STRAINING SILENCING: YOUTH FILM-MAKING ON SCHOOLING’S SILENCING

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ABSTRACT
Amy Senta: Straining Silencing: Youth film-making on schooling’s silencing
(Under the direction of George W. Noblit)

For four years within their public elementary and middle schools in rural North Carolina, 24 youth worked together as a writing and film-making group to challenge schooling’s silencing. This dissertation is an analysis of the final year of that group. The dissertation consists of two framework layers.

First, using a post-critical approach (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004), which employs assumptions from both critical and constructionist epistemologies, I, the researcher-facilitator, analyzed the films as cases. The three films were about three forms of silencing: a) silencing of Spanish, b) silencing of romantic relationships, and c) silencing in classrooms. The ethnographic account is structured by the method of articulation (Hall, 1986). For each form of silencing, the articulation of one scene of silencing with one scene of social change of that silencing surfaced a focus film-making practice (Bourdieu, 1977) specific to that film group. The practices were: a) using extras, b) bonding, and c) adding alternate endings. The ethnographic account explores the students’ theorizing on schooling’s silencing, including their theorizing on how silencing works and their visions for how social change can happen. As part of this dissertation that theorizing engages with existing qualitative educational research on silencing.

Second, using an agential realist approach (Barad, 2007), which employs poststructural assumptions for the advancement of posthumanism, I reanalyzed the ethnographic account. The reanalysis surfaced the research writing as the object of study. Questioning the cuts of inclusion
and exclusion that the research writing apparatuses had made exposed the contingency of the ethnographic account. The interpretations imploded the ethnographic account. Poststructuralists have called for posthumanist theories such as agential realism to be brought to bear on qualitative research, but that project is only just underway, currently as theoretical engagement. This dissertation contributes to that project by providing a case in which agential realism was engaged with qualitative data.

The dissertation raised hauntings for both ethnographic and posthumanist research. Tensions, contradictions, and implications are discussed. The overall purpose of the multiplicity and complexity of the dissertation was to “strain” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009) schooling’s silencing as theorized by the youth during their film-making.
For Youth Populace “g”
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................................................... xiii

CHAPTER 1: STUDY SET-UP AND INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION ........................................ 1

Context of the Study ........................................................................................................................................ 1

Style ............................................................................................................................................................... 1

Town .............................................................................................................................................................. 3

Schools .......................................................................................................................................................... 4

Participant Selection ...................................................................................................................................... 5

Framework ..................................................................................................................................................... 6

Framework Layer 1: Participatory ethnographic account in contexts of silencing ................................. 7

Framework Layer 2: Agential realist reconsideration of the ethnographic account .............................. 36

Embarkation .................................................................................................................................................. 40

CHAPTER 2: “THE HISPANIC MOVIE” ................................................................................................. 41

Introduction to the analysis ........................................................................................................................ 41

Group formation and meaning .................................................................................................................. 43

Form of silencing as a problem and potential exceptions: The silencing of Spanish ............................. 48

Good from the silencing of Spanish .......................................................................................................... 49

Silencing form illustration: Silencing of Spanish – ISS scene and beyond ............................................. 50

Form of silencing as wider social problem: Silencing of Spanish as systemic racism ........................... 60

On “systemic” and experiences with racism ............................................................................................ 61
Form of silencing as wider social problem and possibility for change of that social problem: Hallway scene of “racism” and “justice” ........................................... 64
Practice: Using extras ............................................................................................................. 67
Exercising power ..................................................................................................................... 77

CHAPTER 3: “THE LOVE MOVIE” .......................................................................................... 82
Group formation and meaning .............................................................................................. 82
Form of silencing: The silencing of relationships ................................................................... 89
Form of silencing as a problem and potential exceptions:
The silencing of relationships ................................................................................................. 90
Good from the silencing of relationships ................................................................................ 92
Silencing form illustration: Silencing of relationships—The “hallway” “love” scene .......... 95
Form of silencing as a wider social problem: Silencing of relationships as isolation .......... 99
Form of silencing as wider social problem and possibility for change of that social problem: Scene of “rebellion” and “inspiration” ........................................... 101
Accomplishment ................................................................................................................... 106
Practice: Bonding .................................................................................................................. 107
Exercising Power .................................................................................................................... 115

CHAPTER 4: THE “CLASSROOM” MOVIE ......................................................................... 118
Group formation and meaning .............................................................................................. 118
Form of silencing as a problem and potential exceptions: Silencing in classrooms .......... 125
Good from silencing in classrooms ........................................................................................ 128
Silencing form illustration: The “writing” scene .................................................................. 130
Form of silencing as wider social problem and possibility for change of that social problem: Writing reimagined ................................................................. 134
Practice: Adding alternate endings ....................................................................................... 135
Exercising Power .................................................................................................................. 139

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION...................................................................................................... 141
Silencing: “It’s really hard to describe it.”................................................................. 141
Youth accounting as foundational for conceptualizing silencing ....................... 142
Silencing experiences in students’ accountings .................................................... 145
Isolation enclosing pain .............................................................................................. 146
Practices, power, change (movement of understanding) and silencing’s positioning in educational research ...................................................... 149
Group formation/dissolution ..................................................................................... 156

CHAPTER 6: RECONSIDERATION..................................................................................... 163
Introduction of a Transition ......................................................................................... 163
Introduction of the (Re)analysis ................................................................................ 167
Containment of the Reanalysis Scope ....................................................................... 174
(Re)analysis strategizing: Poststructural interrogation of the classical analyses ........ 178
Interpretations .............................................................................................................. 179
Justifying cuts ............................................................................................................ 180
Linearity and parallelism ......................................................................................... 182
Linguistic situation of understanding .................................................................... 184
Individual things with own properties .................................................................. 189
Material opportune glimpses .................................................................................. 191
Epistemology and Ontology of Complementarity and Uncertainty .................... 196
Exclusion and inclusion ............................................................................................ 199
Representation and production .............................................................................. 201
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 – Study Interpretations Over Time.................................................................9

Figure 1.2 – Students’ Pseudonyms and Self-descriptions 2013 ........................................15
CHAPTER 1: STUDY SET-UP AND INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION

Context of the Study

This dissertation is based on participatory ethnographic facilitation of writing and film-making groups with 24 youth in public school together through 4th-8th grades in rural southeastern United States. The study took place during 140 school days over four school years from 2009-2013. The dissertation is about the final year of the study, which consisted of an after-school writing and film-making group at the students’ middle school. The purpose of that group was to describe and challenge what we called school’s silencing.

Style

When I use the unspecified term “we” I am referring to the students and myself. Although the youth in this research were all connected to one teacher through their shared status as former students in her elementary classroom, that teacher may appear to a reader who is unfamiliar with the youth and their practices to be minimally present in the writing. However, the teacher and I together arrived at a stylistic decision to contain the focus of the storying on the film-making at the middle school. We are writing as co-authors of other texts that center the teacher’s teaching, the researcher-teacher relationship, and emergence of the study over time. We view this dissertation as an important contributor in a set of texts that will describe and contextualize all of our experiences.

I ascribe to Charles Price’s (2009) stylistic practice of capitalizing race descriptors, including Black, Brown, and White. In the context of scholars’ variation of stance on the
implications of case style he decided, “Race, as understood by my Rastafari interlocutors, carries a force deserving of capitalization, regardless of whether we embrace it as positive, focus on how it is used to debase, or fall somewhere within these poles. ‘Black’ is more likely to remind the reader of the salience of race than ‘black’ (Price, 2009, p. xv)”. My writing and my data transcription adhere to capitalized race descriptors for the purpose of reminding readers, including myself, of the salience of race.

I use the terms Latin@ and Hispanic and they are not interchangeable. “Hispanic” was a term first used by the United States government in what many argue was an attempt to erase ethnic identities. This term is often used to include people of both Latin American and European Spanish heritage. The term Latino/a was appropriated in recognition of the common experience of oppression of people in the United States that have Latin American ethnicity (Chomsky, 2007). In response to this historical storying, the term Hispanic appears here only within comments of original authors or speakers.

However, a close read of how the students used the term Hispanic exposes this decision to shift from Hispanic to Latin@ because of the colonizing history of the term Hispanic as being colonizing itself. For instance, one grouping of students I described as Latina stated at one time in the study, “Now we are proud to be Hispanic.” In using the term Latin@ much complexity was lost both among students as well as among shifts in context and time. In a rash decision that privileged a static notion of identities, I used a single moment in the research to establish the way in which I would describe students even though the students’ descriptions of themselves varied across context and across time. My future writings will require more nuanced attention to those complexities and to the histories in which they are embedded. My future participatory work will
also certainly require study design that can allow for some understanding of those complexities within contexts.

Town

The research took place at the single elementary school and single middle school in the rural town “Gibson” (a pseudonym) in the southeastern United States. In this former flour mill town and many like it in its geographical area, the history of schooling has involved schools for Black “delinquents”, mill schools for Whites with whom the mill owners hoped to stock their industrializing mills in the absence of immigration, and university-sponsored private academies that served to socialize and insulate children of the privileged from war by preparing them for higher education, teaching, or elite roles in society.

The major event in recent Gibson history was the failure of its septic system. Sewage leaks to the land surface during the winter and rainy periods. Soil in the area is packed tight, which prevents the sewage from flowing through the soil, making the problem worse. Sewer repairs promised by county government were never fulfilled, and most residents credit this to Gibson’s unincorporated status, as the town does not have elected official seats in the county. Because it was an unincorporated town, Gibson did not have local officials, and many residents were frustrated with being represented by officials elected by the more populated and wealthy city in the county, a university city that seceded from the surrounding county to form and fund its own school district. Because there is no working sewage system, businesses and residential developments cannot locate in Gibson, so residents travel outside the town for work. Some of those residents were commuters who were attracted to Gibson by low-cost land in newer housing developments that had been added to the community’s clusters of single-family homes and trailers. A teacher at the elementary school described these affluent commuters as mainly having
jobs in academia and in medicine. Other common jobs held by Gibson residents included jobs in construction, health care, and manufacturing. For services such as banking, medical treatment, shopping, groceries, legal services, childcare, and dining, Gibson residents have had to travel by their own private transportation to nearby areas. Many residents attributed a lack of access to services to Gibson’s relatively low political power. The town is racially segregated, with many Black and Latin@ families living to the west and many White families living to the east.¹

Schools

The elementary school and the middle school were the only non-charter public elementary and middle schools in the town and they each served just under 500 students each. The state classified the student bodies as more than half White, about 25% African American, about 15% “Hispanic”, less than 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and less than 1% Asian or Pacific Islander. The classroom demographics during the study were about the same as these overall school demographics, and the after-school film-making group in the final year of the study had proportionally more students of color than the classroom in which the study originated (see Figure 1.1). Both schools were full Title I schools and in any given year during the study between half and two thirds of the student body received free or reduced school meals (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2009; U. S. Department of Education, 2015). Children qualify for free daily lunch and breakfast if earning an annual income below a given

¹ Much of this information was drawn from a source that can’t be cited due to concerns for confidentiality and anonymity.
threshold. The cost of elementary school lunch at the beginning of the study was $1.50 per day and the cost of middle school lunch at the end of the study was $2.70 per day. For reference, children in a family of four at the beginning of the study would be offered free lunch at or below an income of $27,560 (Child Nutrition Services, 2008). The district’s per pupil expenditure was over $9,000, ranking in the top third across the state (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2013a). Almost half of that per pupil expenditure was generated from residents in the district taxing themselves, with that local taxation percentage ranking in the top few across the state (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2013b).

**Participant Selection**

Participatory research with youth on schooling’s silencing can take place with any strategy for grouping people. Although for the purposes of encompassing the arguments in the dissertation as a whole I eventually drew from poststructural work of Jackson and Mazzei (2012) to understand our film-making as “straining” silencing, it could certainly be understood as “challenging silencing” and related to ongoing participatory silencing research with youth. By category of difference is one grouping approach that contributes to educational research’s challenge of silencing. For instance, Brown (2005) and Starr studied silencing by class and gender through the work of two groups of girls grouped by class. This study began with a selection strategy by category of difference, bringing together all of the youth in an elementary school who were in transition from an English as a Second Language (ESL) program. All of those youth described themselves as either Mexican or Mexican American at the time, and the strain on silencing targeted racialized silencing.

After the first year of the study, the strain on silencing expanded with inclusion of students across categories of difference. Moving a silencing study across categories of
difference is a method that also contributes to silencing research. For instance, Brown (2005) wrote, “In my current work, I have attempted to create groups that cross class and race lines. While such groups struggle a good bit initially, in time they begin to name their experiences and imagine different realities than the limited ones offered them in school and society. This process holds the potential for deepening our and their understanding of the complicated intersections of gender, race, and class” (Brown, 2005, p. 161). Although the organization of this dissertation draws attention away from such intersections, the descriptions of the film-making work invite a reader to imagine influences of bringing youth together across category of difference for work on a shared problem. Silencing research purposes seem bolstered by youth work that has taken place in what Torre (2005) called “radically diverse groups” (p. 251) in “radically inclusive spaces” (p. 264). She argued that such spaces allow for, “The development of new ways of thinking and being in the world; of new subjectivities, subjectivities that having experienced the intoxicating intellectual, social, and political potential of such spaces desire more” (Torre, 2005, p. 266). The topic of schooling’s silencing certainly lends itself well to work both within and across categories of difference.

Group formation is a prominent theme in this dissertation not as a topical claim but instead as a contextualizer for outsider engagement with the youths’ film-making work. Although the cross category of difference participation in this study presents uncertainty for analytic writing, reading the dissertation as a teacher or as a classroom ethnographer can transfer that uncertainty to an excited expectation of complex insight.

**Framework**

The framework of this dissertation is composed of two layers. The organization of the first framework layer follows the students’ grouping structure within the writing and film-
making group. The writing and film-making group of the final year of the study consisted of three self-selected groups of youth. In the dissertation they are named “film groups”. The youth most often named these film groups as “The Hispanic Movie group”, “The Relationships group”, and “The Classrooms group”. The wider group comprised of the three film groups is named “film-making group”, “writing group”, or “writing and film-making group”. The first layer is a participatory ethnographic account of the work of the film groups. Being a multiple case study allows the dissertation to include previous studies and interpretations, “throughout the report without a special section” (Stake, 2006, p. 81). The previous studies and interpretations that appear in the fifth and sixth chapters of this dissertation serve to potentially deepen understanding of the students’ theorizing as represented in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

The second framework layer is an agential realist reconsideration of the participatory ethnographic account. In agential realist language, I often call it the “classical” account. The purpose of the second framework layer is to understand the dissertation analysis in a new way, rendering the account contingent and exploring both how it came to be and what it did.

**Framework Layer 1: Participatory ethnographic account in contexts of silencing**

I ascribe to Geertz’s (2003) research purpose of enlarging and enriching the human discourse and thick description as a means to that end.

Participatory research involves engagement in research for and with participants, moving towards a subject-subject relationship between researcher and researched. This type of research is often marked by participants’ involvement in the research design, process, and representation of the study as they create their own knowledge (Leavy, 2009). Each year the principal, teacher, students, and I designed a different writing group for students, and in each case I was involved with a high level of participation. Each of these writing groups was co-designed and student-led.
I accompanied the 4th and 5th grade combination class during many whole school days, informal gatherings, school-wide events, and events outside of school hours. I had many roles at the school and in the classroom. My primary role was facilitator and researcher of writing and film-making groups. When a teacher or a student introduced me it was most often by saying, “my researcher”.

In my research of the experiences of students and teachers in classrooms, I used the interrelated techniques of participant observation, intensive interviewing, and document collection to develop a deeper and more complex understanding of the participants’ views (Glesne, 1999). I formally interviewed the students from the writing group, the students in the class, and the teachers. Interviews included many topics but generally focused on their experiences with and perspectives on schooling. Finally, I analyzed documents including students’ writing and film footage from the writing groups, students’ work and personal correspondence from their classrooms, and curriculum materials both used and developed by the teacher.

In addition to these well-established methods within qualitative research, this study involved innovative variations driven by the students’ ideas about the study design. For example, many interviews took place with self-selected groups of two or more students. In addition, some students preferred to write with me rather than to speak with me, so some of the interviews took place through live writing. Some of the students who are multilingual developed this method to represent their perspectives in a way that challenges forms of silencing that they experience in schooling. Film added yet another innovative aspect of data collection, as for each year of student filming there are about 100 hours of film footage in which the students filmed each other working, engaging in spontaneous interviewing with one another, and performing for a variety of
audiences that they have in mind, including “the proscientists”, or those they imagine to be working to make schools better for students. These methods of interviewing and participant observation complexify and deepen the students’ theorizing on silencing and therefore offer a fresh perspective on qualitative research methods in classrooms.

The research problem in this dissertation is schooling’s silencing. I did not set out to study anything about silencing. The problem of silencing emerged as the main research problem early in the study and has been the central problem throughout the study. I came to this claim through ongoing inductive (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) analysis of the students’ accounts of their experiences with schooling. Because the study culminated as a writing and film-making project about schooling’s silencing, schooling’s silencing is situated as the research problem in this dissertation’s first framework layer. Figure 1.1 briefly overviews the study by year, including the context, participants, and major interpretation related to schooling’s silencing.

Figure 1.1: Study Interpretations Over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Form &amp; Topic</th>
<th>Silencing Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>4 students. Each Mexican or Mexican-American. Cross-grade, cross-classroom, cross-gender</td>
<td>Ms. Parker’s 4th/5th grade classroom</td>
<td>Writing group on transition from ESL programs</td>
<td>Students who were bilingual or multilingual were silenced by isolation during the transition from an ESL program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>7 students. Cross-race, cross-grade, cross-gender. 2 past participants.</td>
<td>Ms. Parker’s 4th/5th grade classroom</td>
<td>Writing group on school</td>
<td>By escaping isolation, students articulated collective grievances with schooling’s silencing of the personal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>16 students. Cross-race, cross-grade, cross-gender. 2 past participants.</td>
<td>Ms. Parker’s 5th grade classroom</td>
<td>Whole class writing and film-making project on students’ personal histories</td>
<td>Although the project centered the personal, schooling and the project silenced students through a search for certainty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>15 students. Cross-race, cross-grade, cross-gender. Each a past participant.</td>
<td>After school at middle school for 6th-8th grades</td>
<td>Writing and filmmaking group on schooling’s silencing</td>
<td>Students strained schooling’s silencing through collective filmmaking about schooling’s silencing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I began volunteering at the elementary school in early 2009 on Fridays for nine weeks. My teaching experience and research interest in the transition from ESL programs paired in a relationship of intervention with what was framed by the school staff as the district’s unjust policy to begin ESL in 1st grade. I began the work by holding push-in and pull-out groups for the bilingual students, all Latin@, in all five kindergarten classrooms. I designed bookmaking lessons and worked throughout the day to make photo books, stickered books, and other types of books with each of the five groups of students. For the remainder of the day I worked as a sort of literacy remediator for a Latino 5th grader in Ms. Parker’s (a pseudonym) class who was in transition from ESL. We spent most of our time together on decoding, comprehension, and critique of universally assigned class readings on the American Revolution. This is how I met Ms. Parker and we began to work out a study design that we perceived to be beneficial for the students, for the school, for her, and for me. Administrators and peers considered Ms. Parker to be an excellent teacher. Ms. Parker, a White woman from the Midwestern United States, was in her 20s and pursuing a Masters of Arts in Teaching through evening courses. In the fall of 2009 the ethnography began.

For the first year of the study I held a writing group for all of the students in transition from ESL at the school from October 2009 through February 2010. This included three of Ms. Parker’s students and one 5th grader from a classroom across the hall. I wouldn’t call myself an artist yet I am committed to the assumptions about knowledge that underlie the arts. In the
historical contexts of qualitative research, the arts have emerged as a particularly useful way to study knowledge-making processes (Leavy, 2009). This study brought art and science together in design, methodology, and representation. As Leavy (2009) explained, art and science can come together during any aspect of research to illuminate aspects of the human condition and therefore to advance knowledge. Language, and therefore writing, is entwined with the construction of knowledge, and narrative writing is a way that people make sense of their lives (Leavy, 2009). How a narrative is told and how a narrative is structured can shed light on how an individual relates to social contexts (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Thus, to explore experiences of the transition that was taking place, we wrote, and continued to do so throughout the study.

We met in the adjoining office inside Ms. Parker’s combination 4th/5th grade classroom. All of the students described themselves and their parents as either Mexican or Mexican American. I observed and facilitated the writing group and classroom for a total of 50 hours over 24 days. In addition to interviewing the students individually, I also interviewed their teachers and the ESL teacher at the school. This first year of the study involved 7 formal interviews and all of the interviews with students took place over two days. In the writing group the students wrote and talked during the group meetings on topics related to the transition from ESL, which was a topic unstudied in educational research and a topic with which I had a great deal of teaching experience. I viewed my main role as assembling the students to find out what they thought which might lead to better teaching practice and policy for bilingual students. I did an inductive analysis of the data for the first year and the major interpretation was that students were silenced by isolation during the transition from ESL (Senta, 2010). The students described pivotal moments early in their schooling experiences through which they learned silencing. They also described pivotal moments in their schooling experiences when they eluded silencing by
escaping isolation and they were persistent in pursuing escapes, which included the writing group meetings. The students were clear about their discontent with schooling’s silencing and I moved away from the previous research problem of underservice during the transition from ESL to the new research problem of schooling’s silencing.

The second year of the study was designed in response to the interpretations of the first year with the consideration that everyone looping up to 5th grade inside the classroom wanted to be in the writing group. Because the topic of the experiences of students that have transitioned out of ESL had not been the central focus of previous work, there had existed no single theoretical perspective to guide a linear study of the experiences of the four students involved in the research thus far. Facing the need to expand participation in the writing group across categories of difference, we fully embraced an emergent design paradigm. In an emergent design paradigm, the researcher adjusts her plans and strategies in response to what she is learning at the research site (Merz, 2002). Specifically, throughout the research process, I adjusted the methodology (including both data collection and data analysis), research questions, and my use of related literature in order to honor the perspectives of the participants and to allow me to move towards some understanding of their experiences.

In our first major shift of design, Ms. Parker and I selected seven students across categories of difference for the writing group. The seven included the past participants still at the school. We negotiated heavily about the remaining five students and the justification for each student’s participation was different. We considered a wide variety of factors for participant selection. These included student interest, family interest, anticipated benefits of extended and/or intensified writing activity, relationships among students, and what Ms. Parker currently calls “relationship maintenance” between her and the students. I observed the classroom and
school with a focus on writing, science, and events for parents for a total of 83 hours over 29 days. I conducted and transcribed 12 formal interviews and most of the interviews took place over two days. A focus emerged: collective grievances with schooling’s privileging of the technical and silencing of the personal. I also began to interpret power shifts within the group. The emergence of collective grievances with schooling and the shifts of power to heavily silenced students shifted my role to protector of the writing group. Schooling’s silencing of the personal became the research problem and we designed the next year of the study to legitimize speaking of the personal as valued knowledge at school.

Again, during the writing group all of the students in the class wanted to be in the writing group. The selection considerations that Ms. Parker and I had made the previous year created a context of opaque exclusion and hierarchy, particularly because we did not share all of our selection justification with the youth in the group or the entire class. Therefore, despite the significant changes to our own commitments, to the study activities, and to the classroom curriculum for a group of such size, we designed the third year of the study to include the entire class. This third year about half of the students had looped to 5th grade within Ms. Parker’s classroom and the other half were 5th graders from other 4th grade teachers’ classrooms. During the third school year of the study I gestated and birthed a child. Still, I observed the classroom with a focus on writing for a total of 50 hours over 25 days. I conducted and transcribed 19 formal interviews and 5 of those interviews were with pairs of students who self-selected to be interviewed together. Many of the interviews took place over two days. The students wrote about their personal histories in narrative, poetical, and theatrical form. They videotaped one another’s work and also videotaped each other speaking about the work. We used a $1,500 grant to purchase video equipment and writing materials. Each student chose footage and I compiled the
work into a one-hour film using my computer and software. The film included four sections: a) a story of the process of the personal histories project, b) a chapter for each student that included performance of the art bookended by the student’s comments during the work and a discussion with the artist, c) a section of students’ valuing statements about the project with a focus on statements about the personal, and d) a blooper reel. We held a screening of the film for school and district staff, families, and students and we distributed copies of the film. My primary role during this year of the study was organizer, as there were activities and stories taking place in a multiplicity of directions and forms and sustenance of the lengthy project inside schooling required an organizer role that involved me somewhat claiming charge of how things would emerge.

In my analysis of the data from the third year I interpreted that although the project centered the personal, schooling and the project silenced students through a search for certainty. Throughout the study many students named writing as a context for silencing in general, and situating the study during the writing period did not resolve that problem. Vicki, for example, said that silencing emerged as the topic of the final year of the writing group because of silencing during writing. She traced the earliest emergence of silencing as a topic to schooling experiences, “Where we couldn’t write about what we wanted to.” In addition, Hector traced the general topic of silencing back to writing contexts involved in the history of the study. He said that the silencing topic came from, “Our stories. From writing group. Cole’s story where the White House blew up. He let his freedom of speech writing, his imagination, run free.” Hector was referring to a writing group session during the second year of the study in which Cole wrote and shared a story that had been prohibited during school writing time. That this event stuck with Hector as an exemplar of schooling’s silencing speaks to writing’s contradictory influences
throughout the study. In other words, writing both challenged silencing and silenced. Cloud affirmed Hector’s analysis by responding to him, “That’s really good, dude.”

It was at this point in the study, the point at which a study even designed to challenge silencing was still implicated in schooling’s silencing, that I knew that in order to continue the work we would need to bring the writing and film-making groups relatively away from schooling. Ultimately, although students who were new to the study evaluated the design as overwhelmingly positive, the students who had seen the writing groups taking place during the previous year were bitter that I had changed the design to involve a classroom project instead of a group.

The fourth year of the study involved 15 students from the first three years of the study in an after-school writing and film-making group. The students asked that I follow them to their middle school and return to the group format for the study. We also invited all of the past participants who had since gone to the middle school to return to the writing and film-making group. Most of the 24 students still attended public school in the town and most of the 20 still attending were able to come to the group. Figure 1.2 includes the 15 students’ descriptions of themselves, their history of participation in the wider study, and their visions for the cover of a book based on this dissertation.

Figure 1.2: Students’ Pseudonyms and Self-descriptions 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym (grades in study)</th>
<th>I call myself a White woman. What race and gender do you call yourself?</th>
<th>Use this space to write a message you want to tell readers of the dissertation about yourself.</th>
<th>Title and Cover for Dissertation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scott (5th, 6th)</td>
<td>A mixed man (Native American and Scottish)</td>
<td>I am an interesting young man to meet.</td>
<td>Silencing: Do you like it? Somebody pointing at you in seriousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Ethnicity/Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ann-Marie</strong></td>
<td>Puerto-Rican and Chinese girl</td>
<td>I love making stuff.</td>
<td>A Family’s Work: Made from Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5th, 6th)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I’ve been writing since forever, and this group has helped me express myself through writing. I’m very bubbly and full of creativity.</td>
<td>Black/White diagonal stripes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chelsea</strong></td>
<td>White girl</td>
<td>I’m very bubbly and full of creativity.</td>
<td>Group: A Family Put Together by Similarities and Differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5th, 6th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People’s hands together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bailey</strong></td>
<td>Mexican/Latina girl</td>
<td>I’ve been writing since forever, and this group has helped me express myself through writing. I’m very bubbly and full of creativity.</td>
<td>Silenced 4 Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5th, 7th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A Latina kid with a finger on her lips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wendi</strong></td>
<td>Multi-racial young lady</td>
<td>I’m 13 years old. Has a colorful, bright, and sparkling personality. Loves the people all around me.</td>
<td>From a teen’s perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4th, 5th, 7th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blocky writing, teen girl and boy hugging with foreheads and noses touching; “a couple kind of hug”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cole</strong></td>
<td>White boy</td>
<td>I’m determined, crazy, sporty, and creative when I want to be.</td>
<td>School Silencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4th, 5th, 6th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blue cover with a picture of one of our scenes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cloud</strong></td>
<td>Brown man</td>
<td>I’m awesome.</td>
<td>Silenced Students working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5th, 6th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hector</strong></td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>I am awesome. Stay fresh.</td>
<td>The Silencing Students Students working in the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4th, 5th, 6th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gia</strong></td>
<td>Hispanic girl (female)</td>
<td>Energetic, crazy, friendly, (mean at times), pretty</td>
<td>Something We All Never Get Tired of Hearing Everyone in a crazy pose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4th, 5th, 6th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olivia</strong></td>
<td>African-American girl</td>
<td>I’m fun, bubbly, and very creative. You will never find anyone like me.</td>
<td>Family: A Group of People Put Together By Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5th, 6th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All of our hands together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peaceful</strong></td>
<td>Black female</td>
<td>With the deep dimples and her sparkling smile that brightens up our day.</td>
<td>How Silencing Affects Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5th, 6th)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What’s a symbol for silencing? I don’t know. That’s a good question.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quiana</strong></td>
<td>Mexican female</td>
<td>It takes one person to change a room, one room to change a community, one community to change a nation, one nation to change the world.</td>
<td>SILENCING the MOVIE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following field note illustrates some of the issues raised with the concept of participation in the writing group.

