about the words she chose, she explained that she felt happy inside, she tried to be a good person, she has fun, and she chose strong because she tries to be happy even when people are bad. We moved on to discuss aspirations and dreams. I explained that aspirations are dreams you have. They are goals you set and want to reach. Something that you hope you can do.

*Researcher:* What would you like to do one day when you grow up?

*Geanina:* I love singing! I would like to be a famous singer.

*Researcher:* That would be fun!

*Geanina:* Yes. Or do hair. My aunt does hair.

*Researcher:* Really? Have you seen her do hair?

*Geanina:* Yes, and she is really good!

*Researcher:* I bet she could help you with that one day.

*Geanina:* (Smiles.) Maybe
Just as she was finishing up the session, a little 3-year-old toddled into the room. She saw me, the sparkle sticker lady, with Geanina and ran into the room! “Oh boy! Just in time!” I said. Geanina laughed.

**Third art workshop.** Geanina and Ismena attended the third workshop. Valentina missed this workshop due to her move. Participants were reminded that they could bring found items from home. Geanina was the only participant that chose to use materials solely provided by me. However, I did make an extra supply run for her after this session. In this workshop, I reminded the girls about the informational meeting and how I explained I didn’t know much about the Romani’s family traditions. Geanina talked about her family eating meals together.

*Researcher:* Geanina, does your family do something special to celebrate being Roma?

*Geanina:* We have big dinners and all of my family comes. There lots of food! Sausages, bowls of fruit, and salad.

*Researcher:* Is there a special reason for the big dinner? Or a special day?

*Geanina:* No. Just we do it sometimes.

*Researcher:* I love having dinner with my family. Who comes to your dinner?

*Geanina:* Oh, my mum, my dad, sister, grandpop, aunt, uncle, and cousins.

*Researcher:* Wow! That’s a lot of people! How many cousins do you have?

*Geanina:* (Smiles) Three cousins here and some family in Romania.

*Researcher:* That’s nice! Do you get to see your family in Romania?

*Geanina:* Not since we are in London.

*Researcher:* Aw. Do you miss them?

*Geanina:* Yes, but we can talk on the computer for free.
Researcher: That’s great! My brother lives far away from me too. I talk to him on the computer sometimes.

As she worked Geanina talked about the design in the bottom left corner of her collage. She chose a patterned, purple, square of paper. She carefully placed some silver rhinestones around its edges and placed four small, square mirror tiles in each corner of the decorative paper. Geanina explained that it was the table set for her family dinner. She also added a map of Romania and then several cutouts of London icons. When asked if she liked living in London, she said, “Yes! It’s neat!”

Geanina wanted to include her best friend from Romania in her collage. Her friend’s name was very long, so she decided to do initials. While looking through the materials she found a doily. “Oooh, Miss! I love her. It looks antiquey!” I looked up to see Geanina holding a white paper doily. “Oh! That’s a doily. It is pretty. You like antiques?!” I don’t think I’ve ever met a 10-year-old who likes antiques let alone know what the word antique means! “Yes! I love the antiquey stuff. They look old,” she said. Before our last workshop I would try to pick up vintage style scrapbooking materials from the art store.

None of the participants tried to copy any of the features from my collage. This was interesting because in the U.S. when young children are trying something new for the first time, they often copy their teacher’s example. However, in this particular workshop session, Geanina wanted to add an envelope being held by a mini clothespin like I had added to my collage. My collage featured a little piece of paper coming out of the envelope with the word “love” on it. Geanina said she wanted to put, “a secret note that no one could read” in her envelope. She had finished attaching the materials and inserting the secret note. Before closing the envelope and clipping it shut with mini clothespin, she asked me if I wanted to see her secret note? I told her it
was okay to have a secret note in her collage, and that I would only look at it if she wanted to share it. Geanina slid the tiny note out of the envelope and showed it to me. In pencil, she had written the word Roma and drew a heart around it. After looking at the paper, I told her that her secret note was very, very special.

**Fourth art workshop.** The last meeting was one-on-one at the Roma Support Group offices. Geanina walked in with her smiling face and long, dark, swinging ponytail.

*Geanina:* Hello Miss!

*Researcher:* Hi! I found something at the art store! (Pulled out small package) They are antique style cutouts!

*Geanina:* Oooh! I can use?

*Researcher:* Yes! (Opened package and spread out the pieces.) Today you are adding your favorite things. Think about hobbies or activities you like to do.

*Geanina:* I am putting the flowers on the table for dinner. (Chooses cutout of bouquet.) I love it. She looks old. (Referring to the antique style floral cutout).

*Researcher:* You really do like antiques!

*Geanina:* Oh, I love the birds!

Geanina sorted through the cutouts and placed several on her collage to look at. After arranging and re-arranging, she chose to add the flower bouquet to the family dinner table, a picture of birds and some flowers made of felt and wooden buttons. True to her love of glitter, she added some big, fluffy, glitter hearts. After she had finished her collage, we talked about her written reflection. Knowing she has only been speaking English for two years and drawing from my knowledge as an English Language Learner teacher, I wanted to make sure Geanina was able to communicate what she wanted to in her reflection. We talked about different ways she could
write her reflection, whether it be a poem, a story, a paragraph, etc. She could draw a picture, she could dictate to me what she wanted to write and I could write it for her, or she could write it and if she got stuck I could help her. Geanina chose the last option. The only word she asked for help with was antique! Though not all of the words were spelled correctly, she wrote them out phonetically and it was possible to read her words.

As we said our goodbyes, Geanina asked if she could take her collage home. I told her that the Roma Support Group would like to know if they could hang her collage at the 20th anniversary event and after the event they would return it to her? She agreed, but said to make sure she got it back. I looked at my two liaisons and said, “You heard her! You have to make sure she gets it back.” They promised. I also told Geanina that I would be at the event and I hoped to see her there. On her way out she said to me, “Thank you Miss. You make me feel happy inside.”

**Summary**

During our sessions together, Geanina was very open and loved to talk about her life. Though she had only moved to London from Romania two years ago, she spoke English very well. She loved London and thought it was a “neat place” and added many iconic London symbols to her collage. Geanina also had a very different side that reminded me of “an old soul.” She liked the stereotypical, “girly stuff” like hearts and flowers, however she also loved antiques and wanted to add elements to represent that in her collage. An additional trip was made to the craft store to purchase “antique looking pieces” for her to choose from. She gravitated towards the doilies, the traditional printed paper, vintage roses, and vintage bird pictures. As she added these elements, she commented, “Ooh Miss, I love the look of this. She is so antique looking!”

Geanina, often used feminine pronouns when speaking. Instead of saying “this is” or “that is”
she would often say “she is.” Geanina is a second language learner, however in my experience as an English Language Learner instructor, I have never encountered this. It was interesting that she used the feminine pronoun and describes herself in her collage as strong, full of goodness, happiness, and fun. Geanina is very social and wanted to include her best friend in her collage, which is why she added her friend’s initials. Though Geanina comes across as fun loving and care free, she is not naïve to people who are not nice. She defined people as being “good” and “bad.” When she talked about her best friend and her new teacher, she mentioned they were “good people.” When she talked about being bullied in her old school, she said the girls bullying her were mean, and they were “bad people.” She categorized people as being “good” or “bad” based on whether they were nice, kind, or friendly or mean and unfriendly.

Geanina also helps out quite a bit with her little sister. Geanina and her mother take care of the toddler, shop for groceries and necessities, and cook. On the home visit to work with Geanina, she was just coming back to the house by herself from the local market where she was buying fruit and bread for the family. Geanina expressed that she is happy when she can talk on the phone, sing, or create art. She also said that making art helps her to concentrate. In the future she would like to be a singer, but if not, she would like to be a hairdresser like her aunt.

**Found Poetry**

This is the reflection of the artwork and words of Geanina written by Roma artist D.L.B.⁵

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**GEANINA**
We just moved again
Romania is looking like a head, does it speak to me?
London is a heart to me
But is England a kind place?
Antique flowers and birds, Is this England dreaming?
I am strong, I have to be or do I think I am strong?
Small crystals are two sides to a square
We just moved again.

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⁵ Roma artist requested use of initials per the approved IRB consent form.
Ismena

Ismena is a 9-year-old girl who identifies as Roma. She is an only child and though her parents were born in Poland, she was born in London. Ismena can speak English and Romanes. She enjoys dressing up in pretty dresses and she loves the movie Lion King. In school, Ismena likes math class. Outside of school, she enjoys drawing and dancing. She learned how to “Roma dance” from her mother, who volunteers at the Roma Support Group and teaches dance there.

Initial meeting. I first met Ismena at the informational meeting for the research project held at the Roma Support Group. She caught my eye as soon as she walked through the door. Ismena arrived wearing a beautiful, light pink, satin dress covered in pastel flowers. The top had fashionable capped sleeves. The skirt came right above the knee and poofed out like a cupcake.
Her dark brown hair was pulled up into a perfect bun, decorated with a pink hairbow. There wasn’t a hair out of place. Her feet were adorned with light pink patent shoes. She sat down in a chair during the meeting and only afterwards did she get up to look at the collage books, sample collage, and crafting materials. She spoke and laughed with another girl her age, who turned out to be Geanina. Ismena and Geanina knew each other from dance classes they took together. With the busy evening, I didn’t get a chance to personally talk to everyone there. Ismena was one of the potential participants I didn’t get an opportunity to meet and I wasn’t sure if I would see her again after the informational meeting.

**First art workshop.** It turned out that Ismena was a participant and she arrived at the first workshop in another beautiful satin dress. I asked her mother if she had a change of clothes or if we could get her an apron to protect her dress. It was too pretty to ruin, but her mother waved it off and said, “Oh no, it’s ok.” “Are you sure?” I asked. She replied, “Yes. Yes. No worries.” So Ismena did paint in her dress, and it did get paint on it. Red paint!

The session began by sitting in a circle and just chatting. The girls had chosen Disney Radio to listen to and we went around the circle and shared what our favorite Disney movie was and why we liked it. Talking about her favorite movie and dance brought Ismena immediately out of her shell. Though she was soft spoken, she did talk and converse with the others.

*Researcher:* Ismena, do you have a favorite Disney movie?

*Ismena:* I like The Lion King.

*Researcher:* That’s a good one. Have you seen the live show?

*Ismena:* Yes, I have seen the movie and the show on stage.

*Researcher:* The Lion King has some amazing music! Why is it your favorite?

*Ismena:* Well, I like animals a lot. And I like Simba and Nala. But in the show on stage, I
like how they dance in the animal costumes.

*Researcher*: Which animal costume did you like best in the show?

*Ismena*: I love the giraffes in the show. But I like the lions in the movie.

*Researcher*: The giraffes in the show are amazing! I think the warthog is funny.

*Ismena*: (Laughs.) That’s Pumbaa.

*Researcher*: Ah yes. Pumbaa.

After the icebreaker, they moved into talking about colors and the meaning attached to them. When it was time to get started, without hesitation, Ismena went for the red. A strong primary color.

*Researcher*: Ismena, why did you choose red for your background color?

*Ismena*: Red is a Roma color.

*Researcher*: Can you tell me more about that?

*Ismena*: Well, it’s in the middle of the Roma flag. (Points to Roma flag on office wall). So it is very important. It’s also in a lot of my Roma dancing skirts.

*Researcher*: I heard you and Geanina took dance together. Was it a Roma dance class?