The first day is marked by excitement. The main topic of discussion is who is here and who is not here. Also asking after families. Students show up who were not previously invited. We set up a long and wide conference table. The overwhelming topic is who should be here. Olivia and Peaceful protest my decision to only allow past group members…Yasmin explains to them that the reason we can't invite more people is, “Because no one would understand what we are doing. It took us so many years.” Vicki responds, “Exactly.” … Yasmin elaborates, “It took us three years to get the process of everything.”

It was clear to everyone that participation was enacted in a specific way when it came to exclusion and inclusion in the writing group. It is certain that participation could have been structured otherwise. I mention it here in order to highlight the 15 students’ participation over time as well as to note that participation had no fixed meaning among the group.

Students expected one another to sustain their participation over time. When students returned from an absence or anticipated an absence, they often used language of apology such as, “I know”, or, “I’m sorry,” in their reports to the film-making group. During school they spoke to one another and to other students in order to predict attendance. They consistently reported where students were if they were not in the group meeting as well as what their reasoning was for making such a trip so that group members could evaluate that reasoning based on whether or
not the timing of the conflicting event was avoidable. For instance, they reported on each other’s appointments, health, trips out of town, and family commitments. In general, the only universally accepted excuse for missing a group meeting was attention to family needs. This included, for example, visits to ill family members, care of younger siblings, and work to support family. My field notes on the emergency departure of Olivia during one meeting illustrate this interpretation well:

The Teacher and Classroom film group loses Olivia within the first few minutes of the work time. She approaches me in a disturbed state and says that something has happened to their grandmother so she needs to "go down there." She talks to her group and to her other friends in the writing group and everyone is very concerned. Everyone sends her very well wishes and she leaves quickly.

The students always knew where one another were and expected one another to attend group whenever possible. Students even arranged events with their families around group meeting days and monitored their actions at school in order to decrease the likelihood of being removed from school on the day of a group meeting. On one day Olivia “got in trouble” at school and her punishment was to return home on the school bus rather than attend group. This punishment upset the group so greatly that Olivia ended all discussion about it, got caught up with her film group’s work immediately upon return, and did not miss another group, even though her family had to make exceptionally extenuating accommodations to their schedule in order to pick up Olivia from group meetings. The students demonstrated a knowledge of attendance that was so exacting that we constructed an accurate attendance record on the last day of group without the assistance of any documentation.

Ms. Parker occasionally attended the 2013 group as a visitor and was kept informed of what was happening but she no longer influenced the design of the study. Being a former student of Ms. Parker was still an important part of belonging to the group, and the students were
generally proud of identifying themselves in this way. Peaceful’s description of the reputation of the after school writing and film-making group among their middle school peer groups was typical. She explained, “On Friday I get all excited to join group. They wish they was in Ms. Parker’s class.” Discussion followed on the topic of Ms. Parker and how great of a teacher she had been. Wendi added, “Ms. Parker was the best teacher I ever had. Now she’s a science administrator. What in the world?” We met on Mondays and Fridays and we always began by eating together and holding a “business meeting” around a makeshift conference table. They then sorted into three film groups to plan, cast, rehearse, direct, load, and edit their own scenes in film-making software using their personal video recording devices and school-issued laptop computers. I observed the group for a total of 74 hours over 23 days and I interviewed all of the students.

The three films emerged from the scenes of silencing that students wrote on the first day of the group when I shared schooling’s silencing as the main problem that emerged in the history of our work together over the years. The students seemed to understand the collective nature of their histories that convened on this particular writing and film-making group and agreed to center silencing. The following field notes document the group norms of the writing and film-making group that were set during the first two days.

I ask them what they think makes the best writing group discussion. They immediately say that our discussion is like a wave, with control going in waves from me to them. It is Karla who first suggests the wave metaphor: “It’s like a wave”. They do not name this “control” but rather “random” when they have control. Hector re-emphasizes: “wave”, very strongly. Cole explains, “Be random but not so random.” Hector: “We come back together.” Cole: “Don’t be the random random.”… We spend several minutes discussing the line of random v. random random, giving many examples of random random from the discussion we have had so far…This includes an agreement that if someone is being swept out to sea on the wave of random random the group must perform a rescue and not allow the person to drown or to become eaten by a shark (a teacher with authority,
defined by Hector as someone separate from me when he says to me, “You have no teacher authority.”).

With norms set, the work at hand began. After introducing the idea of film-making to address the problem of schooling’s silencing, the students took over with explication of scenes. I faded into the background as the students discussed their ideas, using interaction strategies such as asking each other to continue, repeating ideas in another way, summarizing scene themes, offering related scenes, and evaluating scene quality based on the morality of the actions of those in the scene. In my field notes I documented my next methods move: “At this point they grasp the idea of the scene so well that I decide we should write.”

Students wrote summaries of scenes of silencing on papers and piled them onto the center of the conference table. My field notes read,

When it is time, I decide on the spot that they should sort the scenes on the wall into some sort of grouping. I tell them to take some, read them, and together sort them into something that makes sense to them. They surprise me by completing this in three minutes… jump into the collective task…moving together, arguing, coming to very fast decisions. They are in heavy analysis of their categories…Cole comments, “I think we did a lot of ideas.” Hector: “We did a whole lot.” Peaceful, Olivia, and Yasmin decide about the final few scenes. Peaceful reports to me with finality: “We're finished.” I ask them to explain their categories. Hector says, “subject” arranges them…They say there will be one Hispanic movie, one movie about relationships (this synthesis of categories is offered by Peaceful: “This one's relationships”, with Ann-Marie evaluating this as “awesome”)…and one movie about teachers and classrooms.

The field note documents their swift analysis of the scene pile. The discussion’s culmination appeared in my transcript of early film footage:

Someone filmed the pile of scenes that was growing on our conference table. The voice over plays as follows:

Hector: “These are our skits.”

Olivia: “These are our skits we designed. So awesome.”

Cole: “Our ideas!”
Gia: “They are scenes.”

Further description of the action around one of the scene categories illustrates their newfound forms of engagement. The first analysis move was made by five of the Latina students who said that their scenes all had the “same topic”, which was the prohibition of Spanish at school. Hector then offered the idea of a “Hispanics film” made by “all the Hispanics.” Cole responded that this would not work with his comment, “Man, I’m Caucasian,” which evoked universal loud laughter. The immediate centering of race was unique to this outside-of-class group in comparison to the previous three groups, which had taken place inside classrooms. Engagement was also markedly heightened. There was heavy debate and conflict, and the scenes were flying into the center of the table. Some students were creating additional scenes and some had stopped writing in order to listen and talk about the idea of the prohibition of Spanish as silencing.

All of the students had written several scenes of silencing and contributed them to the pile of scenes. The four groups of sorted scenes included: scenes of silencing Spanish, classroom and teacher scenes, relationship scenes, and a group of visions for what should be that included a single scene. This single scene and its author’s idea was incorporated into the classroom and teacher film and the students began storyboarding and filming three films based on ideas they selected from the pile of scenes constructed by the group. The students self-selected themselves into three film groups, which all used different techniques to focus on the three topics.

Naming schooling’s silencing as the problem was not an act that received consensus among the group. In this initial discussion three students contested and offered examples when schooling’s silencing was beneficial in some way. Many others in the group remembered the examples they presented as part of their argument, and from this unexpected complexification I shifted the methods to involve explicit invitations for alternate moral interpretations of silencing.
This included a set of questions added to the interview guide: Tell me about a time in your life when silencing (related to your film topic) was good. What good came from the silencing? How was this time different from the time when silencing was a problem? How does good come from silencing?

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 provide understanding of the subsequent film-making work. Each day began and ended with a business meeting during which we ate together, discussed plans and problems, and shared ideas, conflicts, and decisions. The remainder of the time was devoted to writing, storyboarding, imagining, rehearsing, performing, creating, producing, and editing. I ascribed to the method of only using technology that was already available to the students. Each film group had access to at least one iPod or iTouch and school computer, and we troubleshooted access issues as a whole group. I also committed to never touching that technology, including filming devices, downloading setups, and computer hardware and software. I mention these methods because they in particular surely influenced the films and practices.

Students viewed one another as essential for the work. They accommodated each other’s schedules in order to get the job done. Students often offered valuing summaries of the day’s work based on opportunities lost due to a member’s absence. For example, in their group reflection on one day The Hispanic Movie film group attributed their day of turmoil to Karla’s absence. The students established and maintained a comfortable and steady rate for the work and rarely deviated from this rate. While school staff and teachers who made a swooping visit to our group for one reason or another often interpreted this rate of work to involve idling or poorly spent instructional time, we protected the rate of work within the group by using explicit pressure amongst one another. This working rate produced the completion of key scenes. Scenes that
involved the most preparation were usually filmed with the greatest sense of urgency and in the shortest amount of time. For instance, I wrote the following field note for one major scene:

Wendi has to leave at 4:00 and she needs to be in the auditorium scene. I notice that this is the only strategy that moves the filming along—when someone has to leave and the scene must be shot before the departure. This has sped along many scenes and I am amazed at the sense of urgency they get when one of the members needs to leave…They have the scene and we move to the auditorium with urgency to film the auditorium scene before Wendi leaves.

More on audiences

As indicated by their established discourse about and input into the dissertation as well as a moment at which they told me they, “approve of this wonderful book you shall make,” the youth had an understanding of the academic audience of my accounts of their work. The youths’ intended audiences for their work seemed to be academia, teacher education, and mainly, the film groups themselves.

The audiences of the films shifted around a bit during the film-making, but were overwhelmingly the three film groups. The youth understood dissertation readers to be another audience. Dissertation readers, to the students, included professors and people studying to become teachers. In addition, since the study’s inception, the students envisioned a book that would eventually be published about their writing group over all four years.

Sharing across film groups took place daily, but even when given the chance to fully screen the films for each other the film groups declined in favor of other formats. Although interested adults often ask me about spreading the films or touring the film-making group, the youth never mentioned anything along those lines. In fact, Quiana and Vicki were the only youth who expressed a demand for locating audiences for their films beyond their film group and readers of academic texts. My involvement within the students’ audiences was limited; early in
the field notes I wrote that they neither wanted nor sought any feedback from me. On another
day my field notes described a trend that I was being sent away from the groups to observe from
the fringes because I was “slowing things down and out of the information loop of the team.” In
my field notes I located the moment in which I realized that the students’ audiences for their
films were their film groups. This moment occurred early in the study.

At the end of each scene take that goes to the end of the scene without producing a
blooper, the whole entire group erupts in clapping. The feeling of something finally
having been accomplished in a final product after all of the hard work they have done
together is overwhelming. The feeling of collegiality and collectiveness is stronger then
when we showed the final video at the film screening premier [last year in the study].
This tells me that the production of a scene by a group involving other members in the
group, also working on parallel projects, is much more powerful than the production of a
product for an outside audience. This challenges my idea of the purpose of the film-
making as speaking to audiences involved in schooling's silencing. They may in this case
be speaking just to each other and that is enough.

Some description of the wider context of the study clarifies the significance of this comparison.

During the previous year of the study each student in a combination 4th and 5th grade classroom
wrote and produced an audiovisual representation of a story that was important to that student’s
own personal history. We then edited the individual film footage along with footage of the entire


2 This exact moment was also significant because the day’s work showcased the incredible acting and improvisation
talent of Cloud. Of Cloud’s talent I recorded, “His responses enrich their scenes so much that the authors of the
scenes break down in laughter or exclamation as they are being taped.” Cloud was generally revered as the most
talented actor in the group. Interestingly, data throughout the history of the writing and film-making study would
suggest Cloud as the student most heavily silenced during the schooling of writing. Cloud’s mother transferred him
into the district because he was underserved in his previous schooling placement. Cloud was described by a recent
teacher as not being able to compose a sentence and during writing time was usually sent away to write in isolation
from his classmates. He used unconventional spelling for a majority of words when using paper and a writing
instrument, and he often spoke of his inability to write. He declined all opportunities for being the instrument of
collective writing yet accepted and sought to be the source of input for expressions in any form, especially when it
came to silencing. During informal discussions outside the group Cloud’s mother mentioned more than once that
the film-making experiences had inspired Cloud to enter “drama” and his mother hoped to one day see him on The
Disney Channel.
process, which took place during several months during the regular classroom writing period, into a feature film length video. We held a public screening and teachers, families, and district officials attended. This audience was an ultimate audience in that third year of the study, and as it was constructed by the youth, I had come to value it so highly that I assumed its permanence.

Interview Methods

The interview excerpts that appear in this dissertation are all from the final year of the film-making group. For purposing the interviews in relation to the films, I used Stake (2006) as a general guide. He wrote, “An interview should be less about the interviewee than about the case” (Stake, 2006, p. 31). This purposing also aligned with my careful intent to study the film-making work and practices rather than study the children themselves. Because the first framework layer of the dissertation is organized into three cases, the interview excerpts generally serve to enrich understanding of each of the three cases rather than to claim caricature of any individual student. This was initiated through the interview topics being, for example, interpretation of the film, meaning of the film group, story of the film group, the film group’s form of silencing, silencing in general, and interpreting confusing or filling in incomplete observational field notes I had taken during their film-making work.

Much of the interviewing took place in pairs or triads of students. The students were familiar with choosing the configuration of their own interview groups and arranged and scheduled themselves. Because I was in large part studying the films as cases by the end of the study, I imposed on their arrangements that at least one interview session had to be closed to members of a film group. Our preparation for the interview included an explicit discussion about speaking for self or others during film group interviewing. I observed and recorded the interviews using field-noting techniques. I did not use audiovisual recording during the
interviews. In this dissertation quoted material is speech that took place verbatim and unquoted speech is my own estimation of what was said. We used either our classroom or a conference room in the school office suite to conduct our interviews. Below is a field note documenting our planning of when the interviews would take place.

I bring up the question about pulling them from class for interviews. They argue for it. I decide to compile a list where they will write down their last two classes of the day, teachers, and which ones they can be pulled from (or want to be pulled from). There are critiques of classes, most notably, the study hall class called “learning lab” and AVID [Advancement Via Individual Determination]. They mostly argue for missing a class based on what they are doing in that class right now and how often other people get pulled from that class. A final issue is who will partner with whom for interviews and we spend some time working this out along with the list. When Yasmin says that she wants to be Gia’s partner Gia says, “I feel loved.” The partnership issue is important to them. I did not even think of it when I circulated the list idea but they were working under the assumption of coordination even before I realized they were doing so.

The interviews took place during the school day with a sign indicating that the closed door was not to be disturbed. Whenever an interview took place during class time it was with permission of that teacher on that day. In each case I used written confirmation or verbal confirmation with teachers. Most of the interviews took place at the end of the standardized testing season towards the end of the school year. In many cases, the classes were engaged in student-elected activities to celebrate that milestone, such as watching full-length feature films as a class or as a grade level. In no case would I have pulled a student out of class activities for an interview if the student and/or teacher declined the invitation. The students protected the class time most important to them using the collective scheduling tools described above and I followed their scheduling at all times of the school day during the final days of the study. The following field note illustrates a typical teacher reaction to an interview scheduling inquiry.

The biotech teacher greets me in her hallway and asks if I am looking for her. She invites me into her room to wait the 18 minutes until her class begins. She says it is no problem for me to pull Yasmin because she is taking her class across the hallway to watch Horton
Hears a Who with another class… The make up tests have been finished this morning. She talks with her husband on the phone, eats her lunch, she is tired, as she has been proctoring for seven days straight. She told the office that they should not use her up. They laughed but she was serious. She feels she has been pulled more than anyone else for testing.

The general sense among the group when the interviewing was taking place during school was excitement. The students would sometimes meet me at the front door to make plans after they spotted my car pulling up. In one field note I wrote, “They are very excited. They do not want to go back to class. They want to be pulled. So I write slips for their teachers asking to pull if they are available. All come back with permission.” This field note indicates how at times a few students would convene in our classroom during school before or after their interviews. During those times they worked together on film-making tasks such as editing their films while I transcribed interviews. It was not unusual for students and I to work in parallel on research activities in school spaces outside of group meetings over the course of the study.

Methods of Analysis

The ethnographic account within this dissertation is organized by film topic, which included the silencing of Spanish as racism, the silencing of students’ romantic relationships, and silencing in classroom teaching. I began constructing the logic of this first analysis by using the analytic method of articulation, originating as a strategic theory/method in cultural studies (Hall, 1986). On articulation as method, Hall said,

The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken. An articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? So the so-called ‘unity’ of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be re-articulated in different ways because they have no necessary ‘belongingness’. The ‘unity’ which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with
which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected (Hall, 1986, p. 53).

Articulation served to enter the youths’ films in a way that could lead to case analysis. As anyone who facilitates the arts knows, children create in ways that don’t often subscribe to predictable structures. In the case of the film-making group, our following the design aspect of youth control of their own digital technologies allowed for the creation of films that challenge norms of cogency and linearity. Descriptions of some of these complexities appear later in the dissertation, and I mention them here to illustrate the need for some deductive (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) method of analysis to set up a written account across the three very different films. The method of articulation beautifully recognizes that the film scenes have no inherent meaning but can also be employed in critical stance. The interpretations formed through the articulations are my “readings” of the films, keeping in mind the understandings built over time throughout the years of the study, namely, that the work at hand was critique of schooling’s silencing.

For each of the three analysis chapters I articulated a set of two scenes from one film group’s film. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are the analyses of what the students called, “The Hispanic Movie”, “The Love Movie”, and the “Classrooms” movie, respectively. Each pair of scenes included one scene illustrating the form of schooling’s silencing on which the film group focused and one scene illustrating possibility for social change related to that form of schooling’s silencing. Thus, I then examined the data for practices that may have been deployed in the production around the scenes that I selected for articulation, and these practices became the links between the articulated scenes. For each film group I chose the practice that most strongly surfaced during description and brought it to center in the analysis. These practices included:
using “extras”, “bonding”, and adding alternate endings. Through this structuring of the account, I both justify and mark as contingent the youths’ silencing theorizing using the practices going on (Hall, 1997, p. 9).

The methods of analysis for this dissertation relied on visual representation of still images from final film footage that the youth produced. In order to make a representational decision about stills of the scenes in a visual articulation I consulted a brief review of ethics and visual imagery research (Wiles, Prosser, Bagnoli, Clark, Davies, Holland, & Renold, 2008). The ethical considerations of research reporting on arts-based research with children are far more complex than the legal permissions that sufficiently cover this study’s activities. The emerging subfield most relevant to this dissertation focuses on representing youth participants’ own images of themselves, particularly when the youth and their families intend to move the art post-production. Three major factors in that subfield are the dehumanization of post-production editing techniques for obscuring identity, violation of the artistry of visual images, and family review of each image for each instance of research representation. In a conservative attempt towards reconciling anonymity and the youths’ artistry, I edited the articulated scene still images with Kartoonizer software in the Old Comic setting. In addition, at places in which the students used their names to intentionally identify themselves for audiences of the dissertation and film footage, I opted to use pseudonyms instead.

In this dissertation I acknowledge that the nature of assumptions renders them in a state of inevitable contestation and I have aimed to be explicit about the assumptions underlying the project. If I had to name one tradition, I would describe the methodology of the first framework layer of the dissertation as post-critical (Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004), which involves epistemological and ontological assumptions based in both critical and social constructionist
traditions. The two traditions come together over the centering of power relations in social constructions. Critical ethnography emerged as a methodology when the power of the critic was problematized for critical theory and when colonialism was problematized for ethnography. Post-critical ethnography is about representation of a multiplicity of ideas in a political project that also acknowledges the role of the researcher in domination. In this dissertation project I work under the assumption that, “Theory is interpretation by a subjective, positioned, political, ideological, historicized, emotional, situational, relational being” (Noblit et al., 2004, p. 34). The analysis is critical because I set up the analysis of each film using the method of articulation (Hall, 1986), but writing towards a local practice in each case leads me to view the analysis as predominantly constructionist.

I ascribe to the stance that all empirical investigation rests, whether explicitly addressed or not, on epistemological assumptions (Stone, 2005). There are two underlying assumptions of which I was convinced when it comes to epistemology throughout the study. First, as people try to know, people are always in processes of making the world. Second, the knower and what is known always move together. Both assumptions involve the construction of knowledge. Research related to the constructionist paradigm in educational research takes on a perspective asserting that there can never be one single real story told through research. Instead, every story is but one story and no story can ever be the real story because all stories are real. Furthermore, every story is told by a knower as well as told to an audience, and both the teller’s perspectives and the audience’s knowledge-construction are entwined with the story. Therefore, I own up to the first framework layer of the dissertation being only one possible interpretation of the students’ critiques, always up for contestation by any audience.
Throughout the framework layers, I keep the critical roots of the analysis structuring in mind yet reconsider the analysis as a whole as constructionist. Exploring the nuances of the relationships between the critical and constructionist aspects of the account is certainly a project for a more extensive reconsideration than I have accounted here. But because that project would inevitably center me as the researcher rather than the youths’ film-making, I marginalize it for some other time. Considering my own education in a multiplicity of critical social theory traditions, it is not surprising that they are deployed together in order to represent an account of youths’ critique of their own schooling.

Post-critical ethnographers make no claims of objectivity and instead explore representation ends involving strategies such as reflexivity that elaborates alternative possibilities in the research; the postpositivist notion of reliability is not a concept with which post-critical ethnographers work. In terms of validity, post-critical ethnographers do not aim to generalize across contexts. The closest concept in post-critical ethnography to the concept of validity is transferability. Transferability can only happen when an audience of the research representation interprets through the richness of the description that the research demonstrates trustworthiness and may be useful in another context. Therefore, in this dissertation I attempt to minimize application across contexts of schooling. Instead, I provide richness of description so that an audience of the dissertation might come to a deeper understanding of schooling’s silencing through the films.

In order to explore potential meanings of the films and film-making, I approached the field notes and interviews with inductive analysis. My initial research questions for beginning the analysis were:
1. What happened in the group that explicitly addressed silencing through film-making?
2. How did silencing play out over time in the processes of the three student film teams?
3. How did the students represent and evaluate silencing?

I coded line by line using Dedoose qualitative data analysis software. This software allowed me to code excerpts across the data and to export by code while maintaining links to cases. It also allowed me to export those same excerpts by case while filtering for coded data. Organizing by film group case emerged as the way in which I would analyze and account for the films and the film group practices. On the other hand, in order to allow for more detailed study of themes that had already been emerging, such as silencing, I also deployed a matrix approach for students’ interview comments about certain topics. With the students’ comments on silencing positioned as theorizing, the coding became somewhat abductive, which involves moving back and forth between data and theory. More specifically, this strategy begins with the particular, connecting the particular with broader concepts as the researcher aims to come to interpretations (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). This strategy allowed me to consider how the data spoke to the students’ theorizing about silencing rather than confining interpretations to my existing understanding of silencing. Most notably, the matrix was instrumental in accounting about silencing. I organized the matrix by film group and then within film group by student. The matrix allowed me to better understand nuances between student perspectives. One important function of the matrix, for example, was distinguishing the nature of silencing from explanations for silencing. Such nuancing paired with the patterning function of thematic coding to provide a richer understanding of the film-making, including a relatively emic description of the concept of silencing.
Agency for social change

The first framework layer culminates with some sense of the students theorizing not only how silencing works but also how silencing can be challenged. Although Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are about the films and about the three forms of silencing taken on in the group, the first framework layer is more about the injustice of systemic silencing and the students’ calls for change.

Students seemed to feel as if they had agency for change. They did not seem to feel deterred, at least not completely, by social problems. I came to this interpretation not only for the problem of schooling’s silencing but also for other social problems. The following discussion is a typical excerpt that led me to believe that the students felt some sense of agency when it came to social problems.

Quiana talks about Macklemore’s song about gay rights. Vicki argues for Ellen Degeneres.

Quiana: “It’s like sometimes standing up for what you believe in might cause you problems at first but sooner or later those problems go away and people will love you.”

Vicki: On Ellen Degeneres, “She started from the bottom.” They know a lot of her biography.

About gay rights: Quiana: “The most hurtful kind of silencing is probably this one...They are just outcast. Like a nobody. Nobody gives a crap about them.”

In addition to providing an illustration of students’ theorizing on changing social problems, when considered in the context of the purposes of the film-making group, this excerpt also indicates that at least some of the time, students seemed to use the language “silencing” in order to increase their agency for changing social problems. Another typical excerpt on change of social problems was,
They talk about a gay student and a lesbian student [currently at their school] and how they have rights. They talk about examples from popular media too. Quiana said to her friends about the lesbian student, “She’s a person.”

Quiana: “People would rather remain voiceless than stand up for people who have had their rights stolen.”

This excerpt can serve as a reminder that students took a moral stance when it came to social problems. Thus, in this dissertation, I reject a relativistic argument on schooling’s silencing and its related social problems such as racism, isolation, and the many others that surfaced during our work together over the years, whether or not those problems glimmer in this dissertation. Educational research offers many ideas for finding moral footing. In ethnographic accounting of participatory research with youth I seek moral stance in students’ perspectives on social problems.

Furthermore, in the students’ work there is clear acceptance of the multiplicity of the silencing problem. They have no issue understanding that (as adults seem to). The problemness of silencing is what they come together on, and not even the problemness for an individual but the problemness for collectives. One student, for example, explained that the silencing topic brought them together as a group rather than having been a topic chosen by a collective with an existing groupness.

The following field note excerpt marked the first instance in which I interpreted any of the groups to be representing change in some way.

When I think about their films they are all about forms of silencing. One film is also about change for teachers and classrooms. This presents interesting visions for schooling I think, even if they are not scenes of navigation.

Although I am not sure of the significance, it does not escape me that my first interpretive moment on change was also the first moment in which I began to understand each of the film
topics as a form of schooling’s silencing. The implications for the concept of change in this field note are also nested within evidence of a turn in the overall emerging design of the study. Because for this dissertation I aimed to decenter my own experiences in the study, even as they relate to methodology, I include this field note excerpt as a mile marker in the story about students’ perspectives on changing social problems.

The students viewed the film-making itself as agentic for social change. The following data excerpt illustrates the furthest reaches of the representations of change. The excerpt documented the end of an interview with Gia and Yasmin.

Amy: “Anything else?”

Gia: “I wanna say one more thing. When you’re silenced, tell a teacher about this group. Well not about this group but about silencing...Say it’s silencing, maam.”

Amy: “What’s that gonna do?”

Yasmin: “Probably tell them why people talk back to them, cause they don’t like to be silenced.”

Amy: “What good will come out of it?”

Gia: “You teach the teacher. She finally has a lesson for herself, that silencing is silencing.”

Amy: “Could any bad come out of it?”

Yasmin: “She would probably feel bad. Like she was doing something bad?”

Amy: “For you? The kids?”

Yasmin: “I don’t think so?”

Gia: “Yeah, if you say it in a mean way. If you say it in a respectful way you might not be in as trouble as you would.”

This excerpt is important for an understanding of the boundaries of the students’ agency in the film-making. First, it is a classic example of the institution of teaching as the site of social
change. Second, the teacher finally having learned “a lesson for herself, that silencing is silencing,” can be understood as a movement of understanding taking place at that site. That movement of understanding is, in this case, specific to schooling’s silencing. Third, the students’ speculation about what would happen during that movement of understanding suggests a boundary to their visions for social change. In other words, and most importantly, the alternative rendering that they worked to envision and create in their film-making stops at movement of understanding between teacher and student, leaving systems of and beyond schooling unimagined beyond critique. Finally, this was Gia’s final comment, and she phrased it in a clear command for me. Throughout the ethnographic account of Framework Layer 1, I take students’ finality, brevity, and commanding as markers of valuing.

Framework Layer 2: Agential realist reconsideration of the ethnographic account

The second framework layer of this dissertation is an agential realist reconsideration of the three film analysis chapters. Despite having represented an account of the students’ film-making based on analytic and writing approaches I trusted as ethically sound, the representation’s underlying message about the agency of the writing and film-making group was incompatible with our sense of agency lived. Static understanding evokes discontent in the way of knowing that produced the account. In a moment caused by a particular history of my learning to research, I reached across paradigms to engage theory as a way to generate movement in understanding.

Because the study happenings took place and were very real for everyone involved, the reconsideration took on an unexpected ethical urgency for me. That urgency sustained the conceptual work of the second framework layer. Barad (2007) argued, “Matter and meaning are not separate elements” (p. 3). The purpose of agential realism is to theorize the relationship
between discursive practices and the material world. Therefore, I aimed to return to the written account with the Barad’s (2007) concept of intra-action rather than the concept of practices. At each of the points in the agential realist analysis I also interrogated apparatuses that made cuts of inclusion and exclusion at the layers of study design and analysis. In addition, I read for the humanist assumptions as described in Barad’s (2007) call for posthumanism.

The interpretations in the second framework layer raise a multiplicity of questions regarding agency. As a brief preview to the reanalysis, consider the contingency of an idea already discussed: the students’ theorizing on schooling’s silencing. Under the first framework layer, interest in what the students’ theorizing has to say about silencing dominates. Barad (2007) emphasized that theorizing is itself a material practice. As I turned to, as Barad calls it, the “classical” analysis with an agential realist lens, surfacing the material happenings of the film-making work, one theme consistently presenting itself was the students’ theorizing on schooling’s silencing. Although this pattern could be understood as discursive, in an agential realist account it can be understood as material. Understanding the students’ theorizing as material rather than discursive leads to its valuing as an end rather than as a mechanism. What matters more under the second framework layer then, is not what there is to be learned about silencing but instead what happens to silencing on account of the students’ theorizing.

The second framework layer became about how the first framework layer as a research writing account materialized and what it did. Overall, returning to the classical account of the film-making surfaced its humanist assumptions, especially when it came to agency. A current project for poststructuralists is understanding phenomena with posthumanist assumptions, and an important part of this project is theorizing towards a new understanding of agency that detaches from subject or event and includes the cuts of inclusion and exclusion made by material flow.
Agential realism is a theory only recently brought to educational studies by Jackson and Mazzei (2012), and even when employed in other fields, has very rarely touched qualitative data.

The way in which Jackson and Mazzei (2009, 2012) entered qualitative educational research with a poststructural lens was to take up the concept-problem of voice for both qualitative research (Lather, 2007) and poststructuralism (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Their 2009 edited book was a response to constructionist and critical conceptions of voice in qualitative inquiry. The argument was that voice has been privileged because of the assumption that voice can speak truth and authenticity. This argument could be described as posthumanist because it countered the idea of an essentialist subject with an authentic voice. In silencing research it seems that language such as, “giving voice” (e.g. Fine & Weis, 2004), “hearing”, and “speaking” falls under this assumption, as does seeking to add voice multiplicity. Jackson and Mazzei (2009) argued that this positions even arts-based research representations as resting on the assumption of a humanist subject because they insufficiently question the role of research and researcher in influencing voice. Consequently, such representations do not present new knowledge or knowledge differently but rather reproduce “the same knowledge with a different literary twist” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, p. 2). The authors represented the purpose of their poststructural approach to voice by writing,

> What is new with this collection of chapters is an attempt on the part of the authors not to give in to a paralysis that can occur by the seemingly limitless interpretations and inadequacies of voice, but in a Deleuzian fashion, to exploit what is produced by the trouble of (or with) voice…seek practices that confront and twist voice, meaning, and truth” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, p. 3).

The aim of their work was to “strain” the notion of voice in qualitative research. The method for straining was exploring “the layers of voices present and the epistemological assumptions that continue to haunt our methodological practices” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, p. 3). They wrote,
“Rather than giving up on voice, or substituting a new word in hopes that we can leave behind the problems of voice, we wish to ‘strain’ the notion of voice. As we strain the notion of voice and refuse ‘too easy’ conceptions of voice, we search for new ways of considering voice…” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2009, p. 3). Because it is about silencing, this dissertation could have become about a qualitative notion of voice, and may still be about that in a way. That possibility tells me that bringing together qualitative silencing research and poststructural interrogation is an interesting project. To begin that project, in direct response to the call to reimagine research (im)possibilities through bringing qualitative research into contact with poststructural assumptions, I positioned this dissertation as “straining” silencing. Rather than searching for a new concept to capture the students’ meanings or to resolve the problems with the concept of silencing in educational research, for this dissertation project I aimed to strain silencing.

Inclusion of my written account of the students’ accountings of how silencing works as well as a reanalysis and reaccounting by different epistemological assumptions strains silencing along multiple planes.

As the concept of straining implies, agential realist inquiry has no concern for structural, complete, or grounded explanations of material engagements. Because completing story is humanist, the dissertation moves towards complexity and situates complexity as a site for ethics. Where my classical analysis of film-making practices of the three film groups culminated in a dead end when it comes to agency, yet the underlying assumptions of participatory ethnography resonate instead with possibility, agential realism was a way for me as a research writer to enter the dissonance head-on. Complexifying understandings of agency and school’s silencing raises ethical possibilities of, but also concerns about, agential realism’s material engagement with educational research.
Embarkation

Each of the three analysis chapters in the classical account contains five major moves. First, I introduce the film group by describing the formation of the film group and interpreting the film group’s meaning to the members of the film group. Second, I interpret the film group’s “form” of silencing, or the topic of the film group’s film. Third, I interpret a relationship between that form of silencing and a wider social problem. In conjunction with this third move I point to representation of possibility for social change within the second scene in the articulated pair of film scenes. Fourth, I examine the articulated pair of film scenes for one practice that seemed important for the meanings I interpreted in the preceding moves. A reader will notice four major implicit themes amongst these moves: group formation, silencing, isolation, and social change.
CHAPTER 2: “THE HISPANIC MOVIE”

Introduction to the analysis

“The Hispanic Movie” was comprised of situations surrounding the formal sanctioning of Spanish speaking at school. In the film students across racial and linguistic groups, their parents, their teachers, and school counselors came into contact with one another around fallout of English-only policy at school. The settings included homes, classrooms, school offices, and shared areas at school.

The producers of The Hispanic Movie called themselves “The Hispanic Movie” film group. The Hispanic Movie film group seemed to come together based on shared experiences of oppression. Shared experiences with the silencing of Spanish heavily contributed to their sense of groupness, but when this was not possible the group complexified their sense of groupness through shared experiences across categories of race. In other words, shared experiences of being silenced in school were important to the work of The Hispanic Movie film group. This was unique among the film groups.

The Hispanic Movie film group focused their work on the silencing of Spanish. The scene I chose for the articulation that would explore this form of schooling’s silencing was a scene in which students experienced sanctions for using Spanish in school. The scene involved metaphor in order to represent the sanction of suspension. The scene also represented the movement of understanding between students who shared categories of race and/or language.
This movement of understanding seemed to be about escaping the isolation that occurred as a result of this form of schooling’s silencing.

The Hispanic Movie film group represented the silencing of Spanish as racism. I explore this relationship between a form of schooling’s silencing and a wider social problem through the second scene in the articulation. The scene I chose for articulation represented a collectively remembered event that exemplified English-only policy at school. In the case of The Hispanic Movie, the second scene in the articulation not only represented a form of silencing as a wider social problem but also illustrated possibility for social change related to the silencing of Spanish.

My articulation of these two scenes from The Hispanic Movie surfaced an important practice from all of the film-making work. The use of what we called “extras” was a practice that emerged in the dissertation analysis as particularly important to The Hispanic Movie film group’s production of critique. In this chapter I describe the evolution of the practice, define the practice using data on its evolution, and argue for its high valuing within the film-making group as a whole. I then focus in on the importance of the practice of using extras to the work of The Hispanic Movie film group.

Framing the practice of using extras as a practice and exploring the importance of that practice raises questions about exercising power. In the final section of this chapter I suggest that using extras, and particularly using extras across categories of difference, allowed for work that situated the silencing of Spanish as racism. This situation was linked to how students described the purposes of their work. The students described their film-making work as linked to wider collective struggles against racism. Understanding their production of critique of schooling’s silencing as representation, then, affords possibility to (re)organize power relations.
around silencing. Along with silencing subjecting youth so strongly, as evidenced in the
students’ theorizing around silencing, is the exercising of power through the practice of using
extras confined to the film-making context? Or might their practice of using extras live through
representations about their representing?

**Group formation and meaning**

In the interviews I asked everyone how they came to be in their film groups. Quiana and
Vicki explained that The Hispanic Movie film group came together based on shared experiences
with the silencing of Spanish. Quiana recounted, “We really thought about it and kept talking
about how they tell us not to speak Spanish. Silence us.” Their shared experiences with the
silencing of Spanish contributed to the importance of their groupness. Of the silencing of
Spanish Yasmin said, “It touches us.” Gia and Yasmin expressed valuing of the film group by
saying in succession, “It means a lot because it’s important,” and, “It’s kind of like a family.”
Bailey similarly described the group as, “It means a big huge family cause we love each other.”
Below is an exchange illustrating how Quiana and Vicki described the meaning of The Hispanic
Movie film group.

Amy: “What does your film group mean to you?”


Vicki: “Friendship.”

Quiana: “Sometimes sisters…Everybody had a story. And we were all Hispanic.”

Their analyses of the group’s formation after the work had been well underway aligned with my
observations of the formation of their film group. My field notes from the first meeting read,

Karla, Yasmin, Quiana, and Vicki say that they all have the same topic. The topic is
“Hispanics” according to them. They talk about the prohibition of Spanish in school. Gia
is sort of leading this group. Karla and Quiana are contributing very enthusiastically.
All being Hispanic was a way in which the group described themselves over the history of the film-making group, but this descriptor was more complex than it might seem.

The way in which the youth described their races played an important role in how the youth in this film group formed their group. The six students, all of whom named themselves as girls or females, named their races as, “Mexican; Hispanic; Mexican/Latina; Hispanic; Mexican/Latina/Meximerican; Colombiana.” Because the way in which the students in this film group described their races played an important role in film group formation, the topic of race immediately became important to group operations in general. During the first day’s whole group discussion around a conference table made from pushing six rectangular tables together, race was named and centralized for the months to come. The following is an excerpt of early field notes depicting the first instance in which a student from outside The Hispanic Movie group spoke of race’s role in the grouping.

For the third movie, Wendi sees that it is called “The Hispanic Movie” and she says that we have to hand that over to "these people", making her arms and eyes waive in motion to the end of the table at which sits Karla, Quiana, Yasmin, and Gia. Gia volunteers to present her idea to the group. Early in the meeting Olivia said that the funniest part of the last meeting was when Cole said, “But I'm Caucasian!” so could not be part of The Hispanic Movie group.

At least some members of The Hispanic Movie group seemed to think that some sense of commonness within the group was important. This thinking was evident in the deliberations on the movie’s title. In addition, the group was united in clarity of scene purpose relative to the other two film groups. On one day I wrote in my field notes, “They seem to have some agreement on the scenes and their importance to the group, more so than the other two groups.” I interpreted this unification to originate from shared experiences of oppression. After the second meeting I asked each film group to write and share with the whole group a response to
the question, “How did you make the decisions?” The Hispanic Movie film group wrote and shared with the whole group, “We made our decisions based on true stories. We made a little decision that turned into a pyramid. We made little decisions then we all agreed to it, and now it’s, BAM! The next big thing.” The group members consistently reported that their shared experiences of oppression moved their film-making work.

Shared experiences of oppression were often related to their film topic, schooling’s silencing of Spanish. However, this was not always the case. Some members expressed solidarity with this particular type of silencing by connecting with other members through categories of difference. Group member Yasmin summarized the group’s general connectedness by saying, “We got each other. We understood.” When it comes to categories of difference, data related to two students in this film group illustrates two different types of connections: race and language. Karla seemed to connect with the group through race and Vicki seemed to connect with the group through language. These two cases of connection demonstrate the students’ capability to theorize for the collective critique of schooling’s silencing and therefore merit descriptive detailing.

Karla originally hoped to be in the Relationships film group but described a change in decision. She explained, “I decided none of them were going to be there except Hector, not to be racist, of our race.” Karla openly critiqued the method of rapid self-selection for permanent groups, and told me that it prevented her from joining the group in which she preferred to work. She said that at the moment of her decision, “Everybody was settled down.” Although The Hispanic Movie group was her second choice, her membership in the group was created through the category of race. Karla described herself as having lost her Spanish throughout the four
years of the study. On the second day of this final year of the study, she revealed to her group
that she was no longer comfortable using Spanish:

Karla reveals that she is against making the Hispanic movie in Spanish because she says, “My Spanish is retarded.” Her group is trying to convince her to do it anyway...She is very uncomfortable with this reveal. She is crossing her arms and looking awkward.

Karla was a member of the original writing group during her 4th grade school year. The major research interpretation from that writing group, which consisted of four students in transition from an English as a Second Language program, was that students were silenced by isolation during that transition. As her work during the study documented some ways in which schooling silenced Karla, and silencing became even more oppressive during the transition from the English as a Second Language program due to increased isolation, her case illustrates some tragic consequences of schooling’s silencing. Furthermore, even though Karla had long been a critic of schooling’s silencing and had struggled against that silencing using tactics such as escaping isolation, by the time this group met during her 7th grade school year she had come to evaluate her Spanish with what I interpreted as shame. Karla was considering schooling’s role in the loss of her Spanish. She mentioned that the Spanish use involved in the film-making brought her to think about this further. Remembering the taping of a scene in which she was scripted to use Spanish, Karla said, “Sometimes...English just comes out of my mouth. It’s like English is a part of me now...When I’m at school I just talk in English all day so it just comes to me naturally.” The way in which Karla described her loss of Spanish pointed to tragic consequences of schooling’s silencing.

Vicki’s case contributes further complexity to the understanding of The Hispanic Movie group’s solidarity. While Karla’s case illustrates connection through a race category, Vicki’s case illustrates connection through a language category. From the first day to the last day, Vicki
was steadfast about correcting the film group as well as the larger group on their inattention to her Columbianness in all forms of their work together. For example, this film was originally entitled The Mexican Movie and on the very first day the group reluctantly edited it upon Vicki’s insistence to The Hispanic Movie. Karla reported that they changed the film’s title back to “The Hispanic Movie” because Vicki joined. The discussion around this edit was prompted by a moment in which the film group named a shared understanding about the racism of the societal perception that someone in the film group named as “Mexicans are bad”.

Throughout the three years of her participation in the group, Vicki consistently described herself as “alone” and perceived as invisible due to her Columbianness. In her interview during this final year Vicki reported that she connected with the rest of the film group through language. Quiana and Vicki chose to come to the interview together, and when I asked them about group formation Quiana described a moment in the group’s formation when, “We really thought about it and kept talking about how they tell us not to speak Spanish.”

The silencing of Spanish was a form of oppression that bound this group together in their film-making. That silencing of Spanish was embedded within larger contexts of racism. Analysis around this point appears later in this chapter. I mention it here because data indicated that the representation of racial and linguistic groups was a wider system of oppression under which the students in this film group connected in solidarity.

The strongest data for this interpretation were in the interviews. In fact, it was during the interviews with members of The Hispanic Movie film group that I began to form the interpretation that they viewed the silencing of Spanish as racism. The students in this film group often used the descriptor “American” in their interviews. The following two exchanges were typical and are the data that provide the most information about this descriptor.
Amy: “What do you mean by American people?”

Gia: “Those whose parents are actually American…Those people think it’s their land and that’s why they don’t like us.”

Yasmin: “‘White’ is more specific.”

Students in The Hispanic Movie film group consistently clarified for me that the term American included neither African American nor Hispanic, both of which were terms they regularly used to describe categories of people. They frequently used the term American to specifically refer to teachers. Although this specific reference to teachers was frequent, the relation of the terms American and White applied to people in general. In a separate interview the response to my asking Vicki and Quiana about their use of the terms “us” and “them” most clearly suggested the relation of the terms American and White as both close and generally applied.

Vicki: “Gringos.”

Quiana: “Bolios. It’s like when you flip it over it’s White. It’s kind of racist [sic].”

Vicki: “Same as ‘Americans’.”

The students in The Hispanic Movie film group consistently seemed to closely relate the terms American and White. In this study there was much interesting data on race, but an analysis on the construction of race in the film-making group is beyond the scope of this dissertation. For this dissertation I relied on data that linked the terms American and White. It is important to track the source of this interpretation because I developed interpretations about racism using this close relation of terms.

**Form of silencing as a problem and potential exceptions: The silencing of Spanish**

Before discussing work around the topic of the silencing of Spanish, I want emphasize that this form of silencing was framed as a social problem. The six-member Hispanic Movie
film group critiqued the silencing of Spanish as a form of schooling’s silencing. The students centered their work on this problem. The first to analyze the film-making group’s ideas about silencing as the silencing of Spanish was Yasmin. Fortunately, my field notes contained a descriptor of the first naming of this form of silencing. I wrote, “The Post Its are flying into the center of the table. Yasmin does not write any Post Its. She talks about the key idea of the prohibition of Spanish and listens to the discussions.” I wrote this note because I noticed that Yasmin was the only student who was not generating scenes of silencing for our brainstorming exercise. As a general method I often documented the actions of any student who diverted from the group in some way, perhaps with a naïve sense of concern for that student’s well being. It was not until a full year later that I would interpret Yasmin’s distinct actions as her development of an analysis that would lead directly to this film group’s topic.

The consequences for this problem were very real. Gia described the silencing of Spanish and its consequences in her experiences by telling me, “For me it’s like somebody’s putting a gun on my head saying, ‘Shut up!’ Tons of times. Five times a day…The benefit [of Spanish], at least to me, is that it’s our code. Also, it’s a traditional thing for us.”

**Good from the silencing of Spanish**

Because one theme in recent educational research on forms of silencing is to challenge the understanding of silencing as a problem, I was sure to interview the students about times they experienced or could imagine good coming from silencing. Members of The Hispanic Movie film group overwhelmingly described the silencing of Spanish as a problem. Gia’s reaction to this interview question was incredulous: “Like good in what way?! I’m pretty sure it’s possible but it hasn’t happened.” Vicki and Quiana responded, “Uhhh…” looked at one another, and shook their heads.
When students did describe good that did or could come from silencing, they spoke of good and silencing in general but gave examples related to the form of silencing they addressed in their respective films. For example, after thinking about it some more, Quiana mentioned one good that comes from the silencing of Spanish. She said, “It sometimes gets us more inspired to fight for what we believe in,” and she spoke of struggle against Arizona law as an instance of this. In addition, Vicki said that her persisting feeling of aloneness from being “the only Columbian here” created a fortunate necessity for her to stand up and love herself. Despite these ideas for good that could come from silencing, the students overwhelmingly framed the silencing of Spanish as a problem.

**Silencing form illustration: Silencing of Spanish – ISS scene and beyond**

The scene that I chose for the articulation to explore schooling’s silencing in the form of the silencing of Spanish was a scene in which students experienced sanctions for using Spanish in school. The scene involved metaphor in order to represent the sanction of suspension. For this dissertation, I interpreted this metaphoring to be metaphoring subjection to silencing. I argue that the scene also represented the movement of understanding between students who shared categories of race and/or language. This movement of understanding seemed to be about escaping the isolation that occurred as a result of this form of schooling’s silencing.
The ISS scene was one of many branch scenes that evolved from a single key scene on which The Hispanic Movie film group spent most of their time. That key original scene involved a scenario depicting the schooling practice of prohibiting the use of Spanish in the classroom. The following field note demonstrates the importance of this scene to the work of the film group:

The Hispanic Movie is, at the moment, about the members of the group coming together to share and understand each other’s experiences through elaboration of one key scene. The scene of the classroom and teacher and relationship between Spanish speaking students grows several arms each day. For example, more students are silenced, more types of interaction are silenced, consequences such as being removed from class to go to ISS (In School Suspension) are added, etc. All of their film scenes evolved from this single scene.

This field note also supports my argument that shared experiences of oppression moved the group’s film work. Because it is beyond the scope of a paper to detail all scenes, I have approached the relationship of scenes for this group’s film alongside the other two films. As another film group focused on silencing in classrooms, I have chosen a branch scene from The
Hispanic Movie that contributes to a deeper understanding of their critique of the silencing of Spanish in particular. In other words, the film group’s key scene involves many forms of silencing taking place in a classroom, of which the silencing of Spanish is included as one form. With what the film group called “the ISS scene”, however, they took on the problem of the silencing of Spanish in particular.

I have chosen the ISS scene of the silencing of Spanish because it involves a sanction with which the group was very familiar. The group called this sanction being sent to ISS, which stood for “In School Suspension”, and seemed to be of primary concern to the film group. Once the scene was set up, there was a heightened sense of solemn urgency to capture it on film, as evidenced by a rare brief appearance of observers in the frame and by an unusual deference to the scene leader.

Quiana led the set up for the scene. The group made general advance plans to create ISS but as was customary for this film group, specifics were not in place until someone took over direction in the moment of setting up for immediate filming. The other group members watched as Quiana directed the set up of three tables with two chairs backed up against the long edge of each table. She ordered each of six students to sit on his or her knees behind a chair with his or her head behind the hole in the chair back, peering out of the hole. In my field notes I described the set up in this way:

Quiana is in charge all of a sudden…Quiana sets up chairs at the base of three tables, facing out and resting against the table at the back. She tells the extras to get under the tables and put their faces through the holes in the backs of the chairs.

Quiana casted Gia as the teacher and ensured that Bailey and herself were adjacent to one another in the line-up of sanctioned students underneath the tables.
I interpreted the imagery of the scene to be metaphorical for an imprisoning style of being subjected. Most of the group members and extras seemed to understand Quiana’s metaphorizing and took steps to enhance the metaphor during the set up. The exception to this shared understanding was Cole, the student involved in this scene who described himself as White. The following field notes describe Cole’s confusion with the subjection metaphor:

Cole tries to take over and make adjustments. Cole is the only White person involved and the only person who does not understand about Quiana’s representation. He asks, “Are we people or animals?” and during the filming he acts as if he were a monkey. This is in stark contrast to Hector, for example, who lays his body out looking dejected and zombie like through the opening in the back of the chair. Cole leaves the scene still confused.

This field note excerpt illustrates Cole’s confusion with the metaphor for subjection.

Furthermore, when considered alongside Hector’s understanding of the metaphor, it may indicate the influence of Cole’s experiences as a student who was White and monolingual for English on this confusion. While Cole seemed to pick up on the idea of imprisonment, Hector, who was bilingual and described himself as Mexican, seemed to pick up on and actually extend ideas related to silencing and subjection.

The set up of the scene described, I move on to describe the action of the scene. The scene plays as follows. The camera allows the viewer to enter a classroom from the hallway. The group has helped the viewer to understand the social context of the metaphor they have set up by hanging a simple sign on the doorframe into the room. It reads “ISS” on a piece of white scrap paper. This minimal preparation of props is typical; film groups consistently devote their work time to discussion of the scene and include a bare minimum of props only when they are concerned with an audience’s interpretation of a crucial part of the scene. In this case, it is crucial for the audience to know that the scene space represents ISS. Gia, the teacher in this scene, paces along the back of the three tables, shaming the students and ordering silence. The
camera spans over the students in ISS and comes to focus on a whispered discussion between Quiana and Bailey, who talk between tables about how they came to be in ISS. As they whisper, their arms clench the vertical metal bars of the tables.

Bailey: “Why are you in here?”

Quiana: “I was talking Spanish.”

The teacher interrupts their whispers, one hand on each table, elbows locked, leaning down into the space between Quiana and Bailey.

Teacher: “Why y’all talking? You’re not supposed to be taking in ISS. What was that?” The teacher walks away.

Quiana: “So, why did you get here?”

Bailey: “The same thing.”

Quiana: “Whoa.”

Bailey: “Yeah.”

Quiana: “Just keep your head down, okay?”

Teacher: “You’re not supposed to be talking. You know that.”

Both Quiana’s and Bailey’s ISS tablemates, both Latin@ as well, now appear in the shot as the camera spans to include them. They whisper to Quiana and Bailey.

Vicki: “Shh.”

Hector: “Shut up.”

I interpreted the students’ metaphorizing work as metaphorizing subjection to silencing. In this case, the scene represented a sanction that the students found important for schooling’s silencing of Spanish. In one of their “bloop” scenes that was ultimately excluded from their full length film, Gia took film of a flushing toilet and voiced over, “This is where you belong.”
alongside two students being sent to ISS for speaking Spanish at school. The subjection was
important to the students because of its very real consequences.

In addition to interpreting the imagery of the ISS scene as metaphorical for subjection to
silencing, I interpreted the scene to represent movement of understanding between students. It
could be argued that the exchanges in the scene were only about remaining quiet in ISS so as to
avoid further sanction. However, in the contexts of the film-making of this film group, who
constructed the scene as part of a critique of the silencing of Spanish, I interpreted the exchange
to be about much more than just volume level. I argue that there was movement of shared
understanding among students. This movement seemed to depend on the students’ varying level
of experiences with the silencing of Spanish.

One type of movement of understanding was advice between students who shared
categories of race and/or language. The exchange between Quiana, who described her race as
Mexican, and Bailey, who described her race as Mexican/Latina, led me to this interpretation.
The two students described themselves as somewhat (but not exactly) sharing the category of
race, and because in the scene they had both been sent to ISS for speaking Spanish at school,
they shared the category of language, at least for the film representation. In this scene, Quiana
had been in ISS for some time when Bailey arrived, which positioned her as a giver of advice in
this dialogue. Quiana advised Bailey, “Just keep your head down, okay?” From this line in the
film I interpreted Quiana as advising Bailey on tactics for navigating this manifestation of the
silencing of Spanish. Two more students who described their races as Mexican and Columbiana
gave directives to Quiana and Bailey that echoed Quiana’s advice to Bailey, telling them to “shut
up” so that they might avoid further sanction by the ISS-monitoring teacher. Ending the scene
with two more students re-emphasizing Quiana’s advice supports this interpretation. Finally, the
impromptu nature of the ending further suggests shared understanding. In other words, the film group seemed to be representing the act of keeping one’s head down as one way to get through ISS, which they saw as the ultimate sanction involved in the silencing of Spanish.

This interpretation is based on observation and in this case I was not able to learn more from discussion with the students. My outsider status was at heavy play around this scene. In my field notes I wrote, “I need to look at the tape…There is something spoken between them that is clear to them as a strategy. This is a brilliant scene.” Later that day I asked Quiana to interpret the scene and instead of turning towards the dialogue she turned towards the metaphoring involved in the scene set up.

An analytic return to the set up of the ISS scene from this point of shared understanding indicates that in this film group silencing was a problem closely tied to isolation. The ways in which silencing subjected students in the scene are multiple. For example, students were removed from instruction, students were shamed, and messages of deviance were added to students’ school records. A full analysis of these forms of subjection is beyond the scope of this paper. For this dissertation the analytic point of shared understanding has led me to analyze the isolation of multilingual students as one way in which silencing subjected students. Quiana’s comments in the following field note explicitly tie silencing to isolation in the ISS scene described above.