*Ismena*: Yes. My mum taught some Roma dance classes here and Geanina was in it.

*Researcher*: Oh wow! That is so neat. Do you still take the classes here?

*Ismena*: When we have them. They aren’t all the time.

The color red made sense in the connection to the Roma flag. It is a color that represents passion, drama, and energy and represented Ismena’s connection to Roma dancing. When asked what her favorite art activity was she said, “dancing!” Then she added, “I also like painting and drawing.” Ismena said she liked to dance and she explained that it was fun and it is part of being Roma in her family.
The liaison explained that Ismena’s mother is a regular volunteer at the Roma Support Group. When they receive grants or have the funding for dance, she is the one that teaches the classes. I realized that I had seen Ismena’s mother several times around the office when I was in for volunteer work and forums. She was usually wearing a beautiful dress or long pastel skirt and her hair was always styled to perfection and face made up like a model. She had a very classic style about her.

**Second art workshop.** Ismena and Valentina attended this scheduled workshop. Geanina was out registering for her new school and had caught a cold. In this workshop we focused on getting into the materials and playing with them on the canvas before gluing them down. The girls were to choose three words to describe themselves. Ismena chose some of the pre-printed words, however she also used a glitter pen to write the word Roma. For her final touch, she found beads with the words “celebrates” and “free” on them.

*Researcher:* Can you tell me about some of the words you chose? I see the beads say “celebrates” and “free.”

*Ismena:* Celebrates is because I celebrate being Roma when my family dances Roma dances. And I put free because that is how I feel when I dance.

*Researcher:* That’s nice. I can tell you really enjoy dancing.

*Ismena:* (Smiles.) Yes. I love it!

*Researcher:* I see you also chose the phrase “loved by lots of people.”

*Ismena:* My mum loves me, my dad loves me, my family loves me, and my friends love me.

Researcher: That is a lot of love! Do you have any brothers or sisters?

*Ismena:* No. It’s just me.
At that moment, Ismena’s mother popped into the room and said, “For now!” We all laughed.

**Third art workshop.** Ismena and Geanina were both at this workshop. Valentina missed due to moving. In this session, the girls talked about family traditions and Roma traditions. I reminded the girls of the informational meeting and how I talked about being from America. I was learning about the Roma culture and I had never met a Roma person until I came to the Roma Support Group. I told the girls that the only thing I knew about being Roma came from books I read and television. I wanted to meet the real people and learn from them. As we discussed traditions, just as the literature indicated, I learned that there are no set Roma traditions. Most family traditions are based on religion or the culture from the origin country of birth. However, one tradition that seems to be woven throughout the different Roma communities is the love of dance and music.

*Researcher:* Ismena, I know from our last workshop that you like to dance. Is that a tradition in your family? Are there other traditions your family holds?

*Ismena:* I think just dance. Our family gets together at Christmas. But Roma dance is something we do anytime we get together.

*Researcher:* So anytime your family gets together, you get to dance?

*Ismena:* Yes.

*Researcher:* That sounds like fun! Does anyone play musical instruments when you dance?

*Ismena:* No. We have Roma music on the radio. There are people playing the music when we go to Poland.

*Researcher:* When you go to Poland?!

*Ismena:* (Giggles.) Yes.
Researcher: When do you go to Poland?

Ismena: Every year there is a...a....celebration? It’s in Poland. Me, my mum, and my dad go.

Researcher: Tell me more about the celebration! That sounds so exciting!!!

Ismena: (Smiles.) We stay with my family in Poland.

Researcher: Ohhh. So you get to visit your family when you go to Poland?

Ismena: (Excited.) Yes! And there is a big celebration. It’s for Gypsies only. We get to Roma dance and wear our Roma dancing dresses. And we dance a long way down the road.

Researcher: Ohhhh. It’s a parade?

Ismena: Yes! A parade!

Researcher: Wow! That sounds amazing!

The liaison from Poland explained that the celebration Ismena was talking about was International Roma Day. The first World Romani Congress took place in 1971 in London. This group was created to discuss and resolve issues Roma people around the world were experiencing. In 1990, the fourth World Romani Congress met in Poland. It was at this meeting that they declared April 8th International Roma Day. This is a day that is acknowledged around the world to celebrate Roma culture and raise awareness of the issues facing the Romani people.

Fourth art workshop. In the last session, Ismena came to the Roma Support Group offices. School was back in session so the last workshop was scheduled when it was convenient for the participants. They were all at different schools in different parts of town and attended different after school activities and programs. Ismena entered the office for her last session in her school uniform, which took me off guard at first. I was so used to seeing her in her colorful
dresses and matching shoes and hair bows. Today she wore a plain navy skirt, white button up blouse, a red and blue striped tie, and a navy blazer to round off the look. In England, students in public schools wear uniforms.

*Researcher:* Hi Ismena! I knew you had started back to school, but it didn’t hit me until I saw you in your uniform.

*Ismena:* Yes. We started last week.

*Researcher:* How is it going so far?

*Ismena:* It’s good.

*Researcher:* What is your favorite subject so far?

*Ismena:* I like maths. It’s like solving puzzles.

*Researcher:* That’s cool.

In the last session, Ismena was asked to think about some things she likes to do and to add any finishing details to her collage. She had brought in a picture of a Roma dancer to add to her piece. She finished out with a few embellishments. As she worked, we talked.

*Researcher:* So tell me about what you added to your collage today.

*Ismena:* I kept forgetting to bring in a picture of Roma dancing. So I brought that today. I added a frame and decorated it.

*Researcher:* I was wondering if something dance related would appear!

*Ismena:* I tried to make a Roma flag but it didn’t come out right.

*Researcher:* I think you did a great job! The Roma flag is not an easy one to draw.

*Ismena:* Yeah, that’s why I added Roma. (Pointing to the word spelled out in gold glitter paint pen.)

*Researcher:* Ah, I see. Tell me about the bottom half.
Ismena: Well, I love rainbows. I was going to make a rainbow, but after I messed up my flag, I decided to spell out the word “rainbow” in rainbow colors.

Researcher: I like that idea! What else did you add?

Ismena: (Pointing the bottom portion of the collage.) Flowers and hearts are my favorite, so I added them down here. I used some of the sticky flowers, but I also wanted to make some of my own.

Researcher: I see that! I like the way you created your own flowers instead of only using the ones that came in the package. I see you did that with your heart also.

Ismena: I like the paper. You can feel the gold on it. (Rubs fingers across the gold embossed design on paper.)

Directions for the written reflection were given and different ways by which she could write the story of her collage were discussed. Ismena was younger than the other participants. I wasn’t sure of her writing skills, so she was offered options of drawing a picture or using dictation, but she chose to write her reflection on her own. Ismena wrote a letter to a rainbow telling it about her collage. As the session came to an end, I asked Ismena if she would like to have her collage displayed at the Roma Support Group’s 20th anniversary event? I assured her she would get it back after the event, and she agreed. Before she left she said thank you and gave me a hug. Ismena’s mother stopped into the office on their way out and thanked me as well for volunteering and said she looked forward to seeing me at the event.

Summary

Ismena presented herself as a happy girl and a bit quiet at first. After the first workshop, she was more open. Ismena’s mom teaches traditional Roma dance at the Roma Support Group and both Ismena and Geanina took classes together. Ismena seemed more outwardly open about
her Roma heritage than the other participants. She was knowledgeable about Roma dancing and talked a lot about dancing in the festival in Poland and when she gets together with her family. One thing that stood out to me was Ismena’s appearance. She was dressed up when she attended events through the organization and even when she came to paint. I found this display of pride very interesting and noticed it in some of the other Roma families when I attended Roma forums, workshops, and events. Ismena’s collage featured red which is a very powerful color and is the color of the 16 spoked-wheel on the Roma flag. She also featured the Roma flag and a photo of a Roma woman dancing. Ismena loves colors and therefore added the word rainbow, using a different color for each letter and added different color pom-poms and around her name. She also explained that dancing was a way to celebrate and it that it made her feel free. When she grows up, she wants to dance like her mom. Ismena’s family is actively involved in the Roma community and Ismena experiences this involvement through the Roma Support Group. When they are able, she travels with her family to Poland for an annual festival celebrating the Roma people. Ismena says, “this is only for the Gypsies.”

Data collection with Ismena was not as abundant as with the other participants even though the same data collection methods were used with each of the participants. I wondered whether Ismena’s thinking and conversations were more literal and not as in depth or metaphorical because she was younger than the other two participants? Her answers to questions were to the point and simplistic as were our discussions compared to the other participants.

**Found Poetry**

This is the reflection of the artwork and words of Ismena written by Roma artist D.L.B.⁶

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⁶ Roma artist requested use of initials per the approved IRB consent form.
ISMENA
Dear rrainbow
Dancing in a square of red, surrounded by colours
Red is everywhere
Red dominates my landscape
The other colors are there, in small circles, in larger ones
The pink paisley heart its soft curved shape with two pieces missing at its centre
Random shapes containing the color red?
Dear rrainbow

Figure 22. Ismena’s Mixed Media Collage

Presenting the Findings

From the three research questions, came the overarching themes of identity, aspirations, and voice. Analysis of the data surfaced seven recurring sub-themes that represent a specific emphasis on each of the overarching themes. The themes and sub-themes represent and speak to the humanity of the artist participants as distinct and creative individuals. While the themes and
sub-themes in this chapter are a product of my analysis and of the participants’ words and art, I am aware of my analytic voice and its potential to minimize the artists’ verbal, written, and visual representations of themselves, their aspirations, and voice. The themes and sub-themes are as follows:

1. Identity
   a. Character Traits
   b. Roma Pride
   c. Self-expression
   d. Responsibility

2. Aspirations
   a. Personal Interests
   b. Self-expression

3. Voice
   a. Influencers

**Identity**

Four sub-themes surfaced that are associated to identity. These sub-themes illustrate the artists’ use of mixed media collage to make meaning and develop awareness of themselves. The first sub-theme, *character traits*, speaks to the girls’ ability to identify and express valued aspects of their behavior. The second sub-theme, *Roma Pride*, represents respecting the culture and heritage that the artist participants share. Knowing about and sharing the rich history and culture of the Roma assisted the artist participants in identity construction and expressions of Roma pride. The third sub-theme, *self-expression*, involves the artists asserting their individual traits through their artwork, written reflections, and interviews. The
final sub-theme, *responsibility*, reflects the obligations, tasks, and duties the artist participants feel an expectation to fulfill from their parents, teachers, and Roma community.

**Character Traits.** The girls expressed character traits in their collages through the use of descriptive words. Both Geanina and Ismena used the phrase “full of happiness” to describe themselves. All of the girls discussed positive intrinsic values about themselves like: belief in self, strong, and interesting. Ismena communicated power and strength by painting her collage in red. Only one participant, Valentina, mentioned religion by including the phrase “child of God” on her collage and is the only participant who mentioned an ability related trait by including the word “talented.”

The written reflections repeated what was displayed in the collages, reinforcing the character traits found there. Geanina expressed her ideal of morality as being a “good” person. She expressed this character trait in her collage, her written reflection, and in her interview. In her written reflection she says, “I am still happy and good even when people are not nice.” In the interviews, collages, and written reflections, all of the character traits communicated by all participants were positive traits.