Quiana reviews the tape later and she is very happy with it. Later I talk with Quiana about her chair idea. She and Bailey are playing catch with a woven bracelet of green, white, and red thread that spells Mexico. She somberly tells me, “In the ISS room, I’ve seen it. There’s like, walls. To make you feel alone. But these people right next to you.” Quiana’s explanation of the relationship between silencing and isolation makes it clear that isolation subjected students to silence. In other words, students were silenced through isolation.
Because Spanish use was sanctioned with this isolation, students who were multilingual experienced subjecting silencing.

Interview data supported and further informed this interpretation of the observations and film artifacts. Data from the interview with Quiana and Vicki named a person in the state of isolation by silencing “an outcast.” They described how outcasts, even if they are outcasts on account of being isolated by silencing of a form other than the silencing of Spanish, “find each other…make a group. They use each other to get through those silencing moments.” Quiana and Vicki located a time in their life stories, during their 3rd grade year of schooling, when this happened to them. Quiana remembered saying to one another, “It’s okay. We’ll make it.” Vicki explained that this shared experience with the silencing of Spanish was what allowed for she and Quiana to be “big friends” as opposed to just “friends”. Quiana further explained, “I would tell them, my not Hispanic friends, stories, but they couldn’t relate. It didn’t really help them or help me.” Vicki responded, “Until I found Quiana (air fist bump).”

A discussion between Quiana and Vicki seemed to point to how important they viewed silencing by isolation to be for students experiencing the silencing of Spanish at school. The context of these comments was an interview discussion on “hiding” Spanish at school.

Quiana: “We’ve all been in that phase where we hide it.”

Vicki: “Yeah. You feel like you’re alone.”

Quiana: “The only one. An outcast.”

Vicki: “Especially from the point of view of a Columbian, you know that there are many Mexicans but not many Columbians. But then I realized I can speak Spanish and they can and that’s how me and Quiana became friends.”

Quiana: “We’ve all been through that phase. Even I know...I would not even dare to say hi in Spanish or eat Spanish food or anything related to it.”
Vicki: “And now we’re proud to be Hispanic.”

Quiana: “I went through the phase. It was in 3rd grade the summer before I came here. They [“the Americans and the African Americans”] would make fun of me because I could not speak Spanish very well. There were three Hispanics in there and they would make fun of us for the color of our skin, our hair, and our accents. And I was like, Man, I hate being Mexican. I want to have light skin, blond hair, and blue eyes.”

Vicki: “That’s the vision that Hitler had.”

This interview discussion draws overt attention to some of the consequences of the silencing of Spanish at school, exposing some multiplicity of the problem.

A return to additional data around the ISS scene can provide more nuanced insight into how the film group complexified the problem of schooling’s silencing. The Hispanic Movie film group decided to expand upon the ISS scene with a scene of a resulting parent/counselor conference. For the scene the sanctioned students’ parents were called in to the school as an intervention on the part of the school. The scene was to involve a surprise turn of the intervention’s nature and direction: the parents were to intervene in schooling’s silencing, citing their own history of experience being subjected to schooling’s silencing of Spanish. The expansion to the parent/counselor scene took place after the ISS scene had been filmed and finalized. The parent/counselor scene emerged from a discussion between Karla and Bailey, the most veteran-schooled members of The Hispanic Movie film group. The following field note excerpt describes my observation of the birth of the expansion scene.

Karla and Bailey are re-filming in the hall because they had a new idea of silencing over time and generations. Karla says, “Over a long period of time they [schools] keep doing it [silencing Spanish] and they’re going to keep doing it in the future.” Bailey: “That’s [idea] actually pretty good...We’re gonna start from the past...ten years later...” Karla adds, “If you’re paying attention, it’s saying that this school doesn’t value the Spanish language even after ten years later.”
During the group’s planning for the parent/counselor conference scene, Karla was to play the role of mother to one of the students who had been sent to ISS for speaking Spanish at school. The plan for the scene was that Karla would explain to the school counselor how the practice of sanctioning her daughter and other youth for using Spanish at school was unjust. One purpose of the scene was likely to have been construction of a shared meaning for the silencing of Spanish that complexified the silencing of Spanish to include silencing over generations. This purpose is reflected in Karla’s statement that this would be the reading of an audience member who was “paying attention”.

Interview data supported my claim that this complexification of the silencing of Spanish through the representation of silencing over generations was a shared meaning among the film group members. For example, Gia and Yasmin expanded on the idea of silencing over generations in their interview. They explained to me how subjection passed through generations “on and on” by telling me, “It goes down the chain.” This complexification of the group-specific problem of the silencing of Spanish as subjection over generations was a typical example of problem complexification during the whole group’s production of critique of schooling’s silencing.

Thus far I have presented the students’ work on the silencing of Spanish qua schooling’s silencing. The next section of this chapter explores consequences in more depth as I analyze how students situated the social problem of schooling’s silencing of Spanish in wider contexts of the social problem of systemic racism.
Form of silencing as wider social problem: Silencing of Spanish as systemic racism

By producing critique of the silencing of Spanish, The Hispanic Movie film group seemed to be representing the silencing of Spanish as racism. Interview data most explicitly named and connected these problems.

Amy: What is the problem with silencing?

Vicki: “Racism.”

Quiana: “It is. That’s the only word that can explain it. Racist…Silence is taking somebody’s rights away…sometimes people cannot express themselves without doing those specific things, what they know.”

Quiana’s response to Vicki’s assertion names not only their representation of the silencing of Spanish as racism, but also relates this representation to the whole group’s general topic of silencing. Such relations of representations of wider social problems to the whole group’s general topic of silencing were important practices during the ongoing film-making work and will be discussed in a later chapter. For the purposes of exploring the silencing of Spanish as systemic racism I emphasize the overtness in the link made by Quiana and Vicki. Furthermore, in this statement Quiana is making a claim about the valuing of knowledges. According to Quiana, the devaluing of knowledges that are “specific” to a group is unjust. To this film group, the silencing of Spanish at school was a practice of racism and therefore unjust.

Putting the link between the silencing of Spanish and racism in time context points to the morality of the film group’s claims. The Hispanic Movie group quickly became about representing injustices of racism. At the end of the school year Quiana, who came to be an unexpected group leader by the end, named their most important decision as “deciding which stories to tell.” In this group discussions of silencing went to racism during the first meeting and the group spent most of its time sharing stories and selecting, through a range of group processes
they even called “fights”, those that were most tightly tied to the silencing of Spanish. Quiana explained that among the group members, “There were a lot of racism stories that didn’t have the big meaning of being silenced.” Two group members argued that students who had been schooled for longer periods of time had more experiences with racism. Furthermore, they thought that students who had been schooled for shorter periods of time used Spanish more heavily and therefore contributed richer stories of the silencing of Spanish. Those two group members therefore interpreted that one role of the students who had been schooled for shorter periods of time was to “choose” the more heavily schooled students’ racism stories based on the stories’ connection to one particular manifestation of racism: the silencing of Spanish. These two students’ interpretation contributes further gravity to the group’s critique of schooling’s silencing. It may even situate the dissertation’s interpretation of the silencing of Spanish as racism so solidly that it seems tragic that this film group’s work was pulled back to the silencing of Spanish from the wider contextual work it had so soon begun on producing critique of racism.

On “systemic” and experiences with racism

In this section I explain my use of the qualifying term “systemic” preceding the emic term “racism”. Data in which students described experiences with racism and racism at school in particular could populate their own dissertation. These experiences most often involved acts based on assumptions on the part of individuals. For example, students described instances in which it was assumed that they would play on school soccer teams. The students sourced those assumptions in wider social contexts. For example, students spoke of how individuals they called American learned to make assumptions from sources such as representations in viral images and misinformation spoken in viral videos. Quiana summarized individuals as “being racist without knowing.” A full analysis of the youths’ understanding of racism is beyond the
scope of this paper, and this topic appears briefly again later in this chapter. I mention it here in order to clarify my use of the term systemic. By describing the wider social problem under which they produced critique as “systemic” racism, I mean to make it clear that the work of the youth in The Hispanic Movie film group was institutional and ideological critique rather than critique of individuals.

I want to re-emphasize the importance of solidarity for this group. Students certainly reported silencing as racism in the interviews and represented silencing as racism in their film. In addition, I often observed instances in which the members of The Hispanic Movie group seemed to share an understanding of silencing as racism. Below is the first scene of this type, occurring during our first meeting of the year.

Several of the scenes from The Hispanic Movie fall to the floor. The group of Latinas who will make this movie are standing in front of this grouping of scenes. Someone says, “Mexicans” right when they fall on the floor. Someone else says, “Mexicans are bad.” There are laughs from all of the Latinas. They have an understanding that this is an inside joke about the perceptions of Mexicans.

My field note language of “joke” and “Latinas” speaks to my own whiteness and otherness to this film group, which became an important part of our relationship over the year. Most of these instances of observation happened with me only on the fringes of the action in terms of both physical space and identity, so I interpret them only alongside the interviews and film scenes. However, the distinction of my researcher experience from my experience as a White classroom teacher of students I similarly silenced has ultimately led me to view those instances as privileged glimpses of students at the urgent work of critical theorizing. My outsider status only strengthens my interpretation that the meanings shared among group members were central to the group’s production of critique.
In any case, my aim for embedding the analysis with at least some description around how students seemed to understand racism and for using the qualifier “systemic” when referring to racism is to clarify that the students were engaged in critique of much more than the actions of individuals in schools. This would be a crucial project for a paper intended for another audience. Data on this subject was plentiful and included students’ theorizing on, for example, relationships between racial stereotypes, mass and social media, immigration policy, labor, and the distribution of wealth. Yet lingering on the establishment of racism as systemic for this dissertation would disservice the students’ knowing by valuing academic demand for explication of a concept over students’ urgent stances on that concept. Quiana’s theoretical summary of racism as a “jacked up” social problem is how I might represent most concisely the shared understanding among the members of the film group of racism as systemic. In the next section of this chapter I introduce the second scene in the articulation. The scene illustrates English-only policy as racism and includes the film group’s representation of social change regarding this problem.
Data illustrated many manifestations of the problem of the silencing of Spanish at school. These manifestations included the prohibition of listening to musicians who were Hispanic and listening to music performed in Spanish, the advancement of stereotypes through representations and assumptions, and school-sponsored ridicule of Hispanics and Spanish. For this dissertation I focus on one manifestation of the problem of the silencing of Spanish at school. This manifestation, English-only policy at school, was the manifestation most heavily represented in the students’ film-making.

The hallway scene of “racism” and “justice” emerged from discussion of English-only policy at school. According to the youth, their school had an official policy of English-only. Karla storied re-enforcement of the policy when I asked her during an interview, “Tell me about a time in your life when the silencing of Spanish was a problem.”
Karla: “[The principal]. All of us Latinos were talking Spanish in the hallway after winter break. A couple days later. Over the intercom he said, ‘No speaking other languages, second languages, because other people don’t understand.’”

Bailey: “Silencing other languages.”

Karla: “Silencing your other languages.”

The hallway scene of racism and justice was designed in close connection to this event as the students in the film group collectively remembered it. The original planning for the scene involved two hallway discussions. Although the final scene involved only one hallway discussion, a discussion in Spanish, I documented the original plan for the scene with the following field note.

I listen in on The Hispanic Movie group planning a scene where two students are speaking Spanish in the hallway and they are told not to speak but two students are speaking English and they are ignored.

The original plan for the scene involved comparison between the discussion in Spanish and the discussion in English in what I interpreted to be an effort to emphasize the silencing of Spanish as distinct from the silencing of discussion in general between students at school. If the final scene alone were to be considered, this comparison to school policy on discussions in English would have been lost. In other words, this original planning contributed to my interpretation that the hallway scene of racism and justice was about how English-only policy silenced Spanish.

The final scene opens with Gia and Vicki walking down the hall speaking in Spanish. A teacher, played by Olivia, who described herself as African-American, confronts the students, physically blocking their movement down the hallway and interrupting their discussion.

Olivia: “What are y’all doing?”

Gia: “We’re talking in Spanish.”
Olivia: “You’re not supposed to be talking Spanish in school.”

Gia: “Why not?”

Olivia: “Because teachers can’t understand what you’re saying. You could be talking about other students behind their backs.”

Gia: “So?”

Olivia: (pause) “You’re not supposed to be talking Spanish in school!”

At this point in the scene Hector and Cloud approach. They are playing themselves in the scene and they address Olivia, the teacher, whom they perceive to be enacting the school’s English-only policy in her interactions with students Gia and Vicki.

Hector: “Bro, bro, that’s racist, bro.”

Cloud: “Yeah, that’s racism.”

Hector: “That’s racist.”

Cloud: “What are you doing?”

Hector: “That’s messed up.”

Cloud: “Just cause you know the language don’t mean nothing.”

The scene concludes with Cloud and Hector modeling for the teacher what the group scripted as anti-racist actions. These actions are represented as alternatives to the racism of English-only policy.

Cloud: (to Gia) “What’s up, mi amigo, how you doin?” (hand clap)

Cloud: (to Vicki) “What’s up ese?” (hand clap)

Cloud: (to Olivia) “You know, just learn with the program!” (shaking body, arms out to sides, loose)

Olivia: “Okay!”

Cloud: (to all) “Let’s go.”
Karla called what happened at the end of the scene “justice”. This scene of racism and justice can be understood as a representation of possibility. Therefore, the production of critique involved representation of the problem but also representation of paths to social change. The change that Cloud called “learning with the program” can be better understood as what Karla called “justice” with an analysis of a practice that emerged as particularly important to The Hispanic Movie’s production of critique.

**Practice: Using extras**

Using extras was a practice amongst the three film groups. The origin of the practice in the film-making group took place when Olivia, who described herself as African-American and “very creative”, brought up a concern about the limitations of the technology we were using. The practice began with work on the Teacher and Classrooms film. My field notes described this moment in the following way:

Olivia is concerned about the camera quality, the camera not being able to move, and that camera not being able to deliver the correct perspective.

Olivia was searching for a way to represent students in a classroom. This need arose for the three-member film group because one film group member was to film, one was to represent the role of teacher, and another film group member did not want to appear on camera.\(^3\) Although I

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\(^3\) Ann-Marie’s involvement in her group may be underread by this statement. Later, Ann-Marie agreed to be on camera a great deal, but only as representing herself. Her role in the film group was editor and her role in the larger group was technical expert. She became editor for the reason she described as, “I was tired of being on the side.” Her expertise and commitment to the editing were extreme and are topics beyond the scope of this dissertation. Her work outside the group meeting time was extensive and heralded. In my field notes I wrote that at home “she has added titles, can use the language and therefore the skills of ‘trimming’ and says she has been working on it at home.” Group members complimented her work and looked to her for help with a diverse set of technical problems.
cannot trace the original person who used the word “extra,” I believe it was me, as I wrote field notes about the emergence of the idea of editing in stock scene created by filming members of other film groups being brought to the table as a potential way to address Olivia’s concerns. The events described in the field notes below took place in the immediate seconds following the emergence of the idea for the practice of using extras.

The classroom group is ready to film. They begin by asking people to come over to their area one by one to be in their cast. Their main objective is to get boys to participate in their movie. They ask them one by one and everyone is so excited they begin to make the plans for the individual lines and actions…They sign up several people one by one to work on their film. They set up their scene in the front of the classroom. They ask the relationships group to move their storyboard, which is done with great flourish, and much, I guess I would call it, theater.

It is with this field note description that I define the practice of using extras. In this dissertation I define the practice of using extras as a film group’s involvement of people who were not members of that film group for representation in a film scene. The following field note documents a time when a student, Peaceful, described the practice of using extras in order to explain the practice to students who were absent on the day that the practice emerged.

The Hispanic Movie group has a debate over who will be the person to talk to about “extra auditions”. Peaceful explains what an extra is, and how one can be an extra or request an extra, for those who were not here last time.

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4 Because this practice led the students to want to use friends they brought to group as extras, we developed strict boundaries when it came to capturing representations of anyone who had not formally agreed to be a participant in the study. This development of those boundaries was a major entry point into our explicit exploration of ethics of research and implications for our ongoing study. The topic of the students’ perspectives on the ethics of research is a promising topic for a future paper.
Although I unfortunately did not capture Peaceful’s exact phrasing, the event of her describing the practice for the purpose of getting the group up to speed for the day’s work informed my understanding of the practice. This event was a relatively clear case in which understanding of the practice moved within the group.

Every film group employed the practice of using extras early, often, and throughout the course of the study. Ann-Marie said that what was great about how the group constructed the practice of using extras was that, “You can’t force anyone.” The group as a whole highly valued and depended on the practice of using extras. I would perhaps even describe the level of valuing as dependence because the students expressed to each other their “need” for each other’s involvement as extras. Field notes documenting action that involved the practice of using extras regularly contained evidence of high valuing. Some examples include the following field note excerpts. All three selections involve scenes produced by the Teacher and Classrooms film group.

I write field notes in the room. The students are all in the hall. It is a peaceful time. I hear sounds of engagement, high fives, comments, shuffling, laughing. Cole [extra], “They still need me!”

Cloud [extra]: “Best buds. I want a hug. Hugs all around. Close friend [to Chelsea].”

Chelsea has a red face. She is so excited. Ann-Marie is excited too. They whisper about it on the side.

They replace Cloud [extra] for Cole [extra]. Ann Marie: “Cloud, we need you.” Chelsea calls him, “Cloud!” He comes to sit quietly at their table [atypical movement for Cloud].

These field note excerpts illustrate both the high valuing of the practice of using extras for both those who expressed need and those who felt needed. Written reflections echoed the language of “need” when it came to the practice. Chelsea, in a daily written reflection, wrote that the most important aspect of their work for that day was, “We figured out that we need a class and one
teacher.” For their film group reflection on one day, the Classroom film group wrote, “We will need people, everyone here, to participate.” In a later reflection Chelsea seemed to represent the practice as important enough to the day’s work to introduce it as, “one great thing—we casted out people.” These valuing indicators are enough to convince me that the practice of using extras was important to the film-making group. Still, the image of a flourishing theatrical beginning to the filming of the very first scene most accurately presages the group’s valuing of the practice of using extras.

In this chapter I focus on the practice by describing its importance to The Hispanic Movie film group’s production of critique. The use of extras from the other two film groups was a practice through which The Hispanic Movie group exercised power in a wider anti-racist struggle. This interpretation emerged from the articulation of the two scenes from The Hispanic Movie, or the articulation of the ISS scene with the hallway scene of racism and justice. The following field note excerpt describes the emergence of the hallway scene of racism and justice.

I listen in on The Hispanic Movie group planning a scene where two students are speaking Spanish in the hallway and they are told not to speak but two students are speaking English and they are ignored. Yasmin bridges language to race in the most explicit way thus far, “That’s racist.”…Yasmin calls Cloud and Olivia for extras as the two English-dominant students. Yasmin is telling the extras, “The point is that the scene is racist. Be like, ‘Hey, that’s racism.’”

This field note indicates that the practice of using extras, in the case of The Hispanic Movie, often involved students who did not see themselves as having direct experience with the particular form of silencing represented in that film. In the case of The Hispanic Movie film group, this meant that the practice of using extras involved work between students across categories of racial and/or linguistic difference. Interestingly, extras who described themselves as not having been subjected to the particular form of silencing critiqued in the film in which
they were extras often described their involvement in the film-making as supporting the critique of the film group. This trend of support was consistent among film groups in the whole film-making group. In the case of The Hispanic Movie film group this support involved monolingual extras, and in the other cases it involved, for example, students who had never had a romantic relationship. Using extras seemed to be a practice important to the production of critique of schooling’s silencing because the practice involved work across categories of difference and experience with forms of silencing. In the case of the hallway scene of racism and justice, The Hispanic Movie group brought in Cloud, who described himself as a Brown man, and Olivia, who described herself as African-American. The coaching for the extras involved explication of the silencing of Spanish as racism as well as the direction of action that would allow for the possibility of social change towards justice. Yasmin directed the enthusiastic extras on “the point” of the scene being racism and to explicitly name the silencing of Spanish as racism in their scene lines.

This film-making for justice through the practice of using extras took place not only across categories of difference but also sometimes within categories of difference. For example, Hector, who was not a member of The Hispanic Movie group, was an extra in the parent/counselor conference ISS expansion scene. His involvement in the scene included reemphasizing the navigational advice of keeping one’s head down to avoid sanctions related to the silencing of Spanish. The film group scripted Hector and Karla, who were playing the parents of the silenced students, Bailey and Vicki, to “chew out” the school employee character for silencing the students. Hector’s role was to accompany Karla’s character as she condemned their daughter’s silencing. Hector’s role was carefully detailed and central to the group’s critique of silencing. Instead, adlibbing during the scene, Hector turned to “chewing out” the students for
getting themselves into the situation. Instead, Hector’s character reinforced the silencing of the daughter by condoning the sanctions she incurred at school as well as introducing new sanctions from the family. This turn occurred at the following point in the final recorded scene:

Karla (to counselor): “So, what’s up with my daughter being in ISS?”

Hector (to daughter): “What are you thinking, girl?”

Karla (to daughter): “What was wrong with you? You don’t do that…What kind of daughter are you? Are you mental?”

Although the film group was disappointed in this turn to further oppression, Hector’s involvement seemed so important to them that they let the scene stand. Although certainly ripe for a number of potential analytic lenses, Hector’s revision of the film is most important to my analysis in its contribution to a complex understanding of the practice of using extras. Thus far, my analysis has focused on this practice as the students used it across categories of difference such as race and language. Hector’s extra involvement in this scene is a case of an extra not only diverting the message of the scene but actually reversing it, as his character represented justification of schooling’s silencing.

5 The way in which dialogue was scripted varied between groups. The Hispanic Movie film group adlibbed as a rule in order to sound what Karla called “more natural”. On their first day of filming Vicki objected to this, requesting written scene lines for her role as narrator of a scene. Karla set the rule for the remainder of the film-making by commanding Vicki, “Just say what comes to you!” In my field notes I noted that prior to the filming the group wrote and coached each other with general statements for the dialogue in their film. The teacher group, on the other hand, wrote exact scripts for each of their scenes. Ann-Marie described this practice in an individual reflection on 3/8/13: “I enjoyed making the scripts because it made me think of what teachers say and do as well as students.” My observations confirmed the importance of scripts to this group, as they often worked on wording scripts for entire meetings. They even set up a googledoc on which they worked outside of group time whenever they got ideas for scripting. Chelsea wrote in an individual reflection that this precise scripting brought them to learning that they would need to cast their peers. In other words, as they scripted perspectives, they realized the need for additional roles. This was the case for at least one teacher role and one class full of students in their film.
This reversal of the film group’s message about silencing brings up interesting questions about the practice of the use of extras as well as the notion of categories of difference. It seemed that categories of difference were even more fluid than categories of race and language as understood in educational research. In Hector’s case, Hector described himself as Mexican. His participation in both of the scenes highlighted in this articulation positions his involvement in the film group’s critique of silencing as forwarding that critique through opposing silencing. The exception of this scene is therefore certainly worth describing. However, data on this exception was limited. At least some members of The Hispanic Movie film group wondered why Hector did not join their group when it was being formed. Vicki, for example, said, “Hector had a story [about his experiences with the silencing of Spanish], I don’t know why he didn’t come…He’s been to Mexico more than any other person here…six times…He hides it.” Hector did describe himself as Mexican, and was known to proudly shout, “We are Mexicans, not Mexican ‘ts!” during the group. However, Vicki and Quiana argued that Hector was distinct from the members of their film group due to his being in what they viewed as a phase of hiding. They described themselves and their siblings as having already gone through that phase, and argued that the phase was universal for students connected with them across categories of either race or language. It is possible then, that Hector was an outsider to The Hispanic Movie film group in more ways than one.

The exception of an extra reversing the message that a film group planned for the representation suggests that the location of the critique was more within the practices than within the representation itself. Data on the time devoted to different tasks during the film-making group support this claim. For example, students spent hours planning and discussing the parent/counselor conference scene in the Hispanic Movie but filming took place from 4:57-5:00
on a single day. More often than not, the final filming of a scene seemed to be an afterthought. Sometimes only pressure resulting from the imminent ending of that day’s meeting or the scheduled early departure of a key group member in a scene would compel the students to begin the actual filming. Furthermore, downloading and editing was certainly seen as a fulfillment when compared to the engagement in practices less connected to the film products. These patterns, as well as their level of attention relative to each other when considered alongside their proximity to what can be seen as the final representation product, gets at practice rather than representation as important for meaning making. In my field notes one day I wrote with clarity, “It is more about the preparation than the product.”

The implications of the message reversal within this scene through the practice of using extras, and the importance of that practice’s employment for work across categories of difference, initially seemed to me to be grave. However, description of one moment in the study can provide better understanding of the students’ meanings around this reversal. On the last day of the film-making group, one of the activities in which everyone engaged was a viewing of their respective films in their entirety. The students chose to screen their films in film groups rather than as a whole group. My role during the screenings was to observe their interactions as they screened the films together. In my field notes I described extra Hector’s reversal of the silencing message the group planned for the parent/counselor conference ISS expansion scene as “devastating”. However, as The Hispanic Movie film group screened the scene, they reminisced. They described the change in the film product as “trouble” yet seemed to use markers in the scene as entry points to celebrate collective experiences in the production of the scene. I was surprised to learn that the film group evaluated the practices around this event as much more important than the change in the film product. This interpretation suggests that the practices of
the film-making held more value for the students than did the films as products. If practices
during representation are more important than the representations themselves, this raises
concerns about meanings that may be lost as practices fade while the fixedness of representations
propels them.

Data from the students’ collective writing support my claim that the practice of using
extras was important in the production of critique of schooling’s silencing. We engaged in many
forms of collective writing. The form of collective writing that I surface for furthering the
argument positioning the use of extras as a practice is the form we called “group reflection”. We
began and ended each day with a meeting of all group members around a single conference-style
table. We called this practice conferencing and anyone could “call” the group “to conference” at
any time although it became routine for the group to come to conference to begin the day and for
me to call the group to conference in order to conclude the day. The most frequent topics of
discussion during these whole group meetings were logistical business for the group, the film-
making, instances of silencing, and the lives of the youth. Much of the time was devoted to time
for everyone to freely be together, and each day we ate together, often a full meal. On one day
we looked over a yearbook from Vicki’s kindergarten year at Gibson Elementary School and the
youth told stories of the memories brought up by the book. Each day the youth noted causes for
attendance or absence and communications about the group that had taken place during the week
at school. This culminated in explicit evaluation of each other’s commitment to the group and
discussions of potential support, praise, or interventions to be taken with any group members.
We treasured the conferencing time together and we all worked to protect it from the increasing
demands of the other aspects of the work that were film group-specific such as writing, filming,
downloading, and editing. My field notes on the conferencing time typically included statements such as, “The energy is overflowing.”

One method we used during conferencing was the writing of reflections. Sometimes the youth wrote individual reflections on the day’s work and submitted them to me for private audience. More often, each film group wrote a collective reflection on their day’s work for the more public audience of the whole group. Someone in the authoring film group always immediately read the written group reflections aloud to the whole group. Early in the film-making each film group wrote a group reflection each week but by the time the scenes highlighted in this dissertation were in production the writing of film group reflections was occasional and took place only when something of great significance had taken place between film groups. The film group reflections seemed to be a practice that the film groups used to communicate to other groups. On the same day as the filming of the hallway scene representing the silencing of Spanish as racism, both film groups with members involved in the scene submitted group reflections emphasizing the importance of the practice of using extras in the film-making.