**Roma Pride.** All three of the participants expressed Roma pride in similar ways. Singing, dancing, and visuals were woven throughout the participants’ collages, written reflections, interviews, and the found poetry. Both Valentina and Ismena included the Roma flag on their collages and Ismena also included the word Roma. One of the Roma flags overlaps the word family. Valentina and Geanina included maps of their home countries Slovakia and Romania and Ismena also includes a photo of a Roma woman dancing a traditional Roma dance.

The interviews and written reflections communicate for Geanina and Valentina that though they move often and change schools, they are proud of their culture and are resilient.
All three participants discuss celebrating Roma culture through dancing, singing, and playing instruments. Ismena expresses her excitement about attending and dancing in a Roma festival that she attends with her family annually. Geanina talked about being Roma in her interviews and expressed that even when being bullied she knows, “I am no different than a non-Roma person” and “I do not see being Roma holding me back.”

Interviews indicated that all three participants are active in their Roma community. This is largely due to their families’ involvement with the Roma Support Group. Ismena’s mother volunteers for the non-profit organization and teaches traditional Roma dance. Valentina is involved in programs through the non-profit that provide music lessons, poetry, writing contests, and art workshops. All of the participants’ parents attend the various trainings and workshops provided by the Roma Support Group that are given in order to provide Roma refugees resources and skills to be successful in the U.K.

**Self-expression.** The girls conveyed their individual traits in their collages, interviews, and written reflections. Though we talked about the meanings of colors, only one participant chose her color, red, based on its meaning of power. The other participants chose their background colors based on esthetics and what their eye was drawn to. All three of the girls discussed in their interviews the intrinsic benefits they experienced when creating art. Geanina said, “Art helps me concentrate. It makes me feel happy inside.” Valentina explained, “Art cheers me up.” Ismena likes that dance makes her, “feel free.” All three of the girls also voiced that art, whether it’s dancing, singing, drawing, or collage, is “fun.”

**Responsibility.** One aspect of the participants’ identity includes expectations of being responsible. For some, these expectations are from family. Some of the familial expectations
are related to Roma culture and some are not. There are also tasks or duties they feel obligated to do through school.

Geanina expressed in her interviews that she helps with her little sister by babysitting her. She also helps her mom cook and clean and makes trips to the local market, on her own, to pick up a few items like bread and fruit. In school, Geanina feels it is her responsibility to translate for other students that speak Romanian because other students did that for her when she first moved to England.

Valentina has three older brothers, however, her brother closest to her in age was diagnosed with autism. She mentions him specifically in both her interview and written reflection. Valentina is very proud of her brother and talks about his interest in studying old maps and his success on social media. Though her brother is a few years older than she, Valentina often takes care of him on some of the nights her parents work.

Ismena is an only child. She did not share any similar tasks or duties that the other participants shared. Though Ismena loves to dance and wants to dance like her mother, there is an expectation that she learns the traditional Roma dances and dance at family celebrations as well as the Roma festival in her home country of Poland.

When talking or writing about the different responsibilities, all of the girls seemed to exhibit pride versus an attitude of resentment. The tasks, duties, and obligations they were expected to fulfill were done so in a way that, though the girls did not question it, were perceived as something they were happy to do or even proud that they were trusted with the responsibility.
Aspirations

Two sub-themes emerged associated with aspirations that illuminated the hope and desire for achieving something. The two sub-themes, personal interests and self-expression, worked in tandem to expose the personal interests as well as feelings and ideas of the artist participants.

Personal Interests. In interviews, written reflections, found poetry, and the collages all participants expressed their own personal interests. These interests reflected what the girls wanted to do or be when they grew up. Considering their ages, 9 and 10, their current aspirations are related to activities they enjoy now.

Valentina speaks about her love of learning about other cultures, however she does not seem to have worked out how this interest could be transformed into a career. Most of her personal interests include playing instruments, drawing, and writing. She has explained she would like to be a writer when she grows up. Perhaps this is because she has already experienced recognition through a poetry writing contest and has had her work published in a book. Success and acknowledgment in doing something she enjoys may be an influence on her aspirations.

Geanina spoke of being a singer, however she also talked about being a hairdresser because her aunt is a hairdresser. Geanina did not express a personal desire or interest in hair dressing. It seems she may mention this job because her aunt is one of the few women in her immediate family that has a career besides being a homemaker.

Ismena expressed that she enjoys math in school, however her future aspirations were more in tuned with her culture, Roma dance. Ismena talked in her interviews, written
reflections, and expressed in her collage her interest in traditional Roma dancing. She would like to follow in her mother’s footsteps and be a Roma dancer.

Two of the three participants looked to women in their immediate family as role models when thinking and talking about future aspirations. Valentina seemed to look at her family as a picture of what she did not want to do for a career. Instead, she chose her own personal desire to be a writer, perhaps because she sees the difficult life her mother leads working at a factory at night. When her parents work 12-hour night shifts at the factory, Valentina often takes on some of the household responsibilities.

**Self-expression.** Just as was discovered in the overarching theme of Identity, *self-expression* plays a role in the participants’ aspirations. All participants discussed aspirations that derived from activities that made them feel good intrinsically. These included singing, drawing, writing, and dancing – all forms of artistic expression. Geanina said, “Art helps me concentrate. It makes me feel happy inside.” Valentina explained, “Art cheers me up” and Ismena likes that dance makes her, “feel free.” We see that all of the participants aspire and have a desire to do things that make them feel good. The thought of money, paying bills, and adult responsibility was not mentioned in any of the interviews or written reflections.

**Voice**

The theme, voice, reflects the expression of ideas in the words of the artist participants in order to challenge others to see and understand the world through their eyes. The one sub-theme that surfaced was *influencers*. This sub-theme highlights the barriers and challenges the artist participants face in their lives as Roma girls and the impact it has on their voice.

**Influencers.** Young people talk a lot about *influencers* in the world today. In this research, the meaning of the word *influencer* involves an individual or individuals that have
an impact on a topic. They are normal people, who can be connected with social media, industry, or even community groups and can be social relationship assets. Through their artwork and written reflections, all of the participants have the ability to become influencers for the Roma culture and Roma pride movements. Sometimes outside factors can have a motivating effect for influencers. For example, Geanina takes her experiences of being bullied in school and draws awareness to it through talking about it, writing about it in her written reflection, and promoting positive character traits in her collage. Ismena is very proud of her family’s involvement in the Roma festival in Poland and celebrating her culture through dance, and though Valentina tends to be on the more private side, she shared her Roma pride in her written reflections and collage.

Though I address research challenges in Chapter 6, I feel it is important to speak about barriers I experienced with the overarching theme of voice. Building trust has historically been an issue for an outsider coming in to a Roma community for research. Though I made great connections with the Roma Support Group and my liaisons there, which helped me build a foundation with the participants more quickly, it still takes time to build a deeper level of trust in order for them to talk about and share with others the challenges of living in a non-Roma society.

Finding the right people to work with and who can help to promote the aspect of voice was lacking due to time. It takes time to search for and meet the necessary connections to build relationships with people. The Roma Support Group has many connections in the community; however, I needed more time to meet with the Roma Support Group in order to be introduced to other community members who could assist with the aspect of the participants sharing their voice (artists, journalists, event coordinators, etc.). There was an
annual meeting and anniversary party for the non-profit organization being held in November, but I was due to return to the U.S. in October. With more time, I may have been introduced to members of, or even have become part of, the planning committee for the anniversary event. Though the collages were displayed at the event, neither the artists nor an accompanying explanation of their work was available or highlighted.

**Summary**

This chapter introduced the participants and their unique qualities. An overview of the art workshops was given in order to better understand the process of creating the collages. Overarching themes stemming from the research questions were introduced along with sub-themes. The next chapter discusses the process of creating collages for researcher reflexivity, what I learned about the research process, and lessons learned in conducting international research.
CHAPTER 5:
SELF-REFLECTION AS ARTIST AND RESEARCHER

In this chapter, I will include information about reflexivity as an artist researcher. I will discuss my researcher journal, the process I used to create the reflexivity collages, and descriptions of the collages and their meanings in regard to my experiences and learning in this research process.

Reflexivity Through Mixed Media Collage

Reflexivity is defined in this research as "careful thought". Guba and Lincoln (1981) refer to reflexivity as a process of reflecting on the self as a researcher, the "human as instrument." Through the research process, I carefully thought about myself as a researcher and an artist and how those two identities were intertwined. Reflexivity forced me to look inward at my choices of research, the group of people I worked with, and my identities throughout this research as an artist, feminist, and researcher. It also ensured that I kept a consistent pulse on my etic position in this study. Maintaining a researcher journal was beneficial in not only transcribing observations, thoughts, and feelings about the research process but was also the beginning of self-discovery. My researcher journal helped me capture moments and reflections as they happened, which assisted me in remembering my experiences. I used the journal as a catalyst to create mixed media collage and through the collage process created a visual representation of my deeper thinking. This critical reflection was a process of discovering my research topic and myself that may not have been explored through other means. Reflecting on myself as a researcher and artist...
through the use of visual art gave me a more concrete understanding of awareness of self and my etic influence on the research. Lincoln (1995) explains:

Critical reflexivity is when one enters into "high-quality awareness" of one's own psychological, philosophical, and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience for the purpose of understanding the personal and psychological state of others. (p. 283)

For this reason, I chose to create three mixed media collages; one for the beginning, one for the middle, and one for the end of my research experience in order to critically reflect and contextualize my lived experiences of the research and analysis process.

As a person who processes the world around me visually, I chose collage as the method to respond to my own lived experiences. Mixed media collage allowed me to integrate my experiences as both an artist and researcher and the creation process gave me an interactive, visual, and tactile process for analysis to help me formulate and understand meaning. Though writing helps me process and make sense of information, it is often single layered, whereas using visual art to express the world allows for multiple layers of exploration and expression. Utilizing collage enabled me to take written experiences and feelings and move them further into thoughts and ideas.

**Creation of Collages**

The artistic process of making a collage produces, "harmony from distinctly jarring material" (Hopkins, 1997, p. 6). By juxtaposing contrasting visual elements, new associations and meaning arise (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). La Jevic and Springgay (2008) describe the collage process as, "the placement of spaces, meanings, and subjectivities together in a rhizomatic sequence, and from this fluid, hesitant, and non-linear arrangement, multiple meanings ensue" (p.
My process of creating mixed media collage began by reading my researcher journal and reflecting on the memories and experiences. Through that process, I visualized the scene in my head like a movie. Thoughts and ideas derived from the experiences and feelings I had written about in my journal. At first, the thoughts and ideas were quite literal. As I thought more about how I could visually represent the thoughts and ideas, I began to mentally map out the collage. Through this process, thoughts and ideas became more layered and metaphorical as I began thinking of materials to use. Some materials came from my own collection of ephemera, paper, beading, and found objects while other materials were acquired to help bring the vision to life. The process of creating the collage in order to communicate my thoughts and ideas also allowed me to (re)imagine and (re)present my reflections of my experiences. In the sections below, I present three mixed media collages illustrating my research process: (1) meeting the artist participants for the first time, and my anxiety about conducting research as a westerner and gadzo, (2) the process of the artist participants creating their collages and the semi-structured interviews, (3) the data analysis process.

**Collage 1: All The World’s A Stage**

The first collage (see Figure 23 on page 145) includes representations of the early stages of the research process. It encompasses my thoughts, feelings, and experiences with my role as a researcher, my initial relationships with the participants, and the nature of the insider/outsider tensions. Ideas for my first collage came to mind as I read through my researcher journal and reminisced about my arrival in England, meeting the artist participants, and the beginning stages of building relationships. The fishbowl became the central theme as it represents the vulnerability of being exposed to others and the world from all angles. There is nowhere to hide.
Sometimes, this vulnerability leads to putting on a show or hiding our true selves from others in order to protect our thoughts, feelings, and the core of who we are.

I had been emailing the organization I partnered with for this research for over a year. Once I arrived in England I found the anticipation of meeting the liaisons with whom I would work exciting and daunting. Though I was in touch through email, more personal relationship building did not take place until I was at the organization meeting and speaking with people face to face. I was excited to begin the data collection I had been waiting so long to do and I was anxious because I was meeting new people. My liaisons were Roma and brought the insider knowledge of the Roma people and the skillset to communicate, work with, and build relationships with Roma refugees. I was an outsider with knowledge of research, wanting to bring the two worlds together. For the liaisons, participants, and me as the researcher, trust needed to be built. I did not want my participants to feel like they had to put on a false identity or feel uncomfortable exposing their culture and traditions to a stranger who would then share it with the world. Fortunately, the liaisons I worked with were just as invested in my research project as I was. This was critical in the success of relationship and trust-building with the Roma community.

The eyes in this collage represent aspects of vulnerability and the unknown. How do people see me? Do they like what they see? Am I meeting their expectations? Are they judging me? Am I good enough? These thoughts ran through my mind many times at the beginning of the research as I met people in the Roma community and the participant artists. I also wondered if the artist participants felt this way? Meeting someone new from another country also put the participants and their families in a vulnerable position. I felt this tension when I was first invited into their homes to socialize and to share their world. They wanted to get to know me and what
my intentions were. The ability to volunteer with the organization was imperative in enabling me to infuse myself into the local community in a considerate way. It allowed me to participate in conversations and get to know the Roma people. This helped build trust and relationships. By taking the time to do this, I was welcomed into their homes to sit, eat, and share our different cultures.

I chose to use map pieces in the background of Western Europe and America only. This represents the pressure that marginalized populations may feel about fitting into western society as well as the discrimination they experience. The maps are also a symbol of the fact that throughout this experience, I tried to remain aware of my position of authority and tried to be open and remind myself not to make assumptions about my participants using a western lens. For example, were my definitions and expectations of identity, aspirations, and voice different from my participants? Though I knew that these issues would become factors in my research, it was my goal to acquire entrance into and partial enculturation within the world I studied and to become an actor and to weave myself into the local culture as much as possible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

The title, "All The World's A Stage," comes from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Though Shakespeare's focus of this line in *As You Like It* was the seven stages of life, my focus is more literal like Shakespeare's similar use of this phrase in *The Merchant of Venice* which reads, "I hold the world but as the world...A stage where every man must play a part." In this research, there is a tension between who the participants are as Roma girls and who the western world, their origin country, their Roma culture, media, stereotypes, and others believe they should be. I wanted to acknowledge this tension as we moved into creating mixed media collages focusing on identity.
Collage 2: Windows and Mirrors

The second collage (see Figure 24 on page 145) includes representations of my role as a researcher and an outsider. This collage uses symbolism to express the process of the artist participants creating their collages and reflecting and talking about their lived experiences as Roma girls. Some of the images and objects for this collage were chosen to represent specific ideas and perspectives, while others were selected as a way for me to process my feelings and connections to my experiences in this part of the research process.

The dark blue background was chosen to represent integrity, seriousness, power, depth, and knowledge. In my mind, conducting this research with seriousness, high standards, and integrity went beyond the expected research ethics. Through my review of the literature, I saw a pattern in the research that showed the researcher conducting research on the Roma populations and speaking for the Roma population. This motivated me to conduct my research in a way that allowed the voices of Roma girls to speak for themselves. Knowledge building was also part of the research process. My participants were 9 and 10 years old. Though they were young, they had voices and something to say. Through the interviews, collage creations, and written reflections, they constructed a deeper knowledge about their own identity.

The abstract gold window frame represents the idea of “windows” as a resource that offers a view into someone else’s experience. The window represents opening up new ideas and spaces. Visual arts are subjective and free the artist of boundaries set by words. Mishra (2018) reminds us of the power of visuals, “Today’s students are part of a visually literate generation, brought up on a diet of steady images and icons. They have an instinctive understanding of visual language” (p.113). Through creating collages and writing reflections, the participants were able to share aspects of their inner lives and communicate the unseen and unheard aspects
of their lives. This was critical because it made me cognizant of my limited knowledge of the Roma people. It also reminded me to be aware of the assumptions I hold and stereotypes that have been ingrained in my thoughts.

The gold “window” also made me think of boundaries. Non-Roma writers, artists, media outlets, policymakers, teachers, etc., propagate discrimination when they continually misrepresent the Roma. This creates boundaries that keep others from learning about and accepting people who are different from them. I learned through the Roma Support Group that policymakers in the U.K. create and enforce laws and program guidelines for Roma. They do this while lacking the knowledge of the populations they create these policies for. “Roma” is an umbrella term that encompasses many different groups of people with very different needs. For example, Roma refugees from eastern Europe, new to the U.K., need very different resources than a Roma person who was born in the U.K. The Roma speak different languages, have different traditions and cultural norms based on their country of origin. To make a generalization that all Roma people are the same stifles cultural identity and the cycle of misrepresentation and discrimination continues.

The image of the person holding the shard of mirror represents the idea of “mirrors” as a story or insight that reflects your own culture and helps you build your identity. However, this is a photo of someone holding a piece from a shattered mirror. The piece of mirror is being held by two different hands. This represents the difficulties people may face when confronted about their identity and culture. Sometimes when we “look in the mirror” we see what society, media, and others have told us to see and sometimes that can be a misrepresentation of who we really identify ourselves as. Through creating art, discussing, and writing about it, this study aimed to support the artist participants in looking inwards at themselves to express who they truly saw in
their mirrors. An unintended benefit of the art making process was the realization that I was holding on to western ideas about what I thought should be accomplished in this research. For example, I held the assumption that this research would somehow “give” Roma girls a voice. In my westernized thought process, I felt that it was my responsibility to “help” the participants speak out for themselves. Had I not become aware of this savior complex, this study could easily have mimicked other studies that perform research on Roma people instead of with Roma people. It was important for me to reconceptualize what voice meant. I came to understand through the process of working with the artist participants that voice did not necessarily have to involve a grand gesture like a publicized art show or media event. Instead, voice for these participants was a more personal experience. For Geanina, it was verbalizing her experiences with bullying. Valentina became more open to sharing and talking about her love of the arts and claiming her talent as an artist. Ismena shared openly her passion for Roma dance and dedication to family events.

There have been many interpretations for the meaning of Salvador Dali’s melting clocks. Some believe they signify time not being relevant or fixed. Others believe they stand for the persistence of memory, or that time escapes us while we dream. There is no definite explanation and because visual art is subjective, in my collage, the melting Salvador Dali inspired clocks symbolize my anxiety about my timeline. Throughout the process of building relationships and data collection, I constantly worried about how fast time seemed to slip away. Though I was in regular contact with the Roma Support Group, it took time to recruit participants, to build trust with families, and to organize workshops. There were times when workshops were cancelled and rescheduled due to participant transportation issues, doctor appointments, vacations, school, and
even moving. Losing time was constantly in the back of my mind because I wanted to make sure I collected all of my data, but in the most comprehensible and ethical way possible.

**Collage 3: Brick by Brick**

The third collage (see Figure 25 on page 146) I created is a series of three representations reflecting my experiences and contextualized my thoughts during the data analysis process. Because the analysis process took place in stages, my collage was completed in stages. This was represented by creating separate collages that used similar materials and colors. Creating separate collages also gives the visual aspect of the different phases.

Sitting with all of my data in front of me, interview transcripts, researcher journal, participant written reflections, found poetry, and collages, was quite overwhelming in the beginning. I had no idea where to begin and no idea what I was looking for. I did know I wanted to ensure that I did not get “lost” in the data. I didn’t want the analysis process to become a “clinical” experience all about data entry. This led to my creation of the “living data wall.” This was a large empty wall in my office. I utilized color coded sticky notes to represent the different participants and began transferring my initial coding onto the sticky notes. This allowed me to physically and visually move the data around and reminded me that I was working with information from real, living people.

All three of the collages in this series have green backgrounds which represent life. My goal was to make sure that my data was about the real, lived experiences of the Roma girls. Their narrative through their voices. All three collages also feature a brick wall, which represents the actual data wall I created in my office. In the bottom right corner, all three collages feature a pop art girl. The pop art girl represents me as the researcher and as an artist. I chose pop art because it was an art movement that emerged in the U.K. and U.S. in the 1950s and represented a challenge
to traditions. I feel as though my arts-based dissertation, though becoming more accepted in the academic community, is still often considered non-traditional. It also represented to me, the tension in the Roma community of an ethnic minority that is constantly challenging mainstream society on what is acceptable and what is not in their culture. Also, Roma girls and women face challenges with finding a balance between maintaining Roma traditions and living in a fast-changing, modern world. Lastly, it represents my presence in this research. As much as I want the participants’ voices to be at the forefront, at the end of the day, it is still my interpretation and I am aware of that fact.

There are changes in the series of collages that one can observe that demonstrate my progress as a researcher. In the first collage (Figure 5), there is very little green showing through the brick wall. This represents the issue of the data overtaking the lived experience of the participants. Initially, the artist participant voices, though acknowledged, are not at the forefront of the analysis. First is the immersion process. Putting all of the data, represented by puzzle pieces, out there to look at, touch, read, and experience was the first step in my process. This overwhelming experience was symbolized by the black puzzle pieces floating out of the pop art girl’s head. I chose black puzzle pieces to represent the unknown, mystery, and seriousness of the data. The data was like a mystery or puzzle to solve and to answer my research questions. There was a sense of not knowing all of the answers to the questions about Roma life as a girl, but there was also a sense of seriousness, strength, and power lurking in the data. Information that could lead to new ideas and change.

In the second collage (see Figure 25 on page 146), I started to get a grasp of the data through initial coding, and I was able to start seeing themes emerge through clusters on my sticky note data wall in my office. The artist participants’ voices began coming to the forefront.
This is represented by the presence of more green background and less brick wall. The pop art girl, representing me as the researcher, began to take more of a backseat behind the wall and we see less of her. The data started to speak and themes began to emerge. Puzzle pieces were no longer strewn about on their own, but in clusters representing themes. The puzzle pieces also changed from black to gold to represent prosperity and wisdom. Prosperity is represented because a wealth of information was being mined from the data and wisdom because this data was assisting in constructing new knowledge about the lived experiences of the Roma girls participating in this study.

The last collage (see Figure 25 on page 146) symbolized the final result of data analysis, which came about after immersing myself in the data, sorting data, initial coding, themeing the data, and connecting themes to my initial research questions. In this collage, more of the color green was integrated into the brick wall than the other collages. This was meant to indicate that the voices of the Roma girls’ lived experiences emerged as I went through the analysis process. This is also represented with the pop art girl being mostly hidden behind the wall. Though I was a part of the process, my goal was for the Roma narrative to be communicated, not my own. The puzzle is almost completed in this collage to indicate that the data analysis process was exhausted. I chose a puzzle of the Roma flag because it was approved by the World Romani Congress and is a symbol of pride for all Romani people. There is, however, one last puzzle piece not quite put into place. This represents that the research with the Roma community is not over. This is not the end of their story. There is much more to learn from this transnational, ethnic minority.