On this day the two groups involved in the scene seemed to speak to one another about the practice of using extras. The Hispanic Movie group reported, “Group Reflection, Hispanic Movie: Today we were mixed up. Some were extras, some were just random. We recorded one scene. Great!” Their comments to the whole group seemed to indicate at least three points: a) the practice of using extras was a practice as opposed to any practice that was “just random”, b) the practice of the use of extras was across categories of difference, which this film group described as, “mixed up”, and, c) the practice of using extras was important to the production of critique as evidenced by the conclusive description of the day’s work as “recorded” and the
evaluative description of the day’s work as “great”. A work summary by the Relationship group marked the importance of serving as extras. They reported, “Group Reflection, Relationship Group: Today we were extras for another group.” The Relationship group had dedicated its two hours of work time to production on The Hispanic Movie.

The practice of using extras was a practice through which the film groups who were producing critique of specific forms of schooling’s silencing worked across film groups. This practice was important to the critical nature of the youths’ work. For further analysis I turn again to the hallway scene of racism and justice. In this scene the coaching on the part of the members of The Hispanic Movie group as they involve the extras in their film explicitly frames the silencing of Spanish as racism. Directly preceding this interaction was a whole group discussion on the topic of whiteness and discourse. Therefore, the production of critique through the practice of using extras seemed to, at least around this scene, point to situating the silencing of Spanish within broader contexts. In the case of this film group, the broader context most important to the group seemed to be racism. Framing the use of extras as a practice and understanding this practice as situating the silencing of Spanish within broader contexts of racism in which students were subjected by silencing raises the question of how the youths’ practice may have allowed for the students in the film group to exercise power.

**Exercising power**

Interviews with several members of The Hispanic Movie film group indicated that they viewed their production of critique of school’s silencing as linked to wider collective struggles against racism. Vicki and Quiana, for example, spoke of their film-making as anti-racist work with the potential to contribute to social change not only in the contexts of schooling but also in other contexts. The following interview comments are about the topic of racism.
Quiana: “I don’t get why people say if we leave it by itself it will fix itself. It’s not something that can be fixed by itself. It needs peoples’ help. Like people up in Washington, D.C. Representatives.”

Vicki: “Celebrities. People that people look up to. Idols.”

Quiana: “Role models.”

They articulate specific ways that our work together might “impact…keep spreading out and people will have that big idea”.

Quiana and Vicki seemed to view their film group as exercising power and as having great potential for exercising power.

In their accounts of what they imagined for their film-making work, they were those idols, presenting their work for groups of teachers and youth. In the interviews I always asked what the students would change about the group should it continue the following year. Quiana and Vicki said that the group as a whole should engage in larger struggles against racism through the film-making. They suggested we structure a way to educate teachers about racism.

Quiana: “Help tackle the problem. Show it to people. Right now we’re just making films. We could show them to people we know.”

Vicki: “The teachers should know.”

Quiana: “Teachers for this district, other districts, just let them know it’s a problem that’s happening…Somebody who will actually think it’s important.”

Towards the end of the study I asked the students to write to the following statement. “Use this space to write a message you want to tell readers of the dissertation about yourself.”6 Quiana’s entire response read, “It takes one person to change a room, one room to change a community, ________________

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6 The document I developed served similar purposes to what is often called a demographic questionnaire.
one community to change a nation, one nation to change the world.” She often used this phrase when she was theorizing social problems. She explained this movement of an idea for change in her own way by detailing, “The more people it impacts, the more it will keep spreading out and people will have that big idea.” The language “big idea” was language that this film group used more than once to refer to the purposes of their work on schooling’s silencing.

Of the meaning of the group, Hector summarized, “Helping a situation…We’re trying to show people the silencing they’re doing to others.” Movement of understanding took place through the practice of using extras. Thus far this chapter has highlighted the movement of understanding about silencing for the case of the Hispanic Movie film group. As a practice widely used throughout the film-making group as a whole, using extras seemed to offer movement of understanding through not only the sharing of information that I have described but also through students’ (e)valuation of each other’s work as extras. This (e)valuation, I believe, was important to what became known in the film-making group. Film groups (e)valuated the work of their extras. The following field note, although documenting an instance of using extras in the context of the Classroom film group’s film-making rather than in the context of The Hispanic Movie film group’s film-making, best exemplifies students’ (e)valuation of one another’s work as extras. In this excerpt I include notes on my own involvement in the instance in order to show their rejection of evaluation from me as a contrast to their own (e)valuation.

Influence for this statement may have come in part from Barak Obama’s quote, “One voice can change a room, and if one voice can change a room, then it can change a city, and if it can change a city, it can change a state, and if it change a state, it can change a nation, and if it can change a nation, it can change the world. Your voice can change the world.”
Scott is very eager. They are coaching Scott, their volunteer. Olivia makes a comment, for example, that he is doing things “perfect”. Scott is taking instructions, watching...intently. I come to say they’re getting caught up in detail but they’re working on the next scene. This is another case where I am sent away because I am slowing things down and out of the information loop of the team. They are all giving Scott positive feedback for what he is doing and how well he is following their directions and their images. Of special note is his enthusiasm and the way that he communicates the feeling that the student is supposed to have in the scene. I noticed that Scott is very enthusiastic. This is the first time that anyone has asked him to do anything. He's always asking to be invited to be one thing or another but he never gets invited. Scott was only invited to their scene because Cole quit mid-scene because he did not want to do what they were asking him to do. When Scott saw Cole quit, he raised his hand and shouted loudly that He would do it, He would do it...Chelsea calls him over and I don't think I have seen Scott so happy in the three years that I've worked with him. I know that he will remember this moment when he was asked to be included into a group.

That the group theorized movement of understanding as a mechanism for social change was secondary, however, to this film group’s theorizing of silencing as a problem. The final messages of Gia, Quiana, Vicki, and Yasmin were all about the silencing of Spanish as racism. Each of the messages emphasizes the injustice of this problem.

Gia’s final message for the reader:

My name is Gia and I’m a Mexican female. I would describe myself as crazy, fun, energetic and loud. I’ve been in this group since 4th grade, so 4th, 5th, and 6th. What I wanted to say here is that when a teacher silences you just because of your race, gender, religion, that is what I call racism.

Quiana’s final message for the reader:

Hey. I'm a Mexican female. I'm happy, crazy, and I love my friends. I’ve been in this writing group for three years – in 5th grade, 4th grade and 6th grade. Racism is fucking wrong... Even if you try to stop it. Even the government tries to keep it from stopping but they don’t really work that well stopping it...Well, we’re making movies about silencing. And we chose racist silencing. I think it’s really wrong to judge someone by their...culture..., skin color, religion, and what they believe in... because in your eyes it might seem awful but in their eyes it might seem (pause) normal (shrug). And, it’s like [our film] trying to help stop it. And we’re trying to give hints to the government to help stop it but they push it away, so that’s kind of stupid and suckish. It sucks really, getting judged by what you believe in and all that shit.
Vicki’s final message for the reader:

I’m Columbian, nerdy and shy. I’ve been in this group for three years. I’ve been in this group for 4th, 5th, and 6th grade. Our topic is about Hispanic people getting treated bad because of their religion and culture. I don’t think that’s the right way to go and you should really stop it if you’re doing it.

Yasmin’s final message for the reader:

My name is Yasmin and I’m a Hispanic female and I describe myself as friendly, kind and pretty. I have been in this group for three years – 4th, 5th, and 6th. My quote is: Don’t judge anybody by how they look or act.
CHAPTER 3: “THE LOVE MOVIE”

Group formation and meaning

“The Love Movie” was a saga of a romantic relationship between two students. The settings were shared spaces at school. Interactions between couples, peers outside the relationship, teachers, and administrators illustrated the consequences of isolating students who desired to be in love relationships.

The producers of “The Love Movie” film group called themselves “the Relationships group”. They opened their film with individual introductory stills of five of the six group members. Below I pair the text overlaying the members’ stills with how the members described their races and genders:


“Hector: Kiwi Boss Bro” – “Mexican”

“Cole: The one that cannot be Ghetto” – “White boy”

“Peaceful: The Cute Glue That Sticks us all together” – “Black female”

“Wendi: cupcake with mixed icing” – “Multi-racial young lady”

Scott: no introduction still – “White man”

The students in the Relationships film group described the group’s meaning as family. The following discussion is from my interview with Peaceful and Wendi.

P: “My group is like a family to me.”

W: “Yeah. Basically.”
P: “We rely on each other. Even though we might not be with each other all the time we think about each other and care about each other.”

W: “We just love each other.”

A major part of the family meaning was what Peaceful described as, “being important”. This included “being needed”. All members described Peaceful and Wendi as “the glue” of their film group, and named Peaceful as the original glue. On a day following Peaceful’s absence from a film-making group meeting the following exchange took place:

Amy (to Peaceful): “Your group fell apart without you.”

Peaceful: “Yeah! I know. Vicki told me. I’ll try not to be gone any more.”

Hector (to Peaceful): “You are the glue that holds us together.”

Wendi: “What about me?”

Hector (to Wendi): “You weren’t here. Y’all two are the glue that holds us together. We are just the bricks.”

Wendi: “Oh, we know.”

My observations supported this interpretation that Peaceful and Wendi were the glue that held their group together. For example, on a day that Peaceful left more than an hour early I wrote:

Peaceful and her friend leave at 3:55 to go the movie Scary Movie 5. She tells me, “I will download tonight.” The three boys in the group are lost without her. They are playing Star Wars with yardsticks. It takes lots of redirection to get them to “support” the two other groups as extras. Cloud and Hector are brought in to the Classrooms film group. Cole is left. I ask The Hispanic Movie group, “Can you use him?” Cole says to them, “I can’t speak Spanish.” I ask Gia, “Can you use that?” They can use it. He asks questions about his involvement, what they want him to do, etc.

Peaceful welcomed her naming. When she invited her film group to name her role for inclusion in their film credits, she approved of the name that they gave her. My field notes read, “Peaceful asks Cloud what her name should be: ‘Cloud, what should mine be?’ Cloud: ‘Cute sexy glue.”
That sticks us all together. It sounds weird but it’s true.” Peaceful agreed to this naming and finalized it in their film credits.

This idea of glue involved complex “family” relationships among group members. For example, Peaceful and Wendi described themselves as like parents in the group.

Amy: “What was that like, being the glue?”

Peaceful: “It made me happy because the boys relied on me. When they said they missed me when I was gone I was like, Awww! Oh my gosh, I didn’t know I was this important.”

Wendi: “It was fun but I kind of felt like a parent though.”

Peaceful: “Oh yeah. Or a teacher.”

Wendi: “Cause we have to keep the boys in tact.”

This parenting or gluing within their group was not always beautiful for Peaceful and Wendi. Sometimes this role in the group was a burden to them. On one day the role pushed Peaceful over an edge. My field notes for that day read, “Peaceful is getting angry at Hector and Cloud because she feels like she’s ‘doing all the work.’ We pack up five minutes early to give the relationships group, mainly Peaceful, a break.”

Gender certainly played out in the formation of the Relationships group. The understanding of the role of “glue” that I constructed above allows for an entrance into gendering within this film group. For instance, I would say that the greatest worry for the members of the Relationships film group who described themselves as boys (and in many cases also “bros”) was having to work without Peaceful and Wendi. In one case, the group’s work across gender categories was threatened. The threat was great enough to compel the members who described themselves as boys to reengage for both the discussion of casting and the filming of their first scene. This reengagement, which was remarkable in both scope and speed, indicated that for the
Relationships film group, gender categories of “girls” and “boys” served functions of “glue” and “bricks” respectively. The following field notes from the first day of the film-making group give a picture of the formation of what the Relationships film group later came to call “the bricks”.

Cloud attaches himself to Hector. Cole asks to be attached to them. Scott asked to be attached to them during the whole day but he's being excluded. I hear many sentences such as, “What about me?” For example, Cloud said his movie was going to be “The C.H. Movie” for Cloud and Hector. Then Cole asked to be a part of it. In response, Cloud renamed it “The C.H.C. Movie”. After that, Scott asked to be part of it by saying, How about a “C.H.C.S. Movie?” and during the whole time asked many times, “What about me?”, trying to make a group of four boys.

All of these notes and comments on the formation of the Relationships film group, along with a great deal of data related to this film group, indicate complex power relations within the film group. In fact, shifting power relations and roles were major themes that I interpreted in the data set as a whole. However, this dissertation is about the films. I raise the point here in order to emphasize that in their description of the film group’s meaning of “family” there were multiple and shifting power relations rather than an even and static enactment of power.

New relationships formed in the Relationships group during the course of the film-making. Peaceful, for example, named both Wendi and Hector as her best friends and Wendi named Peaceful as her best friend. Wendi and Peaceful, in their interview together, said that the film-making group “helped” them to become “true friends”, which they described as “not two faced” and not going behind each other’s backs. Cloud and Hector described themselves as the closest of friends. The following data excerpt is from their interview.

Amy: “What does your group mean to you?”

Cloud: “A family. Can I ask you (Amy) a question?”

Amy: “Of course.”
Cloud: “Is it good to have new friends? Last year I wanted to punch Hector in the face. We cool now. *We bros* (claps).” He tells about how his previous best friends have turned to girls instead of to him…“I mean I can trust him (hand on Hector’s shoulder) but I have only 50/50 for anybody else.”

Amy: “That’s deep.”


Cloud: “Homie deep.”

For several years prior to the film-making group, Scott, who described himself as an “interesting young man to meet”, had previously turned to friends he called “imaginary” for his friendships. Throughout the history of the study Scott and I often discussed his relationships with his imaginary friends, which were detailed and complex in both nature and purpose. He reported in our final interview that being a part of the Relationships group released him from his dependence on his imaginary friend group. During our final discussion on the topic of friendship Scott explained, “I used imaginary friends when I didn’t have any friends. I have a ton of friends now.” Scott described his film group using the phrase, “We all get each other”. He described the wider film-making group as a place “where we can hang out a little bit but also have connections…to things that happened before.” Scott said that being part of the Relationships film group caused him to have friends that he would call “real people”. The new relationships formed in the Relationship group seemed significant to the members’ description of the group meaning as “family”.

Exclusion was part of “family” as well. Many students wanted to invite others to be in the film group. For example, Peaceful argued for a call for applicants and the review of applications that would result in the inclusion of up to only five new members. Wendi clarified that existing members be grandfathered in as “our standard people” if any new members were to
be included. This was a point of major debate on an ongoing basis. The issue came to a head when Marcus, a 16th student whose participation in the final year of the study would be brief, joined the group. Marcus joined the film-making group late in the year due to a sports season having ended and his schedule after school having been therefore freed. Data suggested that the group initially welcomed Marcus into the film-making group and the Relationships film group. The following field notes are a result of my observation of Marcus’s entrance into the group.

Marcus joins the Relationships group without any deliberation that I see; he is attached to Cloud and they seem to stick together. Cloud is much more relaxed today…Peaceful tells him when he has joined their group, “Okay Marcus…Okay, are you ready to listen? Our group is The Silencing of Relationships Group…” Wendi won’t show Marcus the film because she doesn’t trust him yet. Peaceful: “He’s getting emotional.” Marcus has gotten up and walked away because of Wendi’s lack of trust. Peaceful goes to get him and he rushes back.

Initially, the group enjoyed working with Marcus very much. The following field note documented an instance in which the attempt to draw Marcus’s attention was extreme.

Wendi faces Marcus, who is now in the corner chair. Wendi starts to dance seductively, arms out, snapping. She is wearing a tank top and shorts so short and tight that she pulls on them in all directions throughout the day. Marcus shakes his head, “No.” It was probably not a good idea to have group on the day of the dance…Cloud, Marcus, Peaceful, and Wendi are doing a whole lot of whispering. I ask Wendi what’s going on when we get to the car lot. She and Peaceful both “like” Marcus. Wendi: “But we made pacts.” Amy: “What’s the pact?” Wendi: “We are not letting him get between our friendship. When we are flirting we each get equal time.”

It was clear that the members of the Relationship group initially brought Marcus into their “family”. When he committed what they viewed as an act of betrayal, however, they turned against his inclusion. Despite his earlier welcome and his membership in the study during previous years, the Relationships group rejected Marcus’s membership when Cloud reported Marcus had physically attacked someone in his family. My own interactions with Marcus and his mother suggest that it is more likely that Marcus stopped attending the group because of
changes in Marcus’s mother’s work schedule. However, it is possible that the Relationships group’s rejection of him from inclusion in their “family” had something to do with his exit.

An outsider to the group might interpret such exclusion as based in ignorance of consequence. However, group members understood the personal consequences of exclusion. For example, Cole described his feelings during a day in which he was informally excluded.

Cole: “One time I was kind of left out…It was just all crazy. It was just hard. You don’t feel good and don’t feel like you’re loved or liked.” He described feeling “unnoticed” on that day and compared the day to usual days. I found this description to be notable not only in its indication of understanding of some consequences of exclusion from the Relationships film group but also for the norms of family and inclusion that served as the comparative backdrop for Cole’s day.

Although the group eventually formally excluded Marcus, it was never the case that someone proposed an original film-making group member’s formal exclusion. Even Scott, who experienced a degree of exclusion both during their work together and as a result of his spotty attendance, was part, albeit a unique part, of the film group in a “family” way. Exclusion and inclusion were topics of discussion each week and data related to those topics could inform an entire paper. For this dissertation I bring up the topics in order to point to the Relationship group’s description of the meaning of their film group as “family”.

The apparent meaning of the Relationships film group to its members and the origin of the Relationships film group seemed more loosely related than in the case of The Hispanic Movie film group, so in this next section I briefly describe the origin of the film group.

The topic of the Relationships group’s work was always the silencing of relationships. They began the planning for their film by developing scenes for the silencing of three different types of relationships. These three types of relationships emerged from the scene brainstorming session on the first day of the group. The three types of relationships were what the students
called, “family relationships”, “friend relationships”, and “dating relationships”. They initially developed scenes for each of these types of relationships. In my field notes for the moment of formation of the Relationships group I noted that Peaceful synthesized brainstormed scenes into the category of “relationships” and that Ann-Marie validated her synthesizing by saying, “Awesome.” Work on all three types of relationships proved to stretch the group’s resources too thin and they made the decision to focus on the type of relationship in which they had the most interest: “dating relationships”. From then on, they used the term relationships to refer to “dating” and “love” relationships. They considered representing love between what they described as one or more pairs of two boys, two girls, and/or one boy and one girl. They settled on two relationships, each between one boy and one girl. Group member Cole reported on this settling to make the relationships in the film “lovey dovey” and between one boy and one girl by explaining, “We changed it because we wanted it to seem more realistic for people who are dating. It’s a problem for them not to get to show their emotions.” The film-making group as a whole understood that the Relationships film group narrowed the more general topic of the silencing of relationships down to the silencing of “dating” and “love” relationships. Gia, for example, argued that we should expand the group “to have more people for more groups” because, “There’s lots of types of silencing. Wendi’s group had lots of different relationships.” I mention the whole group’s understanding of the Relationships film group’s topic selection in order to emphasize their understanding of the decision to cut scenes that many of the students designed on the silencing of other types of relationships.

**Form of silencing: The silencing of relationships**

The Relationships group focused their work on the silencing of a particular type of relationship. The group members called this type of relationship “dating”, “lovey dovey”, “more
than friends”, and “love”, and came to use the more general term “relationships” to include all of these qualifiers. The following field note is from my observation of the filming of the first scene in The Love Movie. Although this scene did not make the cut for the final edited film, the action around its development illustrates so typically the film group’s focus that it merits heavy description.

The Relationships film group decided to do the introduction scene as a Harlem Shake video. The group was originally going to have Peaceful stand in front and describe the “purposes of the movie”. The “purposes of the movie”, according to the group, are “silencing relationships.”... Hector takes over as the person in the front moving to the beat...He taps his chest with his hands pointing his fingers out to the side saying, “Y’all know when you’re trying to hug your girlfriend in the hall.” Wendy makes a surprising turn when she tells Hector, “Just speak from your heart about your relationship with your girlfriend and how your relationship is silenced at school.” Hector agrees and talks about how the relationship is silenced at school.

During the filming of this scene each member of the film-making group was either participating in the Harlem Shake or observing the scene from behind the camera. At this moment Hector seemed to be speaking to all of us about the film group’s topic. At Wendi’s suggestion, he spoke from his experience with the silencing of his own relationship with his girlfriend. His film group seemed to consider the silencing of Hector’s relationship as a current tragedy. Every day before the group convened he walked his girlfriend, who was not a member of the film-making group, to the school exit door, and his film group worked time for his walk into their daily routine. The Harlem Shake event in which Hector explained the purposes of The Love Movie seemed to clarify for the entire group how the Relationships film group understood their topic form of silencing.

Form of silencing as a problem and potential exceptions: The silencing of relationships

As with the silencing of Spanish, before discussing work around the topic of the silencing of relationships, I want to emphasize that this form of silencing was framed as a social problem.
The six-member Relationships film group critiqued the silencing of relationships as a form of schooling’s silencing. The students centered their work on this problem. The consequences for this problem were very real. One consequence of the silencing of relationships was what the “quieting” of what the students called “helping others.” In other words, they viewed students in a relationship as helping one another. Hector said, for example, “They’re not letting you do little things that help someone else.” Hector and Cloud described the magnitude of this consequence of quieting the helping of others as silencing “freedom”. Cloud argued, “Cause this is the liberty country. Liberty, freedom, justice for all.” In order to explain the connection between freedom and relationships, Cloud used an analogy. He asked me to imagine a police officer telling me that I was not allowed to kiss my own husband. A reader could interpret this comment as naïve to developmental concepts, but Cloud offered a distinction that demonstrated his taking of this into account. He said, “We [all ages] should have the same rights but not the same privileges.” He gave examples of legally regulated age milestones as examples of privileges, which he distinguished from freedoms, including the freedom to help one another. The group collectively wrote that schooling’s silencing of relationships made it difficult to actually have relationships. This point is significant because it clarifies that it was not the case that students maintained the freedom to help one another despite this form of schooling’s silencing. The film group wrote, “It’s just hard to have a relationship in school because of school silencing of relationships.” In other words, the silencing of relationships influenced their ability to actually have relationships.

Scott explained that the consequences of this form of silencing took place through “customs” in school. As an example of a “custom” unattached to the silencing of relationships, he offered the example of teachers expecting students to raise their hands before contributing to
discussions. I interpreted the idea of the quieting of helping others through freedom-infracting school customs to be the students’ framing of this form of silencing as a social problem.

While the students stated and explained the consequence of preventing the helping of others, they also wrote about consequences that resulted from the silencing of relationships. Consequences of the silencing of relationships, according to the group, extended throughout schooling time and space. For example, the film group collectively wrote, “We try to do our work but sometimes it’s hard to sit in a classroom silenced all the time.” Even as an experienced classroom teacher I had never considered that students might be experiencing distress and even disengagement with work in class as a result of the silencing of their relationships. As this was a collective report of experience, I interpreted their statement to indicate that even if underconsidered by adults, the silencing of relationships was very real in its consequences. The most extreme example in their writing of the consequences of the silencing of relationships was not reported as personally experienced but rather as imagined through the film-making. This consequence was one film character’s depression and contemplation of suicide. In my field notes I wrote, “The boy in the relationship experiences depression and contemplates suicide due to the silencing of his relationship with his girlfriend.” These most extreme potential outcomes, as well as the outcomes they reported having experienced, were, according to the film group, a direct result of schooling’s silencing of relationships. Wendi even described the silencing of relationships as literal “killing”, citing her knowledge of suicides of “gay people”.

**Good from the silencing of relationships**

Members of the Relationships film group overwhelmingly described the silencing of relationships as a problem. My observation of Marcus’s arrival to the film-making group three months into the work can best establish my argument. Peaceful spoke on behalf of the
Relationships film group when she tentatively pointed Marcus to the morality of the silencing of relationships by summarizing, “Silencing is when teachers think it’s wrong and you think it’s right and they don’t let you do it. Like relationships.” This sense of wrong and right was a moral stance held by the film group. Peaceful’s summary for Marcus’s entrance to the already ongoing work points not only to the silencing of relationships as a problem but also to silencing in general as a problem. At the time of Peaceful’s summary for Marcus, the group had already established silencing as the “quieting of helping others”, as infringing upon “freedom”, as destructing and preventing meaningful relationships, as preventing engagement in classwork, and as contributing to child depression and suicide.

When students did describe good that did or could come from silencing, they spoke of good and silencing in general but gave examples related to the form of silencing they addressed in their respective films. In the interviews with the Relationships film group members I again asked them if and when good might come from silencing. Cloud’s example of good coming from silencing best illustrates this point for the case of the Relationships film group. Cloud supposed that silencing sometimes “put order in place, like laws.” The example he gave of good coming from silencing was a story from his experience with the silencing of relationships. He storied,

Cloud: “It was in 3rd grade. My girlfriend was a superfreak. I love freaks as a girlfriend for some reason. I changed.”

Amy: “What is a freak?”

Cloud: “Not to be mean or anything, but she would give me lap dances in class when the teacher was gone, come up and kiss me. I was getting uncomfortable. It was getting way out there. It felt like I was a 20-year-old. Cause she was violating my personal space. This kind of girl was always beside me every freaking day. Crazy. Psychopath. One day I was ready to break up with her but I was too scared to break up with her.”
Amy: “What were you scared of?”

Cloud: “Her going crazy and punching me. I was hoping the teacher would see me kiss her and he would get both of us in trouble and it would give me an excuse to break up with her.”

Hector: “That’s a good plan.”

Cloud: “And apparently we were the same. She was thinking the same thing. She was trying to get us in trouble too. She had the same plan. The teacher called my parents and they gave us ISS for three weeks. She dumped me in ISS.”

Amy: How was this time different?

Cloud: “Difference is,”

Hector: “He wanted it to happen.”

Cloud: “Thank you. I wanted it to happen. Other times I don’t want it to happen.”

Ideas for good that could come from silencing were scarce, and the students overwhelmingly framed the silencing of relationships as a problem. One wider group discussion made this framing particularly clear.

Gia: “You know. [Hugging] goes into a relationship.”

Olivia: “A hug’s supposed to be good, like a care bear, but now I’m seeing that it’s not.”

Hector: “Care bears are good.”

Karla: “Well, I’d like to believe it, so.”

The relational nature of a hug captures the human connection of “relationships” as represented in the film-making. Schooling’s prevention or destruction of desired human connection was a problem, and even when schooling messaged otherwise, students held onto that knowledge.

Hector’s response captured the perspective of general problem while allowing for possibility of good. He said, “I’m pretty sure that some moments were good but I can’t think of anything.”

Especially because his surety could well be an appeasement of my interview question, despite
schooling’s daily structuring against the knowledge that silencing the human connection of “relationships” was a problem, the students’ critiques of schooling’s isolation were resolute.

**Silencing form illustration: Silencing of relationships—The “hallway” “love” scene**

The scene that I chose for the articulation to explore schooling’s silencing in the form of the silencing of relationships was a scene in which a principal and a teacher confronted two
students who comprised a couple. The scene involved sanctioning “love” in the relatively public schooling space of the “hallway”. Like the ISS Scene in The Hispanic Movie, for this dissertation, I interpreted this representation to be representing subjection to silencing.

The realization of the hallway love scene emerged when Cole brought some scripting into the film-making group. One method throughout the history of the study was individual writing outside of group meeting time. The students came to purpose their individual notebooks for working on the film-making outside of group meeting time and bringing that work to share with their film groups. Cole brought scripting for a “lovey dovey” “hallway” scene that he had been working on outside of group meetings. His original scripting read in its entirety:

Skit for project:
SO the school employees don’t like girls and boys socializing together.
So let’s say a boy and girl are just friends but teachers/staff think kids are being all lovey dovey, you know. So the boy sees the girl and hugs her and teacher/staff sees them hug. Then they think they are being lovey dovey. So then teacher/staff writes them up/or ISS and etc. Lines for people on the next page:
Skit for project cont. Boy: *sees girl in the hallway.