Throughout all three collages, the brick wall was meant to represent my data wall. In each collage there was less brick and more green showing through. This was initially meant to
represent the emergence of the Roma voice from the data; however, after further reflection, I feel that the brick can also represent a barrier. Though the artist participants were involved in creating the data, they were not part of the coding process. In the future, I would take a more multinational approach to coding. Including the participants, liaisons, Roma Support Group administration, the Roma professor with who I corresponded would have added a richness to the analysis. Insider voices would contribute an authentic perspective and change the interpretation of the data. This could have also aided in communicating the complexity of the Roma people.

Summary

The process of creating these collages presented me with the opportunity to explore my own inner views and ideas before I embarked on the task of presenting the narratives of others. This art practice assisted me both in confronting my resistance of communicating the lived experiences of others and to share my own story of the research process through art. Through this process, I was able to move forward in sharing the identities, aspirations, and voices of the artist participants. In Chapter 6, I will summarize and interpret the research results, discuss the significance of the results, explain wider implications of this work, discuss problems and limitations along with suggestions for improvement, and suggest directions for future research.
Figure 23. All The World’s A Stage

Figure 24. Windows and Mirrors
Figure 25. Brick by Brick
CHAPTER 6:
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research was to explore how Roma girls’ participation in arts-based research worked as a catalyst in creating knowledge and expressing identity, aspirations, and voice while also dispelling cultural stereotypes. This study was guided by the follow research questions:

1. How does the process of art-making function as a catalyst for Roma girls in making meaning of their identity?
2. How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their aspirations?
3. How do Roma girls use visual arts as a tool to express their voices?

In this chapter I will highlight and interpret research results as well as discuss their significance. I will also discuss implications this research may have on the field of education as well as challenges and suggested directions for further research.

Discussion

The findings included in this research provide insights on the power of art in evoking responses from marginalized populations. It offers new insights about the art making process and how this process can be used in order to understand marginalized populations and influence others’ beliefs. Additionally, findings from this research add to the literature of how researchers can use arts-based research to empower participants’ voice and agency.

The Power of Art

The girls’ collages capture the multi-layered nature of their lives, as well as the
complexity of each evolving artist. While their collages and written responses did not always focus solely on their identity, aspirations, and voice related to being Roma, they are linked to additional areas of lived experiences including hobbies, domestic life, school, love, and happiness. This speaks to the potential of mixed media collage as a tool to capture the richness of people’s lives and the opportunity for Roma girls to present parts of themselves. From the perspective of an arts-based researcher interested in how Roma girls make meaning of their identity, aspirations, and voice through mixed media collage, I highlight how the power of art impacted the self-representations of the participants’ lives and experiences.

**Art-making and Identity**

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) indicate that for researchers to ask new questions and develop new insights, we must create new ways to see, think, and communicate. The power of arts-based research can accomplish this. Arts-based practices open up the researchers, participants, and others to multiple meanings and can minimize authoritative claims. The dialogue inspired by art is based on evoking or eliciting meaning rather than one person having the power to designate it.

The creation of visual images can make relationships to ideas and thoughts more vivid (Eisner, 2002). According to Eisner (2002), the arts invite children to notice the expressive features of the environment and assist with the use of imagination. They are better able to create something that can express or evoke an emotional response. I experienced what Eisner eludes to here when the collages were complete and the artists spoke about their creations and wrote their reflections. The artwork became a resource filled with a vividness and expression that enabled them to share and speak about their lives and experiences that could not have happened otherwise. For example, in the first one-on-one interviews conducted with the girls, demographic
information was easily extracted. However, even after community building activities and during art workshops where we were able to craft and talk casually, the girls had difficulty discussing intrinsic aspects of themselves. It wasn’t until I gave the girls more specific directions, like asking them to think of a few words that described themselves and to add those words to their collage, that they were able to begin breaking out and making their own creations.

Holding multiple art sessions to work on the same piece of art, demonstrated to the participants that the creation of a mixed media collage was a thinking process. The ultimate goal was not to have a finished product, but to experience an accumulation of encounters around the concept of their identity and that their identity was not fixed or static, but continually changing through their lived experiences (Kee et al., 2016). By the end of the art workshops, the participants were able to describe, in their own words, why they chose their collage materials and were also able to study their collages and write a meaningful reflection describing their piece of art.

**Art-making and Aspirations**

In this research, the definition of aspirations is the hopes and desires of achieving something. During data collection, the artist participants initially struggled with talking about their future goals. I wasn't sure if this was due to their age, lack of exposure to career choices, insufficient education in the schools, or something else entirely. In the art workshops, with the help of my liaisons, talking about activities and hobbies led to a more in-depth discussion of aspirations. All of the girls discussed careers involving the arts, and only one expressed an interest in a job outside of the arts. As I began looking through the data and reflecting on my experiences, I realized I was holding on to Western perceptions and stereotypical views of the ambitions and aspirations of Roma girls and women. Though I had read literature about the
history of the Roma that described the maternal role of the female in the household, I realized I was holding on to expectations that these roles would still be evident in the Roma community today. In reality, the data indicated the complete opposite. None of the participants in this research aspired to be a wife or homemaker. Though I had to ask probing questions and delve into conversations about hobbies, activities they enjoyed, and the skills they wanted to learn, they all knew they wanted to do something involving the arts.

Much of the literature and research is conducted on Roma and not with Roma, which may have contributed to my assumptions. Bhabha et al. (2017) discovered the views of young Roma remain undocumented and conducted participatory action research focusing on the voices of young Roma people. They found that over 50 percent of Roma youth they worked with had expectations of continuing their education beyond primary school. However, only 23.2 percent dreamed of careers requiring college or other higher education compared to 65.8 percent of non-Roma youth. In interviews, the researchers also found that over 80 percent of Roma youth were less optimistic about their career opportunities when imagining themselves in a career that required higher education. This finding was associated with Roma students who experienced some form of discrimination in school (Bhabha et al., 2017). The impact of discrimination on Roma children's future career aspirations spilled over to their chances of success despite the persistence of personal ambition (Bhabha et al., 2017; Peček & Munda, 2015).

Messing (2017) researched the segregation of Roma children in Eastern European schools and found that persistent stigmatization, interethnic bullying, and teacher neglect resulted in Roma's antischool attitudes and lack of respect for school and teachers. It also damaged their self-perception, identity formations, and future ambitions.
Catterall and Peppler (2007) concluded in their research that nurturing one's self-belief and self-confidence results in control over one's future and increases confidence about overcoming obstacles and achieving goals. The Roma Support Group's Aspiration Project corresponds with Catterall and Peppler's (2007) findings. Their in-depth outreach work and their holistic approach to working with young Roma people enhanced their self-confidence, life aspirations, and improved their health and well-being (Roma Support Group, 2018). In addition to the Roma Support Group's Aspiration Project, my research with Roma girls showed that using art can be a catalyst for the participants in thinking about, expressing, and talking about their aspirations.

**Art-making and Voice**

Future influencers have to be able to access their voice. According to Ajodhia (2019), everyone already has a voice; it is not something that is given to you and though researchers do not give voice, they are “positioned to modulate how loud and clear these voices ring” (p. 138). Voice is more than children expressing ideas or opinions. Roholt and Baizerman (2019) describe voice as including the processes of self-awareness, being comfortable talking to others, and being able to discuss experiences.

While analyzing the data on voice, I had to reconceptualize what voice meant. I defined voice in this research as expressing one's ideas in their own words; however, my Western ideals reemerged during the analysis process. I found myself thinking that there needed to be a significant event to showcase their work in order to demonstrate voice. After revisiting my methods and theoretical framework, I was reminded of Freire's (1970) dialogic approach and that the process of thinking, talking, and reflecting leads to praxis. In feminist standpoint theory, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) reminded me that experiencing life through the eyes of an
oppressed group of girls is a way to accurately and authentically understand their lives through their voices. Voice for the participants in this research was a personal experience. The artists' voices came through by verbalizing and sharing their experiences through discussion, interviews, and talking and writing about their artwork.

The process of art enabled the participants to express themselves, their individuality, and thoughts of their ideas and dreams for the future. By the end of the art workshops, the completion of the written reflections, and the final interviews, the girls were more confident discussing their lives and talking about themselves. They exhibited an air of excitement and pride when sharing their collage with me and their families. All participants gave permission for their collages to be displayed at the Roma Support Group’s upcoming annual meeting and anniversary party. With continued involvement in the arts, the participants could very likely become positive influencers for the Roma pride movement. Scholar and Roma artist Daniel Baker (2008) strongly believes in the power of art to influence society, “Art has the power to challenge long-held stereotypes and misconceptions. The alternative narratives offered by visual discourse surrounding Gypsy culture can signal a way forwards towards equity and presence” (p. 415).

**Implications for Marginalized Populations of Children**

In the literature, I discovered the findings of marginalized groups of children regarding identity, aspirations, and voice were similar to the results yielded in this dissertation. Creating art enables children, in this case Roma girls, to identify and express valued aspects of themselves, represent and respect culture, assert individual traits, and realize future dreams and aspirations. Art is an inherent human activity that demonstrates the capacity for meaning making, constructing narratives, and locating the self (Sinha & Hickman, 2016).
Shah’s (2015) research with school aged girls in India found that the participatory research method of photo voice enabled her participants to engage in the research process and supported development of empowerment. The girls who participated found they were able to share, in their own way, their ideas of reality. The researcher also found that the girls were more confident in sharing about their lives and future aspirations.

Vaart, Hoven, and Huigen (2018) asked participants to visualize the meaning of a place in their village and draw or paint it. They found that their participatory arts-based research produced multifaceted knowledge. Deep insights into participant’s sense of place were discovered. Compared to other methods, like interviews, they found that the arts-based research elicited stronger responses going beyond the cognitive ways of knowing.

Catterall and Peppler (2007) conducted arts-based research with young inner-city children. Using drawing, painting, and sculpting to conduct regular art instruction during a five-month period, they found significant growth in children’s general self-efficacy. Children were more apt to believe they could be agents of change in their own lives and had control over creating their own future. They were also more positive in their ideas about what the world had in store for them. The researchers also saw an increase in creativity and original thinking.

Not only does visual art serve as a medium for understanding and communicating ideology, it can also be used in order to challenge, displace, and transform beliefs and stereotypes (Leavy, 2015). The arts can be a catalyst in leading to intense thinking and discussion. One reason the arts can be highly engaging is partly because they access our emotions and may force us into seeing or thinking differently (Yorks & Kasl, 2006). Engaging in critical dialogue is a necessary activity to implement in order for people to consider aspects of diversity and identity as well as encouraging them to question themselves about the nature of
stereotyping (Henry & Verica, 2015). Ultimately, the goal of creating critical dialogue is to create awareness.