After he brought this writing to his film group, the film group adjusted the relationship to be in fact “lovey dovey” and the act to be holding hands. Cole felt strongly about including this scene he developed in their film and once it was included he was beside himself with enthusiasm. My

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8 Each year I provided the students with notebooks and pens that were identical to my field note notebook and pens. When the group meetings took place in their elementary school classroom, and the students were required to keep their personal materials in school property such as desks and lockers, I provided the students with lock boxes in which to keep their writing materials. The students set the codes for their lock boxes in order to allow for them to control for privacy of their own writing. When the group met after school at the middle school for this final year of the film-making group, the students were able to keep their writing materials on their person. The students brought their writing materials to and from the film-making group meetings. These writing materials were distinct from writing materials used during group meeting time, which included items such as roll paper, chart paper, white boards, and markers.
field notes on the conference meeting at the end of the day on which they filmed the scene read, “I asked Cole to present the first movie about relationships... because he feels so strongly about the scene of the hug between the boy in the girl in the hallway that he can't contain himself.” Cole’s scene was not the only scene idea considered in the early work of the Relationships film group. Scott described the selection of Cole’s scene idea in the following way:

Scott: “We chose on a vote which story would be best for relationships and we picked the one where the girl and the boy were holding hands in the hallway.”

Amy: “Why was that one the best?”

Scott: “Because usually when you’re in a relationship you hold hands I guess.”

When considered in the context of data related to Scott’s comments on the film group, Scott’s addition of “I guess” reads as pointing to his inexperience with love relationships rather than as a qualifier of actual guessing. This interpretation is important because the act of holding hands as an indicator of a relationship that is “lovey dovey” was important to how the film group seemed to situate the silencing of relationships as a form school silencing.

The hallway love scene illustrates the silencing of relationships as a form of schooling’s silencing. The scene plays out as follows.

Cole and Peaceful walk down the school hallway holding hands. The principal and a teacher jump out from behind a wall.

Principal: “Hey, hey hey hey hey! What are you doing?”

Teacher: “Whatcha doin’? This is school.”

Principal: “Why are you two holding hands?”

Teacher: “This is school, not a lover place.”

Principal: “Yes. You (to Cole). Go sit in that corner over there. You’ve got detention. For two years. Get over there before I call your mother.” Principal pushes Cole in the back.
Teacher: “I’m going to call your mom and dad.” Teacher points back at Peaceful.

As they walk down the hallway in separate directions the principal and teacher call loudly to one another:

Principal to Teacher: “I’ll see you later, Mr. Ryan.”

Teacher to Principal: “Later, Mr. Jones.”

Principal to Teacher: “Have a great day.”

Teacher to Principal: “Have a good day.”

My field notes on the production around the filming of the hallway love scene point to its importance for the film group. I noted:

When I see them shoot the scene from a long way down the hallway, I am amazed by the quality of their work. It surprises me greatly how all are engaged. Cloud is in the scene and he is certainly the leader, especially with his ability to improvise on the spot. His acting and his improvisation are so real, also engaging the other students in acting and improvisations so real, that their filmer, Scott, stops filming the scene because he thinks that the interactions are happening in real time.

Until the filming of this scene, the Relationships film group had trouble getting started with the filming. Earlier that day I wrote, “Scott and Cloud do not know what is going on…they seem to have very little interest in finding out what is happening from the rest of the group.” Cloud even considered leaving the film-making group that day, spending time kicking Cole and throwing food as he was thinking it over. Cloud asked Peaceful to give me a message the following week that he was “dropping out of the group”. Cloud decided to remain a member only after Peaceful told him during the opening business meeting, “I want you to be here, Cloud,” which I observed to have repeated around our conference table in emphatic echo. What was important here was not Cloud’s momentary change in actions but the relationship between Cloud and the group. The group was steadfast in commitments to one another and to the work. That the Relationships film group not only withstood the threat to its work posed by the potential exit of Cloud but also
produced such an important scene on the silencing of relationships speaks to the promise of student theorizing on social problems.

I originally resisted all work on this form of schooling’s silencing. I mention my resistance in order to allow for some transparency when it comes to how my research interests influenced the directions of the study. My early field notes describe the topic of relationships to have been “extinguishing my desire to do this group”. At one point in the study the Relationships group proposed that we meet three days each week instead of one day each week and dedicate the two additional days per week to discussing the topic of love relationships. I mention their proposal in order to emphasize the extent of the problem of the silencing of relationships. Fortunately, the articulation of the second scene from “The Love Movie” and the resulting analytic attention to the film group’s understanding of consequences of the silencing of relationships led me to better interpret their important work.

**Form of silencing as a wider social problem: Silencing of relationships as isolation**

The Relationships group framed the silencing of relationships as isolation and isolation as a wider social problem. In the case of the Relationships film group, the framing of their silencing form as a wider social problem was less explicit than in the case of The Hispanic Movie film group. Therefore, the silencing of relationships as isolation is an analytic point that relied more heavily on my interpretations. For those interpretations I looked to the articulation of their two film scenes alongside other data, especially data that involved students discussing the silencing of relationships in more general terms. For example, in their final summary of their film the film group collectively wrote, “Sometimes we feel like teachers don’t even want us to socialize with each other.” Film group phrases that led me to an understanding of isolation as a wider social problem included, “control of action and imagination,” “discrimination about how
people are,” and, “The quieting of helping others.” The assumption of isolation as a wider social problem is an important assumption for understanding the Relationships group’s critique of silencing.

Although film group phrases framed isolation as a wider social problem, in this section I focus primarily on exploring the relationship between the form of silencing that was the silencing of relationships and the wider social problem of isolation through the method of articulation. The second scene I chose for the articulation represented events taking place during an imagined film screening in the school auditorium. The events highlighted the silencing of relationships at school. In the case of the Relationships group, the second scene in the articulation not only represented a form of silencing as a wider social problem but also illustrated possibility for social change related to the silencing of relationships. The social changes took place through what the group called “rebellion” and resulting “inspiration”.

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The scene of “rebellion” and “inspiration” took place in the school auditorium. My field notes provide a comprehensive overview of the film group’s set up of the scene.

They say that the context of a movie being shown for the school is perfect for what they want to say about silencing. The new scene will involve a group of students watching a movie, and two couples in the back of the auditorium doing a couple of things. They do not agree on what the couple will be doing. There is much talk about kissing, French kissing, holding hands, and other things.

The movie context of the scene was selected based on the students’ descriptions of school movie screenings. The following discussion marked an actual event of the silencing of relationships during a movie screening.

Vicki (to Yasmin): Should I tell her [Amy] about Ms. Teacher1? It’s about silencing. She said, ‘If you are talking during the movie you’re going to get sent out. If you’re bugging someone you’re going to get sent out. If you’re with your boyfriend or girlfriend you’re going to get sent out.’” This happened today. “Ms. Teacher2, she wrote somebody up. This couple. A two second hug. That’s bad [of Ms. Teacher2].”
Like many of the other scenes in the films, the scene of rebellion and inspiration was based in a context with which many group members had had experience.

Although The Love Movie originally was a saga of one relationship, during the planning for the scene of rebellion and inspiration the film expanded to include two relationships, each between one boy and one girl. The debate and conflict that led up to this decision was the strongest source of conflict during the production of The Love Movie.

The group has solved their biggest problem. They spend a great deal of time at the beginning of this session discussing who should be the boy and the girl in the relationship. In the initial scene Cole and Peaceful were in the relationship, holding hands. Nobody is happy with this. Peaceful wants to be in a relationship with Hector. Cole does not want to be in a relationship. Wendy wants to be in a relationship, and she wants it to be with Cloud.

They came to their decision in a way that I found interesting. My field notes best illustrate my surprise.

They end up coming to no decision with any help from me. When I come over to discuss it I am basically working under the assumption that there will be one relationship in the movie. I am also working under the assumption that one person has to play each part throughout the movie. They say that this is not true. They tell me that people can change roles in the middle of the film and it will still make sense. For example a person can play the principal in one scene, a student in a relationship in another scene, and the teacher in yet another scene. I tell them that I am just not understanding what they are doing so I had better leave and get out of their way. They agree and they tell me [to leave their work].

The students in the Relationships film group said in their interviews that the most important decisions that took place during their work were the decisions in which they casted couples. My observational field notes echoed this attribution of importance. They sometimes called this couples casting “hiring and firing” for “jobs”. Casting, and especially couples casting, was always in flux. Students urged each other to “sacrifice” the hiring and firing of their own selves
“for the movie”. Fortunately, I captured even more action towards their settling on the focus scene’s ultimate design.

Their solution is as follows followed by lengthy renegotiation of the two couples: There will be two couples in the movie scene. One will enact the alternate ending—stop their PDA (public display of affection) but perhaps be inspired by the resistance of the original couple and also resist. This is best shown by the section they have written on the white board for this script: “Both couples stand holding hands and walk out of the auditorium as the principal angry yet impressed.”

Cloud and Wendi played the role of the rebelling couple, Peaceful and Hector played the role of the inspired couple, and Cole played the role of the principal, who embodied schooling’s silencing of relationships. In the field notes from my observation of the final preparations for the scene of rebellion and inspiration I wrote:

One couple is to follow the principal’s orders and separate. The other couple is to reject the orders and leave holding hands. The first couple is to see the rebellion of the second couple and follow their lead to rejoin hands. The principal is to be angry but still “impressed” with the rebellion.

In the film the two couples are portrayed as watching a movie and holding hands. The principal patrols the auditorium. The main part of the scene plays as follows:

Principal (to couples): “Yo, you need to stop holding hands right now!”

Cloud: “Okay sir, I’m sorry.”

Principal: “Yeah! That’s what I thought!”

Wendi (to Cloud): “Bro, I’m scared of him. Let’s go, let’s go.” The couple gets up and walks up the auditorium aisle to the exit doors.

Hector (to Peaceful): “We’re cool. We’re staying.” Puts arm around Peaceful.

Cloud (to Wendi): “Hey, let’s go with them. At least they stood up.”

Wendi: “Okay.” The couple returns to their seats. Cloud steps aside and puts his arm out towards the row of seats when Wendi reaches the row. She passes by him to enter the row. They sit in their seats beside the other couple. Cloud puts his arm around Wendi. Both couples continue to watch the movie, confident smirks or smiles on their faces.
The Relationships film group called this strategy for social change “rebellion”, which according to them inspires others to also rebel and emotionally “impresses” those in power to change policies. According to the students, rebellion led to inspiration in many forms. In their written summary of their film the Relationships film group wrote about the scene of rebellion, “There is a principal who has started to scream at the two couples. They have started to hold hands and the principal has started to go off. They have finally got the confidence to stand up and go back and watch the movie.” They wrote that the rebellious couple inspired the silenced couple, and named schooling’s silencing as the threat to relationship. The students wrote that the couple that was eventually inspired by the rebellion had been “having trouble” due to silencing despite being “still in love”. Rebellion, then, inspired more rebellion and led to social change.

During one meeting the Relationships group generated a list of acts of rebellion on a white board. Specific acts of rebellion that the group mentioned but do not appear in this scene included acts such as students not doing their work in protest for not being able to hug in the hallway. As an analysis of each act of rebellion is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I have selected the act of rebellion that they represented in their film. I mention their rebellion list here because they developed the auditorium scene of rebellion as a result of their discussions about this list. As they were generating the list I asked them, “How do people rebel?” They replied that the act of being in a relationship at school was in itself an act of rebellion. They said, People do it anyways “in secret”. The Relationships film group further expanded on the idea of rebellion as a tactic against the silencing of relationships. Peaceful, for example, offered cases of this rebellion’s reach into classrooms. Those examples included things that students do during
class to show their discontent with the silencing of relationships such as “not doing their work in
protest for not being able to hug their girlfriends”.

The idea of change by inspiration was not limited to students inspiring other students. For example when Olivia said she wanted to tell the teacher in a scene, “Woman, I’m trying to help!” she received collective feedback that this act of rebellion would inspire the teacher to change and that Olivia would be “doing something good.”

Rebellion was also enacted within the group. For example, the group supported Hector’s regular act of coming to group only after he had walked his girlfriend to the bus lot. A typical instance that I interpreted as this group support was a moment in which someone left a group meeting in order to locate Hector and tell him that his girlfriend was a car rider because the group perceived Hector to have somehow missed this unusual change of routine. The various ways in which the students envisioned rebellion and inspiration to create the “good” that was “helping”, despite a sense of crushing silencing when it came to relationships, led me to have confidence in my interpretation of their framing silencing of relationships as isolation.

Although articulating the hallway scene with the scene of rebellion and inspiration surfaced the silencing of relationships as about isolation, the term isolation is my own. This was distinct from The Hispanic Movie film group, which named racism as a wider social problem. The major influence on my interpretation of isolation as a wider social problem was the way in which students spoke about relationships as helping one another and the ways in which systematic policies prevented that helping through separation. Of all of the group members, Hector and Cloud were most insistent about the connection between systematic policies at school and beyond. They expanded the idea of silencing as isolation to “totally outside of school”... as in, “the way it runs. The way that we know outside, laws that are silencing...in the world.”
The students collectively storied two types of instances in which silencing by isolation occurred: helping others with injuries and helping others with sadness. The injustice of isolation’s support of injury and sadness help could even be applied as a partial critique of the design of the film-making group. When asked how we might change the group should it continue to meet the following year, members of this film group spoke about addressing the wider social problem of isolation as it manifested in social contexts other than school. They argued that our film-making group offered insufficient opportunity to explore what they called “connections” between “subjects”, which were sometimes called “home” or “the neighborhood”. The language of relationship was even used to describe this shortcoming. Cloud and Hector argued, “Cause when you’re in here you can’t really say, you can’t really connect stuff, relate to stuff.” Considered this way, there is much to learn about how the research design’s focus on schooling somewhat isolated students’ knowledge of schooling’s silencing from their knowledge of a wider context of silencing.

Accomplishment

I understood this critique to be, among other things, a marker of the group’s accomplishments challenging schooling’s isolation. The scene of rebellion and inspiration was the most anticipated scene for the film-making group as a whole. I entitled my field notes on its filming, “The most important event yet.” As we entered the auditorium students ran, played, and rehearsed in excitement. When the whole group rehearsal began I noted that the students were intently and collectively engaged in the rehearsal and that “You could hear a pin drop.” I observed the four students who played roles that were central to the scene to be uncharacteristic in their final preparations for the scene. Hector and Cloud sat with the extras upon arrival in the auditorium and I wrote, “How strange! They are silent! They are still! They are so meek looking.
Amy to Cloud and Hector: ‘Oh, you’re waiting for directions [from Wendi and Peaceful]?’ They nod, Yes, still silent and still.” Wendi and Peaceful were equally anxious during the final preparations. My field notes read, “Wendi and Peaceful are so nervous about being placed next to Cloud and Hector respectively. They have been planning this out for weeks. They are pulling at their clothes, pulling at their hair, pulling their shirt hems down, and saying how strange and nervous they feel.” Weeks before its rehearsal and taping, Gia asked the Relationships film group if the “hugging” and “cuddling” and “holding hands” would actually be “on camera”. In my field notes documenting my observation of this moment I wrote, “There is much excitement about this. They are ecstatic that this will actually be in the movie [emphasis in original].” All of the students in the film-making group were directly involved in the production of the scene of rebellion and inspiration. One student filmed, many students were extras in the role of students watching the movie, and one student gestured behind the filmer in order to elicit coordinated emotional responses from the students in the auditorium as if they were reacting to an actual movie playing at the front of the auditorium. In summary of my observation of the production around the scene of rebellion and inspiration I wrote, “All in all the group feels an amazing sense of accomplishment as we leave for the day. I will not forget this day and the feeling…of the entire collective experience.”

**Practice: Bonding**

In their interviews the Relationships film group members explained that their film group meant being important and needed amongst each other. They called this “reliance” “love” and “family”. The group held deep significance for the attendance and contributions of its members. It was difficult to assign a name to their practice. “Bonding” is an emic term that I first observed being used during the Relationships film group’s final viewing of The Love Movie. In a field
notes document entitled, “Group interpretations of their film” I wrote that Wendi summarized the film group’s film-making experience by saying, “It was like bonding.” After returning to the data I interpreted the practice of bonding to involve two interrelated forces within the Relationships film group: their sustained roles over time and their trust of one another.

The Relationships film group seemed to value the sustenance of their roles over time. One pattern that led me to believe this was the sense of accountability to which the members of this film group held each other. Members of this film group kept track of their whereabouts and evaluated one another’s reasoning for those whereabouts. Data on Scott’s attendance comprised an exemplar case that can illustrate this pattern. Many of his film group members thought that Scott betrayed this sense of accountability. Scott missed group on several days. Mid-study I asked the film-making group, “Where’s Scott?” and Wendi captured their feelings by saying, “We are no longer his priority.” On one of Scott’s absences I wrote in my field notes,

   Peaceful is not happy that Scott is absent again. She tells me, “He needs to tell us because he’s part of our group and we might need him.” She is very upset about him not coming, especially because Chelsea saw him [during school] and reminded him about it.

Even when he was at group, something often occurred that took Scott away from his role of filmer. On one day, for example, Scott spent much of the work time trying to figure out his own phone number. This agitated the group to no end. In my field notes I wrote the following:

   Scott needs to call his mother but he does not know his phone number and takes several minutes trying to figure out what his phone number is, going to the office to retrieve his phone number, and requiring me to teach him how to use the phone, even after giving him verbal instructions. While he’s doing all of that his group members become frustrated that he is not available to use the camera, as he is the group filmer and they are ready to film a scene.

The case of Scott’s attendance, exemplar for illustrating accountability within the film group, at the same time illustrates typical evaluation of sustained roles over time within the film group.
The members of the Relationships film group regularly evaluated each other’s sustenance of their own roles. However, the film group had internal mechanisms by which they established boundaries for this evaluation. Most significantly, they established boundaries for evaluation when it came to characterizing one another. In other words, they regularly evaluated one another’s decisions with the information available to them but did not allow characterization of one another based on that information. For instance, Olivia missed one meeting due to an appointment at her dentist. The film group critiqued her having scheduled this appointment on a Friday, as all Fridays involved group meetings. Cole continued this critique to the point of characterization of Olivia by saying, “She might be bipolar.” Peaceful stepped in at this point, reprimanding Cole by telling him, “Cole, everybody has things going on in their life.” This reprimand effectively bounded the evaluation of Olivia’s sustenance of her role in the film group over time. I interpreted this evaluative bounding as typical within both the Relationships film group and the wider film-making group. More specifically, evaluation of sustenance of roles over time was an important, yet clearly defined by actions within social contexts rather than individual characterizations, part of bonding practice.

Characterizations, when made, were made by individuals themselves. In the Relationships group, the process of constructing an introductory sequence for their film most clearly involved self-characterization. I noted that the construction of the introductory sequence, which took place about a month before the group ended, seemed to “bring them together more”. The students used phrases such as, “What do you want for your introduction?” in order to elicit self-characterizations. Peaceful typed in the self-characterizations as overlays to the still self-portraits that would appear in the film’s introduction. As each student made a final decision about self-characterization, there was no evaluation or editing on the part of other group
members. The following is a list of the self-characterizations that constitute their film introduction.

“Cloud: The Enthusiastic Kiwi Bosss”

“Hector: Kiwi Boss Bro”

“Cole: The one that cannot be Ghetto”

“Peaceful: The Cute Glue That Sticks us all together”

“Wendi: cupcake with mixed icing”

Scott: no introduction still

While it might be tempting to focus in on the nature of the roles that the students sustained over time within the Relationships film group, including the distinctions among those roles, my emphasis here is role sustenance as part of bonding. Bonding drove their work on silencing. Being important and needed amongst each other was at the core of the work of the Relationships film group. In one film group reflection they reported to the whole group, “Everybody worked together, to get the work done. [smiley face]” The dual nature of this statement, as in the focus on both the work and the togetherness, points to the practice and the critical work on the social problem of silencing as crucial for this film group. In other words, neither the togetherness nor the critical work stood alone. Rather, the critical work on schooling’s silencing centered their practices of production.

In addition to their sustained roles over time, trust of one another seemed especially important to the Relationships group. Trust of one another was the primary concern for the film group during production of the actual scenes. For example, the students produced the scene of rebellion and inspiration with trust of one another at the forefront. As I have argued, the most important decisions for the Relationship group were the decisions that involved pairing
“couples” for the production of film scenes. In the case of the scene of rebellion and inspiration, one final decision was for Wendi and Cloud to perform as the inspired couple. The following field note documented the basis for this decision.

Cloud asks Wendi, “Why can’t Cole be in the couple?” Wendi responds to him, “Cause I’m not comfortable with him. I know you. I know your brother.”

The basis for the decision on the performance of couple, a decision of ultimate importance for the film group, was based in trust of one another. Wendi’s response in this interaction was a typical response for members of the Relationships film group when it came to their work. Group members Hector and Cloud echoed this basis of trust in making performance decisions. In their final interview together they remembered:

Cloud: “In the beginning we had to make a decision about me or Cole or Hector. Peaceful…she basically didn’t want to hold anybody’s hand. At first. We said, ‘Just do it for the movie.’ And then (snaps) she wanted to hold Hector’s hand because they’re best friends but he was one of the teachers.” This was when they filmed the initial scene in the hallway with Cole and Peaceful as the single couple.

Hector: “We figured out the answer for it by working together. We talked about how it was going to happen. We did it.”

These comments were in response to my request that they tell about an important decision made by the group. Their selection of a couple performance decision as an important decision, paired with their hints towards trust, points to this part of the practice of bonding as central to the group’s work. Furthermore, their description of going through with this difficult decision for the sake of the work illustrates how the practice of bonding was tightly linked with the nature of the work. In other words, the practice of bonding and the critique of silencing were tightly woven. Finally, Hector’s description of a sense of accomplishment within the group further suggests
their urgency for critiquing silencing. Bonding’s emergence as a practice for this urgent critique of silencing merits further description related to bonding.

Trust of one another was paramount during their production of film scenes, but it also seemed to underlie their minute-to-minute operations. I would describe the Relationships film group’s operations as heavily influenced by shifts in power differentials. As I have already mentioned, an analysis of power shifts within the film-making group is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I mention them here in order to provide context for the data on trust in minute-to-minute operations in the Relationships film group. In a typical section of field notes on my observation of their work I wrote,

Wendi and Peaceful have written this scene, with Wendi at the white board as usual. Wendi is writing at the white board. Peaceful is getting Wendi’s script down on paper. Scott is sitting by Peaceful. She directs him, “I need your help. See what she’s doing up there? Write that down.” Scott: “Okay.” He takes his jacket off. Peaceful gives him details, “Write small. See when she writes the extras? Do that in this box. Okay?” Scott: “Okay.” Peaceful goes on and on. Peaceful goes to the computer to begin working on the more important task of downloading film and uploading it into the software. Scott is now on his knees copying Wendi’s huge amount of writing. Peaceful is in power. Scott asks Peaceful, “Should I put special effects?” Peaceful: “Write that right there.” She is over his shoulder. He writes it exactly where she directed. Scott goes up and down to Wendi to confirm exactly what she is writing. When we leave to begin filming Wendi tells Scott about the board, “Scott, take a picture of that.” She shows him how to take a picture on her phone.

I include this lengthy description in order to show the nature of trust in one another amongst the group members as well as to emphasize what I view as the relatively high degree of that trust. I found it interesting that the nature of the trust was specific to the film-making work. The trusting relationships that I observed during the heightened periods of film-making work seemed unique to the contexts of that work. In other words, their purposes for producing their critique of silencing and their trust of one another were related hand-in-hand during the film-making processes.
A catastrophic event occurred within the Relationships film group. I include this event in the dissertation because it is an example of an instance in which bonding as practice seemed to play heavily. Bonding was involved in both the catastrophe and the resolution. The students in the film group marked this event as significant in several ways, but in this dissertation I describe it as a case in which something went terribly wrong within the group, thereby further illuminating workings of bonding practice. The breakdown occurred when Cloud removed himself from the group. For the descriptive purposes of this dissertation I will call this event Cloud’s disengagement from the group.

The event took place during the Relationship group’s first day of what we called storyboarding. Storyboarding involved collectively sketching out various scene ideas on either long stretches of roll paper or large white boards. The following is a lengthy field note describing my observation of the event.

The storyboarding begins. Something interesting happens in the Relationships film group. Wendi says that Hector and Cloud are not listening. This causes Cloud to disengage and get really upset. He won’t talk to anyone. He won’t come back to the group. He has his backpack on, sitting at the back table, texting on his iPod. He is really upset, mainly I can tell because he is sitting perfectly still and being silent. I try to talk to him but he refuses to say a single word to me. I try a different strategy, asking Wendi, “Are you going to talk to Cloud soon?” Wendi: “Yeah.” She puts the lid on her marker, getting ready to go and try to bring him back into the group. She walks over to him, her hand on her hip, pulls a chair in front of him, leans forward on the table, talking to him. He is looking at her. He would not look at me. She takes his iPod and marches it up to the front board, “Come on!” tantalizing him in a playful way. Cloud plays along, to me he says, “She has my iPod!” He is smiling. He goes up to the board with her. For the next 15 minutes, which is a long time in Cloud’s world but also in the writing group, the two of them, and only the two of them, draw script on the board. They are talking and discussing each move. I approach them. Amy: “What’s happening?” They do not even hear me. Again, “What’s happening?” They report that Cloud is drawing the scenes and Wendi is writing the script. I wonder if she knows how conscious he is about his writing and offered this idea. I need to ask them about this later. I say they need to make sure they don’t lose this, that it needs to go on their paper. Later… Cloud and Wendi call Hector, Cole, and Peaceful over loudly. Cloud is up on a chair. Wendi: “I’m short. Let me get up there.” He
gets down and lets her up without saying anything. Hector, Peaceful, and Cole are trying to get on board with what is happening.

Although I did not observe disengagement to the extent of dropping out of the group, it became evident that Cloud was at least speaking about dropping out of the group. Ten days later I dictated,

Cloud is not present today and he is a main actor in most of their key scenes. At the beginning of the group Peaceful told me that Cloud asked her to tell me that he is dropping out of the group. However, this was last week before he attended the group during the last session.

In other words, I doubted that Cloud’s disengagement would amount to his dropping out of the group. In this same field note I commented,

There is a bit of talk about how much they love each other as a group among the students. It is a good sense and this group is really coming together.

I include this field note excerpt in order to emphasize my early interpretations that the event of Cloud’s disengagement would be important to understanding the practices of the Relationships film group, even as those practices were at play in the film-making group as a whole.

In his final interview I asked Cloud to interpret his disengagement with the group. The following discussion took place.

Cloud: “I guess I was kinda mad. I don’t know what for. I was mad at Wendi and Peaceful because they said we weren’t doing any work and I was like, ‘Eff it, I want to go home and forget about it.’”

Amy: “But how did [Wendi] bring you back?”

Cloud: “She was like, ‘Come on, Cloud, we love you a lot. We really need you in the group because you’re funny and not the silencer but the person who keeps everybody in order.’”

Amy: “How did you feel?”

Cloud: “Happy and special.”
His interpretation of his feelings centers the practice of bonding because it speaks to breakdowns and repairs within the film group. In her final interview I also asked Wendi to interpret the event. She began her response by picking up a marker, approaching a white board on the wall, and commanding me, “Copy it down, okay?” I agreed, and Wendi wrote the following statement on the white board. “Good, but at first refusive. Then I was like, ‘We love you, Cloud.’ Then he was all like, ‘No.’ Then I was like, ‘Boy, we all love you too much to let you just walk out and leave us.’ And he finally came back.” All members of the film group marked this event as significant, as evidenced by the solemnity of their interpretations despite the months of time that had passed since its occurrence.

Although the practice of bonding was important for the film-making group as a whole, bonding was especially important for the Relationships group. We all recognized this special importance. When speaking of trust of one another or sustained roles over time, the students often tied those topics to members of the Relationships film group. For example, in her summary comment on the film-making group as a whole, Gia, a member of The Hispanic Movie film group, said her final words to the film-making group would be, “I love you guys.” She continued, “Peaceful would say that. Definitely.” I interpreted this comment as anticipation of the bonding practice and claim of its special use by a member of another film group. In other words, there seemed to be some shared understanding of bonding as a practice. Finally, I found this case of trust in love amongst one another to be an especially strong testament to the practice of bonding.

**Exercising Power**

The Relationships film group can be understood as exercising power in their use of bonding. In their work they viewed themselves as exposing silencing as immoral. In this
group’s case, the nature of their exercising power seemed to be what I call a “knowing stance.”
While in the case of The Hispanic Movie film group the nature of their exercising power seemed
to me to be part of a wider anti-racist struggle, in the Relationships film group the weight when it
came to import was located in what happened during the work. For this interpretation I turned to
the scene of rebellion and inspiration because it was without a doubt the most important scene
not only for the Relationships film group but also for the film-making group as a whole. My
field notes on the moments of production of this paramount scene included the following text.

    From here everything goes smoothly and so quickly that many don’t realize what is
    happening. But the four in the couples know exactly what is going on, as this is what they
    have been thinking towards and planning all along…The scene is over as soon as it
    began…The relationships group checks the footage before we leave.

It is difficult for me to translate into argumentative writing the intensity of meaning packed into
the production of the scene of rebellion and inspiration. That intensity carried a power that I
might call a knowing stance.

    While in the case of The Hispanic Movie film group power was exercised with a sense of
urgency, in the case of the Relationships film group their exposition of the immorality of
silencing had a sense of craft away from fatigue. In their final written summary of their film the
Relationships film group wrote to the dissertation audience, “We try to do our work but
sometimes it is hard to sit in a classroom silenced all the time. We just wanted to bring to your
attention that the silencing of relationships and friendships is wrong.” This summary emphasizes
the morality of their work together as well as the chronic reach of the consequences of the
silencing of relationships.

    Their writing indicated that the work of relationships was difficult for them even without
silencing at school. The group collectively wrote, “It’s just hard to have a relationship in school
because of school silencing in relationships and our own things in life.” Schooling’s silencing, then, was a social problem the students had to navigate on top of the already hard work involved in “helping others”.

In their final messages, two members of the Relationships film group explicitly positioned those reading this dissertation as learners. One student told readers, “If you want to learn more, look at our silencing video.” Another student schooled, “I think we should be able to have relationships in school because it’s a free country. You’re allowed to go out and date some person. Okay?” I interpreted excerpts such as these to be powerful actions because of their content, their brevity, and their knowing stance when it came to the topic of silencing.
CHAPTER 4: THE “CLASSROOM” MOVIE

Group formation and meaning

The “Classroom” Movie included four pairs of scenes addressing classroom silencing. The film focused on interactions and relationships between students and their teachers, and all of the action took place in classrooms. The film was heavily narrated and included major components in which the producers interpreted their own film and film-making. For instance, one segment began, “We are going to give you some behind the scenes scoops of some of our decisions we made during the movie.”

The group that came to call themselves the “Classrooms group” formed out of a sense of duty to the film-making group as a whole. The film-making group noticed that when sorted, the majority of the brainstormed scenes of silencing were included in a category that the wider group had named “classrooms and teachers”. There was a certain sense that this category must become the topic of a film. After The Hispanic Movie film group formed out of a sense of urgency and the Relationships group began to form out of a sense of interest, Chelsea, Olivia, and Ann-Marie came together out of a sense of duty.

In addition to a sense of duty regarding film production of the classroom and teacher scenes from the wider film-making group’s brainstorming session, race also played an important part in the formation of the Classrooms film group. As I mentioned, The Hispanic Movie film group formed first out of a sense of urgency and shared experiences with the silencing of Spanish. When I interviewed the Classrooms film group members about the formation of their
group they explained that formation’s influence on their own formation. The portion of our discussion that explicitly names race follows.

   Amy: How did you come to be in your group?

   Ann-Marie: “We all are just awesome people.”

   Olivia: “We separated ourselves from everyone. Because there were, you saw how they were, little Hispanics.”

   Ann-Marie: “I’m Hispanic!”

   Olivia: “The crazies. We were the calm ones.”

   Chelsea: “The calmies.”

   Olivia: “With a hint of trouble.”

   Ann-Marie: “We’re not that calm.”

   Olivia: “We were the only ones left.”

Although Ann-Marie’s contention of her colleagues’ accounts of race’s influence on group formation makes it clear that there is no causal relationship to be made, the discussion does indicate that race played some part in the Classroom group’s formation. Furthermore, in field notes around this discussion I wrote that Ann-Marie did not join The Hispanic Movie film group because their topic was the silencing of Spanish and Ann-Marie was unable to use any Spanish. While a reader might focus on the characterizing and racial stereotyping taking place during this discussion, both on my part and the part of the students, later in this chapter I include transcripts that provide a sense of the much more complex relationships among the members of this film group.

The primary force behind the formation of the Classrooms film group was a sense of duty to the wider film-making group, and race played some role in that formation, but shared
experiences with the topic were additional grounds for the members’ coming together. When I asked them how they came up with the topic of silencing in Classrooms they said,

Olivia: “It was something we were all familiar with.”

Chelsea: “We all had some mean experiences with it.”

Olivia: “They weren’t all bad. They were experiences. Just something we had seen or it had happened to us.”

The film group members discovered this commonality of experience during the scene brainstorming. Chelsea tracked the discovery by saying, “We each had a lot of scenes to do with classrooms.” This commonality of experience with classroom silencing was not always self-described. For instance, Ann-Marie labeled several of her connected experiences as instances in which she herself was in the “wrong”. Chelsea said that in such instances students had “actually deserved it”. At that point in the discussion Olivia countered their labeling with an incredulous, “What are you talking about?” and maintained her argument that those same experiences were scenes of silencing. I mention this case in order to complicate the notion of shared experiences with silencing as well as to turn away once again from my researcher tendency to claim knowledge of youths’ experiences. However, because having shared experiences with this form of silencing was secondary to the sense of duty to the wider film-making group, I turn the analysis to that sense of duty.

These comments are important for this dissertation for reasons beyond just film group formation through shared experiences with a form of silencing. Most importantly, they highlight how students took on work they saw as moral on behalf of not only themselves but also on behalf of collectives. This point is especially salient given the context of Ann-Marie’s report of her own experiences. Although she reported on silencing in classrooms by saying that she felt, “Not
a humungous problem with it,” she devoted a year of film-making meeting time as well as extensive time at her home in order to contribute to her group’s critique of silencing. Ann-Marie’s engagement, like that of others in the wider film-making group who took on forms of silencing with which they may not necessarily have had problematic past experience, offers a strong case for the promise of eddying collective work with social problems.

Olivia, who described herself as an African American girl, attempted to bring Peaceful into the group, but Peaceful ultimately decided on the Relationships group. Thus group composition was finalized to include, in addition to Olivia, Chelsea, the only student who described herself as a girl and White, and Ann-Marie, the only student who described herself as Puerto-Rican and Chinese. The group members ultimately described themselves as family. They identified a pivotal moment at which they all realized they were family. They did not include description of that moment in the dissertation reporting, but they requested that I include how the moment emerged and their feelings about the moment. The comments they approved included:

Chelsea: “We had this moment. We started crying and hugging.”

Amy: “What brought the moment on?”

Chelsea: “This random thing. We just started talking about being in a group together.”

Olivia: “It was the day we didn’t have a lot to do.” They couldn’t film because they did not have their iPods.

Ann-Marie: “My motto is about family.”

Again, it does not escape me that this section is about group formation but I have not described the pivotal moment at which the Classrooms film group realized they were family. The film group explicitly requested that the event not be detailed in the research writing. The group
instructed me to write the discussion above, stating that a moment took place, describing their feelings about the moment and what led to the moment but not the moment itself. The group, including Olivia, reviewed and approved my field notes about the discussion. The field note documenting that their review took place reads, “Olivia tells me not to write it and she checks up on it, making sure I did not write that part of the discussion.” Olivia’s monitoring of my field notes was an action that I only occasionally experienced during our work over the four years, and each time it occurred, there was a sense of seriousness when it came to establishing a boundary between our work and the research writing. In this case it was an order to cease documentation completely, which was even more serious than bounding documentation at some point between field notes and more public research writing.

Although the dissertation doesn’t include a description of the pivotal event to family for the Classrooms film group, the following discussion offers a sense of what “family” meant to this film group.

Amy: What does your film group mean to you?


Olivia: “It means everything because we’re so awesome and we’re close friends.”

Ann-Marie: “A family.”

Olivia: “Put [in the field notes], ‘Ohana means family, and family means no one is left behind and forgotten.’”

At another time Chelsea said that during the work, “[W]e kind of figured out how each other were.” Ann-Marie echoed this language when she said that the members of the film group “knew how each other worked.” The pairing of such temporal comments with language of “family” led me to believe even more strongly that the sense of family emerged through the film-
making work. Data around a storyboarding exercise can comprise an example of how the relationships were centered on the work. This was the first day of work as film groups. As the scene brainstorming was important to the formation of the Classrooms film group, I describe at length the film group’s early work with the scene brainstorm artifacts. Below I pair Chelsea’s written description of the film group’s earliest work with my field notes on that same work.

Chelsea: “Today, we got to planning out the storyboards of our movies. We rolled out a piece of long paper and put our ideas on it in the order we wanted. We had to throw out a bunch of ideas.”

The Classrooms film group’s process is to evaluate each scene from the stack from last week and select it as rejected or included in the film. If rejected, they crumble it up and throw it on the floor against the wall. I come over to find a giant pile of crumpled scenes. They have selected eight silencing classroom scenes: two in each of four categories. They have arranged them linearly on their storyboard. Ann-Marie suggests an introduction introducing the group members and what their purpose for the movie is. She writes this on the front of the storyboard. They have pasted Vicki’s hopeful scene at the end of their movie – the ninth scene. They say they will be writing more scenes that are hopeful about what classrooms and teachers should be like. They say they want to end the movie on hopeful scenes. They take the rejected scenes (they explain that many are duplicates, hard to understand, or not really about classrooms/teachers/silencing). They have entitled their four topics with new names. See the storyboard for the names. They throw the crumpled scenes in the trash and I have them dig them out, flatten them out, and put them in the plastic sleeve. Cole rips their rejected scenes almost in half then passes them to me when someone in the group tells him to stop because “You never know”.

Ann-Marie’s individual reflection on the storyboarding provided insight into some meaning for the event.

Ann-Marie: “What I thought about Monday: When we did the storyboard it got a teensy bit challenging. But for the most part I had fun and it was easy for the ideas to come to me. I enjoyed the fact that you had to think. The storyboard was what I had to think about the most.”

What I found most significant about Ann-Marie’s reflection was her explanation of the work requiring thinking. I interpreted this as an example of relationships emerging through collective work on silencing.
The film-making work of the film group was a particular context in relation to yet distinct from the wider film-making group. The following excerpt is a typical one from across all of the data that led me to this interpretation of embedded contexts.

Amy: What does the big group mean to you?

Olivia: “It’s a bigger family.”

Chelsea: “It’s not the same as us. It’s the extended family.”

Ann-Marie: “They don’t understand us quite as well. You’re part of our family, Amy. You are my family. They know us, but”

Olivia: “Not as much as we know each other. We love them in an awkward way. They don’t know it because you don’t express it. But it’s always there.”

Chelsea: “If they want it, they’re gonna have to find it.”

Olivia: “They’ve got the key. They’ve just got to unlock the box.”

I have described the embedded relationship of the Classrooms film group as dutiful to the wider film-making group yet most of their practices were relatively insular. It may also be important for my characterization of this film group to note that as part of that insularity, the film group saw themselves as relatively “cooperative” compared to other film groups and to youth in general. They even described this cooperative characteristic as indispensable for any potential future film-making.

Whatever the nature of their work for a given day, the Classrooms film group worked in what I would call insular pursuit of a predetermined action item. A typical field note illustrating this style of working was,

The Classrooms film group consists of Ann-Marie and Chelsea today. They sit facing each other in two chairs with their computers on their laps. As soon as they begin, they never stop and never change. Right away they open a googledoc to write their script. They are writing exact lines. They invite me to their googledoc so that I can look at their script later and not disturb their writing.
As the conclusion of their film the Classrooms film group compiled a slideshow of stills of themselves working on the film. Over the slideshow they played the audio track, “Here’s to Never Growing Up” (Lavigne, 2013, track 1) (see Appendix 2). In their final group interpretation of their own film they explained this decision as one that was “kind of fun.” They said, “In a way, we don’t really want to grow up. It shows the crazy side of everybody.”

**Form of silencing as a problem and potential exceptions: Silencing in classrooms**

Like all of the film groups, the Classrooms group framed their topic form of silencing as a problem. I interpreted the students to, overall, view classroom silencing as violent. The following discussion from a formal interview with the Classrooms film group can provide a general sense of the violence of classroom silencing.

Olivia: “Needs to stop. It’s something that changes you. It makes you different.”

Chelsea: “It’s where they take away your real selves.”

Ann-Marie: “It’s mean in a way.”

Amy: “But what is it?”

Ann-Marie: “It was kind of hard to put the words.”

Olivia: “I describe it as a pain.”

The prevailing site of pain for the violence of classroom silencing was students’ bodies. This bodily pain took many forms in the students’ descriptions. As the consequences of this bodily violence was consistently at the forefront of the students’ work on this form of silencing, I include data that lends an understanding of the bodily violence of classroom silencing relatively early in this chapter. I include some examples below in a collection that can provide a general sense of this interpretation.
Our topic was classroom silencing. Silencing makes you feel as if your real insides were taken out. – Chelsea

Chelsea: “If I’m being silenced I feel like all of the real stuff inside of me is being taken away and thrown in the trash can.”

Olivia: “Chelsea, you say some deep stuff.”

Ann-Marie: “When it does happen I get kind of mad. I like to keep the madness inside.”

Amy: “What does that feel like?”

Ann-Marie: “All your madness piling up in a trunk but you’re trying to keep it down.”

Olivia: “Like a fireball. Inside of a cannon. That wants to let go.”

Amy: “Do you ever keep the madness inside?”

Chelsea: “Yes. It feels like a rock in my stomach. And I just want to spit it out.”

This collection of excerpts is already analytical. In other words, the students have done analytic work on their own experiences and directly offer education researchers their analyses. In addition to these analyses, the students described classroom silencing events. For instance, Chelsea told a story about having been silenced in class.

Chelsea: “One day we were in ELA...our teacher, she was telling us to write a six word memoir. I wrote one. It was perfect. It was the story of my life. I thought that it was perfect. She made me erase it and write about my sister’s birth. I got that boulder feeling where all my real insides were thrown out of me into the trash and she put in robotic insides. She took out my real self and put in cold.”

Olivia: “Why are you so deep? I can understand why you want to be a writer.”

Chelsea’s story, as well as Olivia’s response to that story, captures the sense of pain inflicted upon students’ bodies. I view her story as an exceptional tie between a student’s description of a classroom silencing event and the student’s own analysis of classroom silencing. Chelsea’s analysis that classroom silencing caused pain was typical within the wider film-making group.
The film group viewed silencing in classrooms, which I define later in this chapter with the first scene in the articulation, as a problem. Ideas and phrases that indicated the problematic nature of silencing included, for example, “control”, taking of “freedom”, misunderstanding and disconnect, pain in various forms, and teacher remorse. A scene involving shaming a student within a classroom illustrates several of these ideas. The film group’s written script of the scene reads as follows. The film group entitled the scene, “Hats.”

“Hats

*Camera shows boy putting a hat on at home*

Narrator: *while camera still at boy* Boy had a hair shaving accident yesterday. He doesn’t want anyone to see it so he decides to wear a hat.

Boy: *walking into class, teacher at door*

Boy: Good morning, teacher!

Teacher: Boy, take off that hat please. I don’t want to see it on your head again.

Boy: But...

Teacher: No excuses.

Boy: *Mutters* Yes there is...

Teacher: Sorry, what?

Boy: Nothing.

Teacher: Now take it off before I take it away and stick it in my box and you will not see it again till the end of the school year. *Teacher points at boy.*

Boy: Fine.

*Boy takes off his hat and people laugh. Teacher doesn’t notice or care*”

I include the full script for the hats scene in order to provide a typical example from this film group’s work that frames silencing in classrooms as a problem. Used in this way the scene
establishes silencing as a problem, especially when paired with the insight into the student’s thinking that the written yet unspoken text, which the film group marked with stars, allows a reader to imagine how silencing looks.

According to the Classrooms film group, silencing in classrooms had many consequences. As most of the consequences that this film group represented involved individual tragedies, I interpreted them to be representing silencing in classrooms as embodied violence.

Group interview

Ann-Marie: “It makes you feel like you’re puny.”

Chelsea: “The problem with silencing is that you’re not yourself anymore.”

Olivia: “You feel worthless. I feel like a part of me has died. I feel you’re trying to take away a part of me and you want me to be something that I am not. I am not a puppet and you can’t control me.”

Chelsea: “That’s deep. I get in this moment when I feel so proud of myself for finding something out then my self esteem goes pshhh.” She drops her pen to the ground. “It falls from a cloud. It rains away.”

Clearly, the nature of the violence was tragic. In addition, students said that the frequency of the violence was tragic, occurring multiple times per day. All of the students who spoke of the embodied violence of classroom silencing spoke through both narratives of specific events and through generalizations across classrooms and time. I would describe the movement between these two types of accounts as fluid, which contributed to my interpretation of there being a pattern of frequency when it came to the embodied violence of classroom silencing.

**Good from silencing in classrooms**

Olivia was the only student who mentioned good that comes from classroom silencing. Olivia said in her final message to dissertation readers, “I think classroom silencing can have its goods and its bads,” and explained that good came from silencing, “[W]hen the teacher tries to
keep the kids safe.” This clear distinction was the only data excerpt that spoke to good coming from the problem of classroom silencing.

One other comment challenged my interpretation of the film group’s having framed classroom silencing as a problem. This comment reflects a point I made in an earlier chapter, which was that students in the film group did not necessarily have similar experiences with their film group’s topic form of silencing. In this case, Ann-Marie had experienced what the group described as classroom silencing but reported that silencing to have been just. Although it may not have been an example of good coming from silencing, it was certainly an interesting exception to the pattern of framing classroom silencing as a problem. She said, “Not a humungous problem with it…I’m usually not silenced because usually I am doing what they [teachers] accuse me of doing which usually isn’t a good thing. So I kind of see a different point of view.” Her different point of view, as she phrased it, was even a challenge to the group’s definition of silencing. In other words, she may have viewed her experiences as just and also as something other than silencing. A close reading of this comment in isolation from the context of the film-making might lead a reader to reject the interpretation of students having framed classroom silencing as a problem. However, this was the only data excerpt that pointed me away from that interpretation. In other words, I interpreted years of her work in the group, including her individual contributions to collective work, to frame classroom silencing as a problem with schooling. It is also important to note that Ann-Marie made this comment during a group interview that included all members of her film group. It seemed to me that this distinction of experience and framing was well-known within the Classrooms film group, yet it was clear that their work continued with classroom silencing as a centered problem. This led me away from focusing my analysis on Ann-Marie’s distinction and continuing the dissertation writing under
the assumption that the film group framed classroom silencing as a problem. However, I will clarify this claim for this particular film group, because of Ann-Marie’s contestation, as framing classroom silencing as a problem for the purposes of the film-making work.

**Silencing form illustration: The “writing” scene**

![Image of the “writing” scene](image)

Scenes of classroom silencing represented in both film and narrative during the film-making involved a variety of scenarios. The set of scenes with which the Classrooms film group worked included silencing narratives in which students were drawing during writing class, talking when they were finished with class projects, and engaging in activities that teachers described as “off task”. The members of the Classrooms film group narrowed their film down to include four delineated scenes of classroom silencing.
The writing scene, which is the first in the articulated set for this analysis, was one scene of four clearly delineated scenes of silencing within the tightly edited film on classroom silencing. The scene seemed to have emerged from the group’s analysis of writing as a theme in the wider group’s scenes of silencing. Writing at school had been a focus context of the group throughout the history of the study, so it was not surprising that it emerged in this film. Although the scenes entitled “Hats,” “Helping,” and “Group Separation” all offer deeper understanding of silencing in later sections of this dissertation, I chose to ground the analysis with the scene called “Writing” because of writing’s longstanding history as a focus context for the wider group.

The script for the writing scene reads as follows.

“Writing:

*Teacher smiles and writes “college” on the board and underlines it* [in blue]

Teacher: So class, today we will be writing about what college you want to attend!

Boy & most of class: Okay!

NEXT DAY: [in red]

*Teacher smiles and writes “Birthday” on the board and underlines it twice* [in blue]

Teacher: We’re writing about your favorite birthday!

Boy & small amount of class: Fine.

Narrator: For the rest of the week, the teacher makes them write what SHE wants them to write about, class gets tired of it.

Teacher: Today, you are going to write about--

Boy: Teacher, please just stop telling us what to write about. I want some chance to free write.

Teacher: No, you can write about what
   `I want you to write about.`
In the following field note I documented the Classrooms film group setting up an additional layer of interpretation of their own film-making work. This set up and their layer of interpretation that follows are important for the analysis because they offer a clarity about how silencing in classrooms works.

The teacher and classroom group are in the hallway filming what their movie “is about.” Ann-Marie says this is because “We have us saying what it’s about but now we’re doing the meaning.” She tells me that school silencing is mentioned three times in the film but that they now have to film explanations of the meaning of their work.

The meaning that they settled on for silencing in classrooms was teacher action without understanding. They described this as not taking “the time to ask us what we think and why we do some of the things that we do.”

As a way to better understand teacher action without understanding I now turn towards the film group’s scripting for their teacher characters in their film. The teachers in their film reveal to the students, who the teachers had silenced, “Please forgive me…I am glad you told me,” “Sorry, I didn’t realize…,” and, “I am incredibly sorry. I did not know…Please forgive me.” In each of these cases, the teacher had acted without understanding the student’s perspective on the scene of classroom silencing. This scripting explains that the influence on classroom silencing is located, very specifically, at action without understanding. This location is interesting for the purposes of this analysis because it situates a connection between teacher action and systematic silencing. The location, although not one with which others such as teachers might agree, is certainly carefully identified in the students’ work.

The students in the Classrooms film group identified teacher action without understanding as the meaning for silencing in classrooms. Considered in the context of the wider
film-making group, this explanation of how silencing works was part of a larger attribution of silencing to schooling rather than to individuals who were instrumental in schooling. I have already discussed relationships that members of The Hispanic Movie film group theorized between silencing and racism when it came to teachers as instruments of schooling, and in this chapter I turn towards attribution theorizing on the part of the Classrooms film group.

More than any other film group, the Classrooms film group theorized influences on teaching’s instrumental relationship with silencing. Olivia said, ““They’re just trying to help us and they’re trying to make sure we get the education we need for later in life. They actually want to help us.”” Their theorizing about how silencing moved through teaching was more complicated than a general explanation of what might be called “teacher agency” in teacher education. The first audio track the group overlaid onto their film captures the approach. This track was “Radioactive” (Imagine Dragons, 2013, track 1) (see Appendix 2). Ann-Marie explained their selection as capturing this message in their film-making work: “In a way we [both students and teachers] had our own boiling points, agitations.” I found this explanation to be significant not only as a representative naming of influences on teachers’ acts of silencing but also, and perhaps more importantly, as locating the problem of silencing at the institution of schooling rather than at the site of individual teachers or even the institution of teaching. Extending Ann-Marie’s metaphor, schooling boiled silencing. I end this section of the chapter with this interpretation in order to emphasize that the scenes described in this chapter are scenes of schooling’s silencing in classrooms rather than isolated teacher actions.

The students theorized silencing to the layer of teachers as instruments of schooling, which I would describe as impressive and notable, but they did not create any scenes that went beyond this layer. Olivia theorized that beyond this layer of teachers as instruments, schooling’s
silencing operated by divine mechanisms. She responded to my continual pressing by speaking with finality, “It happens for a reason that only God knows about.” As schooling constrained their theorizing on silencing and I’ve exhausted description of their theorizing at the layer of teachers as instruments of schooling, I build on their theorizing a movement of understanding between students and teachers as social change with educational researchers’ analyses of wider layers of schooling.

**Form of silencing as wider social problem and possibility for change of that social problem:**

**Writing reimagined**

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9 I am confident that Olivia was drawing a boundary for my interview pressing with this statement. The following field note from the interview illustrates my thinking at that moment. “Knowing Olivia I know that this response is in definite defiance to this interview and to my approach in the groups. This response turns me on my heels and brings me to consider how in research I/we researchers always ask youth to explain reasoning for things that happen to them.” As I mentioned in the field note, I responded to Olivia’s assertion with deference.
Practice: Adding alternate endings

The students in the Classrooms film group wrote a line for the narrator in their film that can provide some understanding of the practice of what they called “adding alternate endings.” The line reads,

“Narrator-- We chose to do these “alternate” endings because we wanted to show what could happen when Teachers take the time to ask us what we think and why we do some of the things that we do.”

I interpret this line to connect the practice of adding alternate endings with students’ analysis of teachers’ instrumentality in schooling. The line clearly explains to film viewers and dissertation readers that the practice of adding alternate endings is a practice for envisioning change when it comes to silencing. My field notes for the day on which the film group devised this practice read,

The group says they will have hopeful scenes for each of the teacher or classroom scenes and that they are structuring the movie to have all of the hopeful scenes at the end of the film.

In their final script they included the following notes to themselves:

“FOR LAST SCENE...
Show teacher in each scene saying, ‘I’m sorry, I didn’t know *blah blah*...’, ‘Please forgive me. I will let you do some free writing tomorrow.’, ‘Sorry, I didn’t realize *blah blah*’ ‘Sorry, I didn’t know you were having a hair issue. I wasn’t being reasonable.’”

As their set up demonstrates, some movement of understanding between teachers and students was pivotal for each of the alternate ending scenes. Because for this dissertation I employ the analytic method of articulation and began with the writing scene, I chose the alternate ending scene for the writing scene as the second scene in my articulation. The alternate writing scene plays as follows:
“Second ending--

*After bell rings, boy walks up to the teacher.* [in blue]

Boy: Teacher I was wondering if we could write about something that we want to write about. We just feel so.... controlled.

Teacher: Please forgive me. I didn’t realize that I wasn’t giving you guys the freedom to do your own writing. I am glad that you told me about how you felt.”

Classroom silencing in writing was a central topic throughout the history of the study. An analysis of silencing and writing is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but I will mention that the writing and film-making groups took place during times of the school day that were designated as writing periods. During the third year of the study the study was the writing period for many months. Writing was not only a site for the writing and film-making groups over the years but also a topic for each year of the study. The Classrooms film group identified classroom silencing, writing, and the study as intertwined. Chelsea, for example, explained, “[The study] gave us the chance to write about what we wanted. If you really think about it, in other classes we didn’t have that freedom. [The study] kind of helped it.” Without a thorough historic analysis that is specific to writing, it is impossible to portray the relative importance of the writing scene and its alternate ending. Still, Chelsea’s comment gives some context for the writing scene and the alternate ending for the writing scene, marking them as important for the film-making group as a whole through its history.

A brief look at the other three alternate endings scenes, although not part of my articulation for this film, establishes a base for my claim to pattern. The four alternate endings in the Classrooms film play together as a sequence of four scenes. The group overlaid the audio track “Clarity” (Zedd, 2012, track 5) (see Appendix 2). During their final viewing of their film
the Classrooms film group told me that they made this decision as their way to “clear things up” and “give resolution”.

The scenes entitled “Hats”, “Helping”, and “Group Separation” read as follows. I include a very brief description of the original scene of silencing that accompanies each of these alternate endings in order to allow for better understanding of the alternate endings. However, I want to emphasize that my focus for this part of the analysis is on the patterning among the alternate endings. In other words, I have shifted my focus away from describing the form of silencing and towards patterning the practice of adding alternate endings.

*Alternate ending for scene of “Helping”*

*Teacher walks out to the hall*

Girl 2: I’m sorry for speaking out of class... I was just trying to help my friends. Like I was trying to give the boy a pencil and give the girl my jacket to keep her warm.

Teacher: I’m sorry, I didn’t know that you were just lending items to your friends.

*Alternate ending for scene of “Group Separation”*

*Girl1 confronts Teacher and tells teacher why she was talking.*

Girl1: I’m sorry I was talking in class, I just needed to ask for help on a problem.