**Implications for Learning**

The teaching profession in the U.S. has a history of limiting, and sometimes eliminating completely, the arts programs due to choices in budget allocation and political pressure with regards to state and national testing requirements. As Eisner (2002) claims, “The aims of any field are not determined solely by its subject matter; they are also determined by policymakers and teachers who decide what is important to teach” (p. 70). Assessment, testing, and more specifically standardized testing, are terms that many teachers do not like to hear. However, teachers are also often told by their administrators and other stakeholders in education that our state standards tell us what to teach, not how to teach. Although much of the educational practices stress data-driven decision-making approaches to curriculum, others are calling for the arts and other imaginative approaches to engaging students not only in PK-12, but higher education as well (Henry & Verica, 2015). In the face of politics in education, educators are still aiming for meaningful, long-lasting learning, but in order to make a deep impression, students must be engaged in their own learning process (Leavy, 2002). By integrating the arts into education, teachers can engage their students and improve the ways in which students think. Leavy (2002) explains that visual images are processed differently than text and sound, which is one reason visual images can be powerful and make lasting impressions. They also inhabit an elevated place in the memory. The arts can assist children in developing and expressing concepts as well as accessing their imagination in order to create and evoke feelings and emotions.

Reiterated from Chapter 3 of this dissertation, Holloway and LeCompte (2001) explain that the arts increase academic achievement, creativity, fluency, and originality in thinking and
feelings of self-worth. Participation in the arts gives children the opportunity to express themselves and “try on” other identities and to develop a sense of voice and agency (Freire, 1970). Art can create a space to empower teachers to address bias and stereotypes in order to work for long-term social change. Alternative teaching methods and art integration opens the door for deeper learning experiences for students in the PK-12 classroom as well as higher education settings.

Challenges

While the benefits of participatory arts-based research offset the challenges confronted, the difficulties of conducting a study of this kind are important to discuss. The largest challenge I experienced was researching in an international location. With this came challenges in making contacts, recruiting participants, scheduling, and funding.

International Location

To conduct a dissertation in a country different from one’s own requires patience and a lot of planning. I began organizing and researching for the international aspect of this study more than a year in advance. Even with preparation, I encountered challenges. I planned for as much as possible, but there are always unforeseen issues and obstacles. Constraints of international research are not only external. My own cultural and linguistic knowledge, academic background, and logistical resources determined aspects of my choices in country, contextual variables, and the methods I adopted for this research (Hantrais, 2010).

Building Relationships

I chose to research a refugee Roma population in London because I have traveled to England on a regular basis for over 25 years. I felt, for me, it would be easier to research in a foreign country I was somewhat familiar with in order to maintain more focus on the research
with less worry about culture shock. Though I have traveled to England quite often, none of my personal contacts there had any relationships or connections with the Roma population. It was quite difficult to break through this barrier and to get an introduction. I contacted, through email and telephone, approximately seven different non-profit organizations that were seeking volunteers to work with the Roma population. I received no response. Through researching peer reviewed literature focused on the history and lives of the Roma people, I found a Roma professor living in England who was also on the board of a non-profit organization that worked with the Roma. I contacted him directly and my partnership with the Roma Support Group began. Over a span of a year, I filled out the non-profit’s required volunteer paperwork, researched the IRB process for the U.K. and made sure all requirements for my university’s IRB were met. It came as a surprise when a couple of months before I was to leave for London, the organization asked for additional paperwork. I had filled out their volunteer packet, they knew my intentions were to volunteer but I was also there to collect data for my dissertation. They sent another packet providing student researcher guidelines and requested a letter from my dissertation chair. This was not an issue but easily could have delayed my research had this come up once I was in London. Navigating these types of unforeseen circumstances has taught me for future international research. I have more knowledge about the kinds of questions I need to ask organizations and research partners when organizing a study. Garcia (2020) experienced these difficulties at his research site and ultimately lost data and valuable research time due to the “extra layer of complexity that would be unproductive to the research.” Even after corresponding with the organization for a year, I didn’t have any contact with the liaisons that would help me throughout this journey until I arrived in London and met with them. We quickly
built a rapport; however, building rapport with Roma families that depend on the Roma Support Group for assistance took additional time.

I didn’t realize until I was in the recruitment process how important it would be to build relationships with contacts. The two liaisons I worked with were invested in the arts and focused on providing services that could strengthen the Roma community. They were a part of this community. Working with people who were invested in the research was important for building meaningful relationships and sharing similar goals. Without the personal investment on both sides, conducting home visits and participating in community events would not have been possible. Building meaningful relationships has also created the unintended benefit of international resources. After the research concluded and I returned to the U.S., the Roma Support Group and I maintained our relationship. They have contacted me to help provide resources for Roma families moving to America and they have provided me with additional artist research and annual reports conducted by their organization. The opportunity to work together in the future is an open possibility because of the relationship we built and the vision we share.

Acknowledging Assumptions

When I originally thought out the methods section of my research, I had no experience working, volunteering, or researching with Roma people. One important thing I learned was to be flexible and ready for anything. I was on a nine-week time frame and had a lot of data to collect; however, I found that the best way to accomplish this was to trust my liaisons. Recruiting through one general meeting was not going to work because the Roma families do not respond very well to this method. Nor do they respond through email blasts and fliers. Word of mouth was the most powerful tool, so we started recruiting through home visits. It took spending three to four hours at a family’s house, socializing and sitting around the living room or dining room
table with coffee and sweets. This enabled the families and potential participants to meet me and to learn about the research I was doing. After three home visits, the word spread, and when my liaisons made phone calls about the project, more people expressed interest. This led to a casual drop-in type meeting at the Roma Support Group offices with a similar atmosphere to the home visits.

It was through the home visits that relationships began and trust started to build. The home visits, which were an unplanned part of this research, were some of the most powerful interactions because the ingrained stereotypes and assumptions that I held were exposed and the myths that I had read about in research and saw in media were dispelled. This was especially important because I did not want my own background or assumptions to interfere with the study (Kinnear, 1987). I learned that the Roma people I met were not secretive, but very much open about who they were and where they were from. The workshops and forums I attended taught me that the Roma felt it was their responsibility to educate others in their community about their history and culture. Unlike what the media and stereotypes portray, Roma are hard workers. Many work hard labor jobs in construction and factories. There were no fortune tellers, swindlers, or kidnappers. One of the most detrimental practices that was exposed as a myth was child marriage. The Roma community I engaged with was not practicing child married. They value education and many want their children to have the opportunities that they were not afforded in their country of origin. They taught me that they want people to know who they are and that they come as refugees from countries like Poland, Romania, and Slovakia to work hard and contribute to society. The majority of the Roma community I engaged with wanted people to understand where they came from and that they brought value to a community. They were not there to take from a welfare system or extort those who help them make a new life in the U.K.
**Flexibility and Timelines**

Another challenge I was not expecting was scheduling. Again, when I thought out my methods and calendar for conducting interviews, art workshops, and written reflections, nothing worked as planned. Being an organized person and finding out my perfectly planned and structured timeline was not going to work, could have derailed the study. However, I was able to re-adjust my expectations. Just as recruiting needed to be modified in order to make the participants and families comfortable, so did the workshop schedule. Making the workshop schedule more flexible was less about trust and more about respecting family life schedules. The participants I worked with, though all Roma, were very different. They came from different countries, had different customs, and different priorities. Two of the three participants were in the middle of moving or just settling in to a new place. One participant was changing schools; one went on vacation for a week; one got sick with a cold. Although there is good city transportation, if an adult was not able to bring the participant, they couldn’t make the workshop. For some, parents worked during the day, and others worked nights. Also, school was starting up again, which I had not anticipated. Every participant had the same amount of time and each workshop focused on the same topics; however, where and when they were held became flexible.

Mangen (1999) discusses the importance of flexibility. It is essential to have research strategies designed and introduced sequentially, however sticking to this “no matter what” is detrimental to the research and does not ensure that your data collection and analysis will be more reliable or valid. Being flexible does not mean that the research will have stereotypical results based on naive "touristic" approaches. It is inevitable; accommodations will be made in international research.
Funding

Lee, Recker, and Rogowski (2020) discuss the process that many educational researchers go through when working towards external funding. They describe the process of putting in many hours of work to conceptualize and provide documentation that is deemed worthy of funding. Many researchers bring in collaborators to partner with. The intention here is not only for the collaborator(s) to serve as the research site but to reflect a partnership that has “thoughtful plans for reciprocity in the relationship.” In my research, I found building this relationship challenging because I did not have any contacts or partnerships built before the research proposal. The several attempts I made at funding with other organizations failed, which set my research calendar back six to eight months. When planning for international research, I learned that my timeline needed to be more open-ended and I had to be flexible with setting expectations for where and when the research was going to happen. Another unforeseen was partnering with an organization, completing all necessary paperwork, scheduling the timeline, and booking the travel only to find out the organization’s grant for the program was cut and future funding was not known. My options were to start over and search for another organization to partner with, look for outside funding, or fund it myself. With my timeline, I found outside funding through a company sponsorship and also funded some of the project myself. It is my belief, that for this particular study, funding was the crux of my challenges. International research alone can be a challenge, but funding is absolutely necessary to help provide the resources needed for the research. My funding allowed for nine weeks of food, lodging, transportation, and all of the art materials needed to conduct the research. However, more funding would have allowed more time. With more time, I would have possibly been able to hold a family night where the participants could have shared and talked about the work they were so proud of. This could have
included other youth projects that were sponsored by the Roma Support Group like the youth orchestra and dance class. With more time I could have cultivated relationships with the local Roma artists and media outlets to add to the already growing Roma pride campaigns as well as possibly arrange for the feminist, Roma artist (who also conducted the found poetry for this research) to come and speak with the participants about art and help with one of the workshops. Though I was able to fly back for the Roma Support Group’s annual general meeting and 20 year anniversary event, I would have liked to have stayed on to be a part of the planning committee. This would have enabled the girls’ work to be spotlighted.

I had not anticipated that the lack of funding would have an impact on the data analysis process. The artist participants created the artwork and were included in member checking the written reflections and interviews. I also had an insider artist create found poetry. I recognized the importance of the participants creating the data but neglected to include them in the coding process. Though I followed Saldaña’s qualitative coding methods, I was the sole coder. It wasn’t until comparing my found poetry with the poetry created by the female Roma artist that I realized the considerable difference between the insider and outsider perspectives. In the future, I would ensure time and funds were available in order to include the participants and other stakeholders in the coding and analysis process.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

It is not the objective of this study to examine a whole international society or to comprehensibly cover a social system (Hantrais, 2010). This study is not intended to generalize the findings to all Roma girls, and it is important to value these young, Roma, artist participants’ creative expressions of identity, aspirations, and voice. The artists in this study are not static,
therefore it only captures individual moments of self-expression in order to share with us their lives. This will hopefully inspire further exploration.

Additional understanding is needed regarding the identity, aspirations, and voice of a wider sample of Roma girls. Further research with not only a larger sample of Roma girls, but a wider sample of age ranges may help explore the complexities of identity, aspirations, and voice as Roma girls grow into Roma women. Further research may use mixed media collage to explore these possible connections.

Participants’ communicated closeness to family as their support system. Future research may use collage to explore family, friends, faith, and possible other sources of companionship as sources of emotional support, especially in times of hardship and discrimination they may experience.

Further attention is needed in the role of how technology has connected the Roma. The Roma call themselves transnationalists. For the Roma people, this means their root origins are from India; however, today they live all over the world. They are a minority ethnic group who share their historical country of origin, a flag, and for some, the common language of Romanes; however, they have no country of their own. The Roma have no common nation or territory in which cultural activity can take place. Current, and future, technology can be a space for sharing, listening, learning, and connecting, culturally as well as for engaging in activism.

**Final Thoughts**

One of the most important aspects of this research was using the methods of data collection and representation of mixed media collage in order to explore and understand the richness and multi-layered realities of the Roma people. Research with marginalized populations should be focused on the discovery, insight, and perspectives of those we study with in order to
construct new knowledge. The object is not to reach a single neat answer, but to open up to
different methods of communication, with the hope of providing a context in which marginalized
people can reveal their complexities and lived experiences (Clark, 2017).
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Appendix A: IRB Certificate

This is to certify that:

Crista Banks

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

- Human Research (Curriculum Group)
- IRB Members (Course Learner Group)
- 2 - Refresher Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of South Florida

Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wd35a7c0a-4343-4197-a0fa-7b91575b96b5-26489650](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wd35a7c0a-4343-4197-a0fa-7b91575b96b5-26489650)
Appendix B: Parent Consent Form

Study ID: Pro00036346 Date Approved: 8/14/2018

Parental Permission for Children to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk
Pro # 00036346

The following information is being presented to help you and your child decide whether or not he/she wishes to be a part of a research study. Please read this information carefully. If you have any questions or if you do not understand the information, we encourage you to ask the researcher.

We are asking you to allow your child to take part in a research study called:
Roma Girls Expressing Identity, Voice, and Aspirations Through Participatory Arts-Based Research.

The person who is in charge of this research study is Crista Banks. This person is called the Principal Investigator. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Michael Berson.

The research will be conducted at the Roma Support Group.

Purpose of study:
The purpose of this study is to find out how Roma girls use art making to express themselves (identity, voice, and aspirations).

Why is your child being asked to take part?
We are asking your child to take part in this research study because she is a Roma girl between the ages of 9-16. We want to find out how Roma girls in this age group use art making as a way to express themselves.

Study Procedures:
If your child takes part in this study, she will be asked to:
- Participate in an icebreaker activity at the beginning of each visit.
- Create an art piece using the method of collage.
- Reflect on and write or tell about their collage.
- Share their writing and collage with others.
- Answer questions about themselves and their collage.
- Attend all of the scheduled art sessions.
- Make a collage that involves painting, cutting, and gluing items to a canvas.
- Answer questions to help the researcher understand more about your child and their art.
- If any questions make your child uncomfortable, they do not have to answer them.
- Questions your child will be asked may include:
  - What makes you Roma?
  - What do you love about being Roma?
  - Would you change anything about being Roma? If so, what? If not, why?
  - What do you want others to know about you?
  - What does success mean to you?
  - What do you want to do or be?
  - How old are you?
  - Where were you born?
  - Do you have hobbies? What are they?
  - What do you like about making art?
  - How do you feel when you make art?
  - What is your favorite way to create art?
  - What did you like most about creating a collage?
  - What did you like least about creating a collage?
  - What is unique about Roma compared to other people in England?
  - If a non-Roma person looked at your collage and read your written reflection, what would you want for them to understand or take away?
  - Tell me about your collage. Why did you use the colors and items you chose?
- Interviews may be audio recorded for accuracy. Your child will be informed of the recording beforehand and can ask to not be recorded.
- The maximum expected duration of this project will be 6 sessions that are approximately 2 hours each. Twelve hours total.
- Sessions will take place at the Roma Support Group.
- Sessions will take place over a time period of approximately 6 weeks.
- After the sessions have ended, Crista Banks and a female, adult, Roma Artist would like to use your child’s written reflection and collage to create poetry. Any information shared with the Roma artist will be de-identified.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule (Dates/Times to be determined.)</th>
<th><strong>What Will Happen During the Sessions.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 1</td>
<td>Information meeting with you and your child. Learn about the project. Meet the researcher (Crista Banks). Ask any questions you may have about the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 2</td>
<td>We will start with the session with an ice-breaker activity to get to know each other. Crista Banks will lead a discussion about collage and how to make a collage. Children will be able to see and touch examples of collages, look at pictures and books of collages, and see and touch materials they may want to use in their collage. They will begin the first step of creating their collage (the background). Your child may also be interviewed. The interview may be audio recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 3</td>
<td>We will begin our meeting with a new ice-breaker activity. Crista Banks will talk about collage and ask a question(s) about your child’s life or feelings. This will help guide them in choosing materials and adding to their collage. Your child may also be interviewed. The interview may be audio recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 4</td>
<td>We will begin our meeting with a new ice-breaker activity. Crista Banks will talk about collage and ask a question(s) about your child’s life or feelings. This will help guide your child in choosing materials and adding to their collage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 5</td>
<td>We will begin our meeting with a new ice-breaker activity. Crista Banks will talk about collage and ask a question(s) about your child’s life or feelings. This will help guide your child in choosing materials and adding to their collage. Your child may also be interviewed. The interview may be audio recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 6</td>
<td>We will begin our meeting with a new ice-breaker activity. Your child will finish their collage. Crista Banks will talk about/ask questions about the finished collage. Your child will reflect on their collage and then write about or tell about their collage. They may also be interviewed. The interview may be audio recorded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Number of Participants**
About 10 individuals will take part in this study at the Roma Support Group.

**Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**
If you decide not to let your child take part in this study, that is okay. Instead of being in this research study your child can choose not to participate. You should only let your child take part in this study if both of you want to. You or your child should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study to please the study investigator or the research staff.
If you decide not to let your child take part, your child will not be in trouble or lose any rights he/she would normally have.

You can decide after signing this informed consent form that you no longer want your child to take part in this study. We will keep you informed of any new developments which might affect your willingness to allow your child to continue to participate in the study. However, you can decide you want your child to stop taking part in the study for any reason at any time. If you decide you want your child to stop taking part in the study, tell the study staff as soon as you can.

Benefits
We do not know if your child will gain any benefits by taking part in this study.

Risks or Discomfort
Although we have made every effort to try and make sure this doesn’t happen, your child may find some questions we ask may upset them. Your child does not have to answer any question that makes them uncomfortable. If a question does upset your child, we will tell you immediately and provide contacts of those who may be able to help your child with these feelings.

Compensation
Your child will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study. Your child will be able to keep any art pieces they create and the poetry created by the researcher and the adult Roma artist participant.

Costs
It will not cost you anything to let your child take part in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
We will do our best to keep your child’s information private and confidential. Your child’s personal information will not be disclosed. You may choose a pseudonym or the use of initials for the purposes of the written report. Certain people may need to see your child’s art work, written reflection, and interview transcripts. These individuals include:

- The Principal Investigator, study coordinator from the Roma Support Group, and a Roma artist/expert in collage.
- University people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We will publish what we learn from this study. We will not include your child’s legal name. We will use a pseudonym or initials based on your preference. Your child’s art work and photos of the art making process (in electronic or print form) will be published in this study. Photographs of the artwork and art making process will be used in reports, presentations, publications, and exhibitions arising from the project. Photos will not include your child’s face or legal name. No data from this project will be used for commercial gain.
Data collected for this research will be stored in the University of South Florida’s Box.com cloud storage of the principal investigator located in the United States. This is a password protected program.

**The following information may be used and/or disclosed to others:**

- Photographs of your child’s art work and art making process.
- Written reflections.
- Answers to interview questions.
- Demographic information (ethnic background, age, socio-economic status).
- Poems created by Crista Banks and Roma artist using your child’s written reflection and collage.

**However,**

- In published works and academic conferences there will be pseudonyms or initials used.
- In consulting with other professionals/stakeholders about data, information will be de-identified.

Your child’s information collected for this research will be kept as long as it is needed to conduct this research. This information includes: photographs of the collage and art making process, written reflections, written answers to interview questions, interview recordings, poems created by Crista Banks and a female, adult Roma artist, and demographic information. Once your child’s participation in the research is over, their information will be stored for five years. All information will be stored in Crista Banks’ University of South Florida supported Box.com cloud storage. This is a password protected program. Your permission to use your child’s personal data will not expire unless you withdraw it in writing. You may withdraw or take away your permission to use and disclose your child’s information at any time. You can do this by sending written notice to the Principal Investigator at the following address:

Crista Banks  
13917 8th Street  
Dade City, Fl. 33525

You have a right to see the information about your child after the research is complete, as allowed by USF policies. If you have concerns about the use or storage of your child’s personal information, you have a right to lodge a complaint with the data supervisory authority in your country.

A federal law called Title IX protects your right to be free from sexual discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. USF’s Title IX policy requires certain USF employees to report sexual harassment or sexual violence against any USF employee, student or group, but does not require researchers to report sexual harassment or sexual violence when they learn about it as part of conducting an IRB-approved study. If, as part of this study, your child tells us about any sexual harassment or sexual violence that has happened to her/him, including rape or sexual assault, we are not required to report it to the University. If you have questions about Title IX or USF’s Title IX policy, please call USF’s Office of Diversity, Inclusion & Equal Opportunity at (813) 974-4373.

**You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints.**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Crista Banks at 07751496920. If you have questions about your child’s rights, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-
Information Use
By signing this form, you are giving your permission to collect, use and/or share your child’s information as described in this document. As part of this research, USF student and principal investigator, Crista Banks, may collect, use, and share the following information:

- Your child’s art work.
- Photographs of the art making process.
- Your child’s written reflection.
- Your child’s answers to interview questions.
- Your child’s demographic information.

You can refuse to sign this form. If you do not sign this form your child will not be able to take part in this research study. You can revoke this form at any time by sending a letter clearly stating that you wish to withdraw your authorization to use your child’s information in the research. If you revoke your permission:

- Your child will no longer be a participant in this research study;
- We will stop collecting information about your child;
- We will not use the information collected prior to the revocation of your authorization.

To revoke this form, please write to:
Crista Banks
For IRB Study # 000363436
13917 8th Street
Dade City, FL 33525

Please choose below how you would like for your child to be referred to in this study (choose only one):

______ Please use a pseudonym that I will disclose to you at a later time in private.

______ Please use my child’s initials __________.

______ Please use my child’s first name __________________.

Consent for My Child to Participate in this Research Study

I freely give my consent to let my child take part in this study and authorize that her information as agreed above, be collected, used, and shared in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to let my child take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_________________________________________  ________________________
Signature of Parent of the Child Taking Part in Study          Date
Printed Name of Parent of the Child Taking Part in Study

**Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent**

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their child’s participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent  
Date

---

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
Appendix C: Assent of Children to Participate in Research

Study ID: Pro00036346 Date Approved: 8/14/2018

Assent of Children to Participate in Research

Pro # 00036346

Title of study: Roma Girls Expressing Identity, Voice, and Aspirations Through Participatory Arts-Based Research.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research?
You are being asked to take part in a research study about using art to express yourself. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a girl between the ages of 9 – 16 and you are of Roma decent. If you take part in this study, you will be one of about 10 people at this site.

Who is doing this study?
The person in charge of this study is Crista Banks. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Michael Berson.

What is the purpose of this study?
By doing this study, we hope to learn how Roma girls use art making to express themselves (to communicate identity, aspirations, and voice).

Where is the study going to take place and how long will it last?
The study will take place at the Roma Support Group. You will be asked to participate in approximately 6 visits which will take about 2 hours. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 12 hours over the next 6 weeks.

What will you be asked to do?
- You will be asked to participate in an ice breaker activity at the beginning of each visit.
- You will be asked to create an art piece using the method of collage.
- You will be asked to write or tell about your collage.
- You will be asked to share your writing and collage with others.
- You will be asked questions about yourself and your collage.
- You will need to be able to attend all of the scheduled art sessions.
- You will need to be able to make a collage that involves painting, cutting, and gluing items to a canvas.
- You will need to be able to tell or write about your collage.
- You will need to be able to answer questions and talk about yourself and your collage.
- You will be asked questions to help the researcher understand more about you and your art.
- If any questions make you uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them.
- Questions you may be asked include:
  o What makes you Roma?
What do you love about being Roma?
Would you change anything about being Roma? If so, what? If not, why?
What do you want others to know about you?
What does success mean to you?
What do you want to do or be?
How old are you?
Where were you born?
Do you have hobbies? What are they?
What do you like about making art?
How do you feel when you make art?
What is your favorite way to create art?
What did you like most about creating a collage?
What did you like least about creating a collage?
What is unique about Roma compared to other people in England?
If a non-Roma person looked at your collage and read your written reflection, what would you want for them to understand or take away?
Tell me about your collage. Why did you use the colors and items you chose?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>What Will Happen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 1</td>
<td>Information meeting with you and your parent/guardian. Learn about the project. Meet the researcher (Crista Banks). Ask any questions you may have about the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 2</td>
<td>We will start with an ice-breaker activity to get to know each other. Crista Banks will lead a discussion about collage and how to make a collage. You will be able to see and touch examples of collages, look at pictures and books of collages and see and touch materials you may want to use in your collage. You will begin the first step of creating your collage (the background). You may also be interviewed. The interview may be audio recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 3</td>
<td>We will begin our meeting with a new ice-breaker activity. Crista Banks will talk about collage and ask a question(s) about your life and/or feelings. This will help guide you in choosing materials and adding to your collage. You may also be interviewed. The interview may be audio recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 4</td>
<td>We will begin our meeting with a new ice-breaker activity. Crista Banks will talk about collage and ask a question(s) about your life and/or feelings. This will help guide you in choosing materials and adding to your collage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 5</td>
<td>We will begin our meeting with a new ice-breaker activity. Crista Banks will talk about collage and ask a question(s) about your life and/or feelings. This will help guide you in choosing materials and adding to your collage. You may also be interviewed. The interview may be audio recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting 6</td>
<td>We will begin our meeting with a new ice-breaker activity. You will finish your collage. Crista Banks will talk about/ask questions about the finished collage. You will reflect on your collage and then write about or tell about your collage. You may also be interviewed. The interview may be audio recorded.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What things might happen if you participate?
To the best of our knowledge, your participation in this study will not harm you. Although we have made every effort to try and make sure this doesn’t happen, you may find some questions we ask may upset you. If so, we will tell you and your parents or guardian about other people who may be able to help you with these feelings. In addition to the things that we have already talked about, listed above, you may experience something uncomfortable that we do not know about at this time.

Is there benefit to me for participating?
We cannot promise that you will receive benefit from taking part in this research study. However, some people have experienced pride and happiness when they create and share their art.

What other choices do I have if I do not participate?
You do not have to participate in this research study. If you decide not to take part in this study, that is okay. Instead of being in this research study you can choose not to participate. You should only take part in this study if you want to. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study to please the study investigator or the research staff. You should talk with your parents or guardian and others about taking part in this research study. If you do not want to take part in the study, that is your decision. You should take part in this study because you want to volunteer.

Will I receive any compensation for taking part in this study?
You will not receive any compensation for taking part in this study, however you will keep any art pieces you create.

Who will see the information about me?
- Your information will be shared in the researcher’s written report, presentations, publications, and exhibitions arising from the project.
- Your collage and written or told reflection will also be shared with an adult, female, Roma artist in order for the researcher and artist to create a poem about your project.
- You may choose to use a different name or your initials if you do not want anyone to know who you are.

The following information may be used and/or disclosed to others:
- Photographs of your art work and art making process.
- Written reflections.
- Answers to interview questions.
- Demographic information (ethnic background, age, socio-economic status).
- Poems created by Crista Banks and Roma artist using your child’s written reflection and collage.

However,
- In published works and academic conferences there will be pseudonyms or initials used.
- In consulting with other professionals/stakeholders about data, information will be de-identified.
What will the data be used for?
We will publish what we learn from this study. We will not include your legal name. We will use a pseudonym or initials based on your preference. Your art work and photos of the art making process (in electronic or print form) will be published in this study. Photographs of the artwork and art making process will be used in reports, presentations, publications, and exhibitions arising from the project. Photos will not include your face or legal name. No data from this project will be used for commercial gain.

Can I change my mind and quit?
If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to change your mind later. No one will think badly of you if you decide to stop participating. Also, the people who are running this study may need for you to stop. If this happens, they will tell you when to stop and why.

What if I have questions?
You can ask questions about this study at any time. You can talk with your parents, guardian or other adults about this study. You can talk with the person who is asking you to volunteer by calling Crista Banks at 07751496920. If you think of other questions later, you can ask them. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant you can also call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Assent to Participate
I understand what the person conducting this study is asking me to do. I have thought about this and agree to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of person agreeing to take part in the study: ____________________________ Date: __________

Signature of child agreeing to take part in the study: ____________________________

Printed name & Signature of person providing Information (assem) to subject: ____________________________ Date: __________
Appendix D: Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro # 00036346

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

Roma Girls Expressing Identity, Voice, and Aspirations Through Participatory Arts-Based Research

The person who is in charge of this research study is Crista Banks. This person is called the Principal Investigator. She is being guided in this research by her faculty advisor, Dr. Michael Berson.

The research will be conducted at the Roma Support Group.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out how Roma girls use art making to express themselves (identity, voice, and aspirations).

Why are you being asked to take part?

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are an established, Roma artist with experience in art making and mixed media collage.

Study Procedures:

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

- Look at mixed media collages created by Roma girls ages 9-16.
- Look at written reflections accompanying the mixed media collages created by Roma girls ages 9-16.
- Use the collages and written reflections to create a poem.

- Create one poem for each participant.
Total Number of Participants
About 10 individuals will take part in this study.

Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal
You do not have to participate in this research study. You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Benefits
We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort
To the best of our knowledge, participation in this study will not harm you. Although we have made every effort to try and make sure this doesn’t happen, you may find some interview questions and/or answers cause you to feel uncomfortable.

Compensation
You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Costs
It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
We will do our best to keep your records private and confidential if you choose to use a pseudonym. We will do our best to honor your choice of recognition as selected below. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Certain people may need to see your study records. These individuals include:

- The Principal Investigator, faculty advisor guiding the Principal Investigator’s research, study coordinator at the Roma Support Group.
- Certain university people who need to know more about the study, and individuals who provide oversight to ensure that we are doing the study in the right way.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.
- Roma Support Group deputy manager.

We will publish what we learn from this study. We will refer to your choice of recognition as selected below. Your poetry may be published in this study and used in reports, presentations, publications, and exhibitions arising from the project. No data from this project will be used for commercial gain.

Data collected for this research will be stored in the University of South Florida’s supported Box.com cloud storage of the principal investigator located in the United States. This is a password protected program.
Poetry collected for this research will be kept as long as it is needed to conduct this research. Once your participation in the research is over, your information will be stored for five years. All information will be stored in Crista Banks’ University of South Florida supported Box.com cloud storage. This is a password protected program. Your permission to use the data will not expire unless you withdraw it in writing. You may withdraw or take away your permission to use and disclose the poems at any time. You can do this by sending written notice to the Principal Investigator at the following address:

Crista Banks  
13917 8th Street  
Dade City, Fl. 33535  
cristabanks@mail.usf.edu

While we are conducting the research study, we cannot let you see or copy the research information we have about you. After the research is completed, you have a right to see the information about you, as allowed by USF policies. If you have concerns about the use or storage of your personal information, you have a right to lodge a complaint with the data supervisory authority in your country. You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Crista Banks at 07751496920.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu.

Please choose below how you would like to be referred to in this study (choose only one):

   _____ Please use a pseudonym that I will disclose to you at a later time in private.
   _____ Please use my initials __________.
   _____ Please use my first name only ________________.
   _____ You may use my legal name ____________________________.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study and I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

______________________________  ____________________
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study  Date

______________________________
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their

Social Behavioral  Version #1  Version Date: 8/12/18

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

Page 3 of 4
participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

__________________________________________
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent      Date

__________________________________________
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
Appendix E: Collage Prompt Guide

Prompts will be used to guide thinking in collage creation. Two prompts will be given in each workshop session. Artists will be given the freedom to choose their materials to answer the prompts. Prompts will be verbally given as well as written on a whiteboard or poster for each session. Artists have creative license to interpret the meaning of the questions and in answering the questions in their collage.

1. What makes you Roma?
2. What do you love about being Roma?
3. Would you change anything about being Roma? If so, what? If not, why?
4. What do you want others to know about you?
5. What does success mean to you?
6. What do you want to do or be?
Appendix F: Interview Guide

Both initial and final interviews are semi-structured in nature. Questions may be asked in any order and some questions may be eliminated. There is no time limit set for the interview in order to reduce pressure on the participants. Questions are used for guidance only and may be altered depending on the trajectory of the interview.

Initial Interview

1. Demographics
   a. How old are you?
   b. Where were you born? If born outside England ask how long they have lived in England.
   c. Tell me about your family.

2. Do you have any hobbies? Or What do you like to do in your spare time?

3. What do you like about making art?

4. How do you feel when you make art?

5. What is your favorite way to create? (write, draw, paint, sew, dance, music, theater, etc.)

Final Interview (Conclusion of workshop)

1. Tell me about your collage. Probe by asking about specific parts of collage.

2. How did you feel while creating your collage?

3. Would you change anything about your collage? Why or why not?

4. What did you like most about collage making?

5. What did you like least about collage making?

6. If a non-Roma person looked at your collage and read the accompanying written reflection, what would you like for them to take away or understand?
Appendix G: Written Reflection Guide

The objective of the written reflection is for artists to reflect on the collage making process and what they want others to understand about their collage. What meanings, ideas, and take-aways are the artists trying to convey?

Part 1:

First, I will explain to the artists that we will take a moment to look at their final collage and then they will write a reflection about it. My liaison and I will be available to take dictation for anyone who has difficulty writing. The artists will take time to visually examine their own collage. During this time, I will verbally ask the artists to look at the aspects of their collage (written below). This information will also be posted in the room on a white board or poster.

Researcher will say:

- This is a time for you (artists) to reflect on your finished collage and the collage making process.
- Take a moment to examine your collage.
  - Notice the colors you chose.
  - Notice the textures: smooth, bumpy, sharp, soft, coarse...
  - What materials did you use? Why did you use those materials?
  - Did you use photographs? Why did you choose to include the photo(s)?
  - Are there words in your collage? What do they say? What do they mean to you?
  - Are there images besides photos? What are they? Why did you include them?
  - Are there found objects? Why are they a part of your story?
  - Look at the whole collage.
Part 2:

After examining the collage, we will discuss the different ways the artists may choose to write their reflections.

Researcher will explain:

• You may write your reflection like a diary/journal entry, a letter to someone, or a story you want to tell.
  o Tell about the materials you used and why you chose them.
  o Describe how you feel about the collage making process.
  o What meaning or ideas do you want your collage to convey to others?
  o Write anything else that comes to mind about your collage or your experience creating your collage.

Part 3:

• Pass out lined paper and writing utensils to artists.
• Allow artists up to 60 minutes (as needed) to write their collage reflection.
• Take a photo and scan the written reflection. Allow the artists to keep their original written reflection.
• Thank the artists for taking the time to write their reflections about the collage experience.