Teacher--Sorry, I didn’t realize that you were just asking for help. But next time, if you need help, ask me. Okay?

Girl1: *nods* Yes, ma’am.

*Alternate ending for scene of “Hats”*

*Teacher walks up to boy after class and asks him why he was wearing a hat in the first place.*

Teacher--Why were you wearing that hat in the first place? You know they are not allowed her at school.
Boy--I am sorry, I didn’t know. And I had a haircut accident and had no other choice but then to cover it up. You probably didn’t notice, but when I took off the hat, everybody laughed.

Teacher--I am incredibly sorry. I did not know that you had a hair issue. Please forgive me, *boy*. If you want you can sit in the back of the class, but you still cannot wear a hat. It is against school rules.*Teacher pats boy on the back and boy is still frowning some, but satisfied.*

At this point in the dissertation I bring a wider lens to the practice of alternate endings because the practice of alternate endings can offer an understanding with which to look back on all three of the articulations.

The practice of adding alternate endings was important to the Classrooms film group. During an interview in which I asked the three film group members to respond to my prompt, “Tell me about a time when your team made an important decision. How did it go down?” the film group pointed to the strategy of adding alternate endings as the most important decision they had made during the film-making. Some of the discussion follows, excerpted to an unusually heavy extent in order to focus on the practice of adding alternate endings.

Chelsea: “Hold on, let’s huddle up… Adding alternate endings.”

Ann-Marie: “We thought of that during the brainstorming.”

Chelsea: “Vicki thought of that actually. It was a resolution…We did them at the end.”

Amy: “What was the point of the alternate endings?”

Chelsea: “If we didn’t have the alternate endings we would just be showing the bad outcomes out of it and that nothing can change. Bam [with a sense of finality and accomplishment].”

Olivia: “We have to make the world a better place than it already is.”
This discussion not only marks the importance of the practice of adding alternate endings but also points to their creating those endings as their agency for change. They viewed their film-making as both important and as making the world better.

For classroom silencing, these two aspects of the work were tied to the movement of understanding. The following exchange between Yasmin and Gia illustrates another way to describe such movement of understanding.

Yasmin: “[Teachers] should first find out what happened before they start judging.”

Gia: “[The film-making group] means a lot because it’s important.”

If considered in isolation, these two comments may not seem related. However, as the second was in response to the first, I interpreted them as implicitly linked. As linked, they portray a sense of urgency for the critique of classroom silencing.

**Exercising Power**

The Classrooms film group took on the importance of including the silencing critiques from the wider film-making group. This inclusive task may have been related to the way in which they used metaphor when discussing silencing. Using metaphor seemed to give them a way to speak a stance from a collective position. A typical metaphor emerged during their interview:

Olivia: “It [Silencing] means we’re not as free...chained down. Like a lion. They throw them chains over them lions.”

Ann-Marie: “It’s like the lion chained down cause they have to go to school.”

Olivia: “We’re metaphorically metaphoring ourselves to lions.”

As a result of their metaphorizing they regularly called each other “deep” and “writers”.

139
Ann-Marie presented an idea that was unique among the students. In the final sentence of her final message to the dissertation readers she said, “Silencing could be used in different ways, either good or bad ways. Ways that teachers learn and the students speak up to the teacher.”

Considering her statement alongside the film group’s work, I interpreted Ann-Marie to be suggesting that their film-making work was one of these instances in which movement of understanding occurs, specifically from the students’ experiences.

Although Ann-Marie viewed this movement of understanding to occur from students to teachers, I argue in this dissertation that her end of changing teachers’ understanding was limited. Schooling’s silencing limited that end. I argue that schooling’s silencing limited the students’ change ends throughout the film-making.
In other words, heterogeneous complexity (Dimitriadis, 2005) is the hallmark of educational research on schooling’s silencing.
Youth accounting as foundational for conceptualizing silencing

Only the students’ accounts can define silencing as conceptualized here. The way in which students described it affirmed silencing as both being an attribute of schooling as well as having influenced students’ lived experiences. When I asked the students if and how they shared their understandings of schooling’s silencing outside of the film group, they said that they used description.

Peaceful’s family, for example, related to the film-making group first by hearing about the day’s work but then by asking Peaceful for an accounting of how she was being silenced at school. Peaceful said this experience accounting was necessary for her family “to kind of understand what it (silencing) is.” The richer accounting of experiences with silencing surely took place in discussions with family and peers who could understand that silencing, rather than with me, the White adult researcher. Still, description of experience with silencing and with the film-making work to critique that silencing was an important way in which the contexts of family and writing group communicated and shared purposes throughout the ongoing study.

This relationship between family context and writing group context was unique within the study. All who were directly involved in that relationship carefully nurtured it in order to maintain the film-making and writing work. The youth continually led the crafting of this specific insulated relationship and said that they did so, “so we can protest”. For instance, despite the experientially mediated relationship between family and writing group contexts, the relationship between schooling institutions and the family/writing group relationship was based in other events taking place. These included a whole flock of ideas valued by one party or another within schooling such as, extended “instructional time” in writing, “pull out” relief, “technology” enrichment, and university connections for students of color. In contrast to those
interesting aspects of the study, youths’ accounts of their experiences with schooling’s silencing were foundational for how we conceptualized silencing.

The students’ generalizing about silencing was also a form of the youth accounting that was foundational to silencing as conceptualized in this study. Silencing was about “more than being quiet.” Silencing was “control”, which included control of youth, of action, of “how people are”, and of “imagination”. Whereas adultness may dismiss the youths’ conceptualization of silencing as naive, there was no absolute relativism about the objects of silencing; silencing was about schooling taking youths’ “rights” and “freedoms”, which were distinguished from “privileges”. It was enacted by, “telling [me] hush but in different ways: …be quiet…stop what you’re doing…do the form that [you] expect me to do.” Silencing was, “Horrible. Terrifying. It’s really when people can’t have a say in what they think is right.” There was graveness to silencing, described further as, “like somebody’s putting a gun to my head”, “like I just got shot in the head and it nailed me right in the face to where I can’t speak…harsh and hard.” Sometimes silencing was marked by the responses it induced, such as, “red face”, “mean stare”, “I could kill them with my eyes. I don’t like being silenced. I don’t participate in class,” “I’m just like, ‘Whatever’.” Although silencing was not entirely about speaking, quieting speaking was certainly a contradictory part of schooling’s silencing, as in, “We need to interact to get the work done”, and, “If we’re not talking to each other, how are we going to know what each other’s thinking?” Even with generalizations such as these deployed, the students accounted using description. When the students recognized a description as one of silencing, they named it. This happened outside of the film-making group as well. Peaceful elaborated, “I tell my friends, ‘That’s school’s silencing.’ They ask me, ‘What’s that?’ and I have to explain it to them.” Chelsea even named silencing to herself: “I think about it like all the time…Whenever I get
silenced I think, ‘Oh, this is a great example.’” Silencing, then, was a conceptualization available for use in many ways, interpretable enough to support shared understandings yet singular in its isolating nature and unjust stance.

Crucially, the study could not have captured students’ experiences with silencing, which is why this dissertation’s conceptualization of silencing is founded on youths’ accounting of experience. The ethnography was about the writing group. I was positioned in the writing group in a way that inscribed my embodiment of many instruments of silencing, such as, teacher, White, adult, researcher, outsider to Gibson, and so on. Based on the way in which silencing was conceptualized, my available roles in this case did not involve shared silencing experiences with the youth. Their experiences as youth having been silenced by schooling were their own, accounted via layered power relations. One possible iteration of analysis could have positioned silencing of the writing group as topic, in which our study of the power relations between the writing group and schooling became accounted for. When considered alongside a movement towards study of groupness in school silencing research, data that do not appear here assure that such an account would be a contribution to silencing research. However, that project has been left for another time in which I will engage with the data through analysis of the study’s emergence over the years. This is not to mention the ontological incompatibility between ethnography and postpositivist claim to essentializing experience. Silencing here has been framed as schooling’s silencing of youth, and as such, allows for an understanding specific to the youths’ accounting.

To facilitate the final year of the writing group from this stance of schooling’s silencing was a carefully crafted decision. During the first meeting of the final year of our writing group I named silencing as the main thing I interpreted in the students’ writing and film produced in the
old groups. In the various writing groups we had worked at length with the concept of silencing, exploring and critiquing it through the arts, curriculum, and research. I asked students in the final year what they remembered about their “time in the old groups” as related to silencing. In the responses writing and feelings during school were tightly linked as considered from the audience of researcher. This can be illustrated with the description of, “[W]hat you read about how we felt in school.” In other words, there was a knowing amongst the group that silencing as was to be defined for this dissertation was a researcher’s interpretation of youth’s *accounting* of their experiences with schooling’s silencing.

**Silencing experiences in students’ accountings**

One type of experience that was considered silencing was the prevention of idea sharing. An event in which one film group noticed this happening and tried to address it took place during scene planning. The group took actions to make sure a scene idea about a diary “could go all around” before eventually “going down the drain” like the majority of the scene ideas shared. They reported that making sure the idea went all around the group was “hard” and that they “didn’t know what to do” to ensure that silencing took place neither of nor as a result of the diary idea. In that film group, challenging silencing meant including not only ideas but also the people attached to those ideas, even if those people and ideas were beyond the membership of their film group. Preventing the sharing of ideas was described as “cutting people off” and was exacerbated by schooling structures such as limitations on working time. In short, ideas and people were tied together when it came to silencing’s exclusive nature.

Another type of experience that was considered silencing was assumption about categories of difference. Stereotyping was tied to assumption, but was not a necessary characteristic for assumption to be silencing. Assumption about race, ethnicity, and language
were some examples that surfaced as shared experiences among group members. Stereotypes connecting extracurricular involvement, linguistic proficiency, sexualization, religion, peer and spousal interaction, social class, food, music, and dress, for example, were all mentioned as having been tied to assumptions and therefore instrumental in silencing. The relationships between assumptions, stereotyping, and silence were as nuanced as experience was. As an illustration of this type of accounting of silencing experience, I would offer students’ critique of a standing classroom policy allowing students to listen to music while engaging in classroom work but prohibiting music artists who either sang in Spanish or who were thought by a teacher to be “Hispanic” and singing in English. This example was described as “taking it too far”.

In the context of educational research on silencing those accounts might be paralleled to youth and teacher accounts in race-centered analyses of assumptions. In one study whiteness operated through norms and privilege to silence Hmong youth (Lee, 2005). As the accounts of the writing group also suggested, assumptions were about hierarchy and schooling practices adapted to maintain a specific hierarchy dominated by whiteness. One mechanism of silencing that surfaced in that race-centered analysis of silencing as well as this study was isolation.

**Isolation enclosing pain**

Silencing through isolation was framed as enclosing towards a tragic human pain. Enclosing, as in, “It shuts you up to where you feel like you’re in a very enclosed place…I just want to get out of there.” Towards pain, as in, “When it does happen I get kind of mad. I like to keep the madness inside…All your madness piling up in a trunk but you’re trying to keep it down…like a fireball inside of a cannon that wants to let go…It feels like a rock in my stomach and I just want to spit it out.” Human as in, “It’s mean…It’s kind of hard to put the words…It’s not something you really talk about.” It was clear that silencing “needs to stop. It’s something
that changes you. It makes you different...I describe it as a pain.” It was, “something that keeps people from socializing or expressing their emotions,” even, “It’s where they take away your real selves.” There was a very real determinism tied to silencing that was specific to schooling, with schooling delivering a message of, “[Y]ou’re going to have a horrible career.”

There was an overall shared understanding that the pain caused by silencing’s isolation was unjust. That injustice was embedded in the students’ very being in the world, carried in the statement, “I should be able to be who I am.” Discussions on silencing regularly circled human being, as in this discussion among the Classrooms film group.

Ann-Marie: “It makes you feel like you’re puny.”

Chelsea: “The problem with silencing is that you’re not yourself anymore.”

Olivia: “You feel worthless. I feel like a part of me has died. I feel like you’re trying to take away a part of me and you want me to be something I am not. I am not a puppet and you can’t control me.”

Chelsea: “That’s deep. I get in this moment when I feel so proud of myself for finding something out then my self-esteem goes pshhh (drops pen to the floor). It falls from cloud. It rains away.”

The pain of silencing extended in this sort of way beyond things immediate through patterns of self-destruction. Quiana explained, “When I get silenced the first thing that goes through my head is, Why am I still doing that? Why am I letting them silence me?” There was also an understanding that through power relations, the pain of isolation had systemic consequences. Pointedly, the children knew, “But they’re the adults and we do have to listen to them.”

In the context of educational research, isolation and relation are real in their consequences for youth. “[S]ocial relations and discursive practices in schools dramatically and fundamentally rust students’ souls or, in contrast, invite them to engage with creative intellectual imagination” (Fine & Weis, 2005, p. xxi). The films are representative of the tragedies of
isolation as well as the possibilities of relation. The dissertation is structured to strain silencing using techniques that highlight tragedies of schooling. However, through constant reminder of the film-making group context, the study happens in concert with other youth projects having taken place in educational research designed to challenge schooling’s silencing (Torre, 2005). There is inspiring promise in educational research accounts of collective youth theorizing on oppression in their own schooling contexts. Scholarship has labeled such promise as, “the power of what can happen when very differently positioned youth come together to undertake a project larger than self” (Weis & Fine, 2005). Whatever the reading of the dissertation, and as critical its stance, this study has been about that having happened.

Of course isolation was a problem that was not unique to schooling’s silencing. The written summary of The Love Movie read, “The relationship…is having trouble. Well, they’re still in love but it’s just hard to have a relationship in school because of school silencing in relationships and our own things in life.” This summary indicates that students knew the causes of isolation to be multiple and complex, but the juxtaposition of school silencing with other “things” clearly positions schooling as instrumental in isolation’s enactment.

In addition to positioning isolation as an instrument of schooling, the dissertation account contains silencing in limited form. The account reads as a set of cases of forms of silencing and constrains the problem of silencing as tackled by the writing group. For instance, a form of silencing that does not appear in the account is heteronormativity. What the youth called “gay rights” was situated in the following way: “The most hurtful kind of silencing is probably this one...They are just outcast. Like a nobody. Nobody gives a crap about them.” Stories during group discussions included dehumanization of a lesbian student at their school with the injustice
summarized as, “She’s a person. People would rather remain voiceless than stand up for people who have had their rights stolen.”

There was at least some irony for silencing’s isolation, as students described the solidarity that could take place as a result of isolation. At times, that solidarity even healed the pain of isolation. The children explained, “It (silencing) sometimes gets us more inspired to fight for what we believe in…Because some people will just stay there with their arms crossed and say nothing…You learn to stand up for yourself and love who you are.” Ironic contexts for silencing’s isolation ranged from the writing group to popular culture fanship and from celebrity role modeling to social movements for and against state laws. The sentiment of solidarity in these cases was, “It’s okay, we’ll make it.” In all of these cases, togetherness was a result of silencing’s isolation.

Although the dissertation is organized around the film groups’ three forms of silencing, the film-making work is not so much about the isolation and pain caused by those forms as about the injustice of systemic silencing and calls for change. The problemness of silencing is what the group came together on, and not even the problemness for any individual but the problemness for collectives.

Practices, power, change (movement of understanding) and silencing’s positioning in educational research

Silencing research is about advancing educational equity. That purpose has remained steady over time. Challenges to silencing for the purpose of advancing equity often appear in educational research as teacher actions. Researchers have called for teachers to challenge silencing by listening to voices of youth who are systematically marginalized by schooling and to design spaces that catalyze new identities. This listening is forwarded as an essential
characteristic of a good teacher (Schultz, 2003; 2009) who is engaged in good practices (Fine & Weis, 2003). Not specific to utterances by youth, listening also involves challenging silencing by, for example, attending to ideologies as explicitly and even tacitly forwarded through discursive practices in social relations (Smith, 2005). According to these paths towards social change, human agency moves through new identities as well as by generative creativity on the part of teachers. It would be difficult to imagine a schooling relationships problem that would not benefit from attention to teacher agency in one way or another, and the film-making group certainly theorized this.

Agency was attributed to the role of teacher, as was benefit of the doubt regarding understanding of silencing: “They should first find out what happened before they start judging.” There was a youthful hope that the path to teacher agency for changing silencing was the movement of understanding. After years of critique, teacher understanding still seemed to be a necessary and sufficient condition for changing silencing. For instance, in finality at the conclusion of the group Gia said, “I wanna say one more thing. When you’re silenced, tell a teacher about this group. Well not about this group but about silencing...Say it’s silencing, maam.” In addition, the films illustrated faith in teacher understanding as the path to change. The script for the alternate endings section of the Classrooms and Teachers film dripped with that faith:

Show teacher in each scene saying, “I’m sorry, I didn’t know *blah blah*...”, “Please forgive me...“Sorry, I didn’t realize *blah blah*” “Sorry, I didn’t know... I’m sorry, I didn’t know... Please forgive me. I didn’t realize that I... Sorry, I didn’t realize that... I am incredibly sorry. I did not know that...Please forgive me...”
The movement of understanding is privileged in educational research about teacher agency and teacher education. For instance, Valenzuela (2005) drew upon caring theory in her scholarship on silencing and understanding.

The benefit of profound connection to the student is the development of a sense of competence and mastery over worldly tasks. In the absence of such connectedness, students are not only reduced to the level of objects; they may also be diverted from learning the skills necessary for mastering their academic and social environment. Thus, the difference in the ways in which students and teachers perceive school-based relationships can have direct bearing on students’ potential to achieve (Valenzuela, 2005, p. 92).

Through the concept of profound connection, caring could describe the movement of understanding here. Both profound connection and movement of understanding challenge schooling’s silencing. However, in this study there was no sense that caring as theorized in educational research was a necessary condition for, a product of, or a characteristic of movement of understanding. The study was less about teachers’ understandings than about the relational ways in which movement took place. For this study, film-making’s role in that was at center.

It was possible for film-making to challenge silencing because it moved understanding, primarily by acknowledging silencing as “not right”. To film-make was to “Help tackle the problem. Show it to people…just let them know it’s a problem that’s happening.” Included in the final messages to the dissertation audience was, “If you want to learn more, look at our silencing video.” Whatever actualization of movement of understanding beyond the group might or may have taken place, it fundamentally took place among the group.

Facilitating resistance to silencing through research design is not a new idea for educational research. Framed as distinct from intervention, facilitating silencing resistance as part of participatory educational research with youth is a tradition with which the film-making aligned. For instance, Brown (2005) and Starr worked embedded in a school to support the work
of White girls grouped by class. Movement of understanding in those research groups took shape over time as support, validation, and “emerging collective critique” (Brown, 2005, p. 151) about silencing by teacher interaction. This dissertation, however, can’t claim understanding of what the film-making group was to the youth. A field note that best captures the insulation of that meaning was, “[T]his is what they have been thinking towards and planning all along…The scene is over as soon as it began…[T]he relationships group checks the footage before we leave.” As an alternative to interpreting overall meaning for the youth, the dissertation is comprised of moments of rich description (Geertz, 2003).

The film-making was a form of movement of understanding in more ways than one. Across understanding’s motions there was a static shared knowledge that the film-making group “should have a say” in what happens at school. During this year of the film-making, the design of the scenes of silencing was not restricted to the experiences of the group members: “Last year was about us and this year we’re doing stories that more people can relate to.” There was heated debate comparing the year’s work to the previous year’s “Personal Histories” work, culminating in the framing of last year’s experientially-tied scene creation as “selfish” to individuals and configuring this year’s scene creation to the commitment that, “You have to care about yourself but you have to think about other people.”

As the students theorized, implications of silencing research could be infinite, only one of which is generalizing to schooling as a whole. Crucially, challenging schooling’s silencing has been about challenging inequities. Yet silencing scholarship positions schooling as silencing through hierarchies of privilege and oppression while at the same time positioning schooling as universally silencing. For instance, although her accounting surfaces the brutal silencing of U.S.-Mexican youth, Valenzuela (2005) also noted, “[I]n some ultimate sense, schooling is
These two lenses speak in layers in silencing research. By design of the writing group and the study, this dissertation speaks both of those lenses. This has taken place in large part because those lenses were confirmed as real in both distinction and generalization. That complexity resonates within aspects as clear as the topic selection and group formation of the three film groups and within aspects as faded as each of the children’s schooling stories. As far as the problem of schooling’s silencing goes, the important thing here is that silencing’s universality and silencing’s differentiation necessitate fluid movement among research accounts in the project of deepening the understanding of silencing. That fluid movement is not captured in this dissertation as a whole and remains a project for when the dissertation is reworked for entrance into educational research discourses. In my consideration of what to publish about this dissertation account, the underlying purpose of silencing research leads me to weigh the contribution of the generalized account of the dissertation as a whole against the contribution of an account I would write after questioning how schooling disproportionately silences youth along patterns of hierarchy. For instance, Chapter 2 calls to educational research with a sense of urgency unique among the film group chapters and will therefore have to take precedence within my “research agenda”.

Whether advancing equity by describing oppression or by generalizing across schooling experiences, another way in which silencing in educational research is often positioned is in dialectic with the concept of voice. Voice theorizing’s feminist roots (Fine, 1992) and resistance theorizing’s critical roots have influenced this positioning of silencing vis-à-vis voice. In many cases, the study of voice silence takes place within classrooms, which are sites ripe for multiplicity of situatedness (Haraway, 1988). Understandings of voice silencing in classrooms are as complex as classroom speech, grave yet playful in their constructionist ascription to
contingency (Hacking, 1999). For instance, Boler (2010) theorized voice as operating through hierarchy and the way towards more inclusive classroom practices was to use that same hierarchy to privilege silenced voices. Even in this study’s initial analysis that positioned silencing as a topic for subsequent writing and film-making groups, silencing and its navigation were conceptualized with the concept of voice (Senta, 2010). In such work, schooling is both silencing and voicing. In any case, when critical theory and constructionism come together in classroom research, the work inevitably becomes about power relations, heightening silencing taking place in schooling contexts.

The widening of critical social theories’ involvement in silencing research has been complicating the relationship between silence and voice. Voice is about the act of speaking but also, and sometimes instead, about survival and navigation. Crucially, things can always have been otherwise and can always be interpreted otherwise. For instance, Lee’s (2005) description of the voice silence of Hmong high school youth during class time accounted voice silencing as a result of children’s understanding of schooling’s racist silencing more broadly defined. Furthermore, in an analysis of the meanings of voice silence in Western and East Asian cultural contexts, Kim and Markus (2005) argued that equating silencing to voice expression was an oppressive Western project.

Limiting silence and voice to talk individualizes location of both silencing and resistance to silencing, while a relational personhood frees resistance to encounter oppression’s fluidity, whether in form of silence or otherwise. In this case the film-making group theorized away from intricate explanation of thought processes behind linguistic expression and instead pointed to the morality of how silencing operates in schooling. The written summary of The Love Movie read, “We try to do our work but sometimes it’s hard to sit in a classroom silenced all the time. We
just wanted to bring to your attention that silencing of relationships and friendships is wrong.”

In this comment there is no sense of need to explain their reasons for voice silencing. Instead, the comment points adults straight towards the injustice of silencing, leaving the workings of voice silencing to be the children’s business.

Although the form of movement of understanding was partial, there was a sense of hope that movement of understanding would somehow alleviate silencing. Quianna trusted her theorizing: “It’s like sometimes standing up for what you believe in might cause you problems at first but sooner or later those problems go away and people will love you.” To be clear, the sense of hope that movement of understanding would alleviate silencing extended well beyond the film-making. For instance, Hector messaged dissertation readers with, “Hi, I’m Mexican, not Mexican’t. I’ve been in this group for three years – 4th, 5th and 6th grade. I’m Mexican. Stay fresh, stay fresh, we can change the world.” The account here illustrates that film-making for hope was a purpose of the work. Chelsea explained, “If we didn’t have the alternate ending [scenes] we would just be showing the bad outcomes out of it and that nothing can change. Bam.” The need for this possible change was urgent. Olivia was known for urgency: “We have to make the world a better place than it already is.” This was not to say that urgent work was not exciting. The film-making work itself generated hope. Chelsea’s emotion rallied the group when she made calls such as, “We need to be brave, try new things.”

Hope for the alleviation of silencing beyond the film-making resonates with yet another educational research positioning of silencing. Scholarship that contextualizes schooling as an institution of the state brings a critical theory lens of complicity in and resistance to hegemony (e.g. Smith, 2005). From a critical theory perspective specific to media studies, film-making as art is “productive and generative” (McCarthy, Rodriguez, Meecham, David, Wilson-Brown,
Godina, Supryia, & Buendia, 2005, p. 118), and hegemony’s rhizomatic nature lends itself well to intersecting film-making projects such as the three described in this dissertation. With education as a site of possibility and contestation, the film-making might rework signification towards alternate identities, norms, or ideals (McCarthey et al., 2005). Although this study and dissertation have not followed the youths’ theorizing of the roles of hope and bravery in social change much past the contexts of the writing group, that theorizing is noted here in order to relate it to critical scholarship’s influence on silencing research. In other words, a critical theory perspective would certainly be in order for the children’s purposes, but better deployed for analysis of how sets of the film-making representations, not limited to the three full-length films, are taken up and read by audiences.

**Group formation/dissolution**

The purposes of the work brought the film-making groups together. For example, children spoke to educational researchers and their students, “[The Hispanic Movie film group] means a lot because it’s important.” “And, well, we’re making movies about silencing. And we chose racist silencing…It’s really wrong to judge someone by their skin color, religion, and what they believe in. And, it’s like [the movie] trying to help stop it. And we’re trying to give hints to the government to help stop it but they push it away, so that’s kind of stupid and suckish. And it sucks really, getting judged by what you believe in and all that shit. And yeah (shrugs), don’t be racist. It sucks. Yeah. (shrugs)” “Our topic is about Hispanic people getting treated bad because of their religion and culture. [T]hat’s [not] the right way to go and you should really stop it if you’re doing it.” The message was clear, “My quote is, Don’t judge anybody by how they look or act.” “And plus, we’ve had a great time.”
The group was a place to tackle silencing. Quiana explained, “The group is the only place we can talk about it. Cause others will say, ‘You should tell a teacher,’ but the teacher doesn’t really help. They will just push it away.” This analysis was followed by descriptive storytelling about instances in which talking about silencing outside of the group had gone terribly wrong. The group had always been a place to tackle silencing. Gia, a long time participant, explained why the research emerged as it did from year to year: “It [the group in 2010 and 2011] was good and you [the researcher] wanted to finish. You did it with us surprisingly and you were persuaded because it was really interesting. And then you made this one…Not necessarily group, but the topic. Silencing. (Draws open palm, fingers only, all across desktop.) (emphasis in original)” In other words, silencing was not a topic chosen or taken on by the film-making group of 2013. Rather, the topic of silencing continually brought us together as a group.

In addition to being a place for silencing work, the group meetings supported silencing work being done outside the group. For instance, phone discussions about silencing often took place among members of The Hispanic Movie film group, especially explorations of past events from elementary school experiences as the silencing of Spanish. The Hispanic Movie film group also discussed silencing with friends outside the group with regularity. Those discussions most often took place during the lunch period. According to one member, they shared stories from their day’s experiences at school, “and it all somehow has to do with silencing.” The language, “us”, was used when referring to the friends involved in the discussions. Below is an exchange indicating that the discussions were about experiences with silencing in general rather than the silencing of Spanish exclusively.
Amy: “Us? We?”

Gia: “[Our friend] is half.”

Yasmin: “She’s mixed.”

Gia: “Her dad is African American and her mom is White.”

Amy: “So you talk about silencing, not just silencing of Spanish?”

Gia: “Yeah. All silencing. Of our family.”

Amy: “Of your families?”

Gia: “Of our writing group family.”

Most of the children in The Hispanic Movie film group participated in the study for three years, and members of the original writing group were members of The Hispanic Movie film group. Thus, these comments surface the history of the writing and film-making group. Group was a “family”, “a big huge family because we love each other.” This love was family love because of getting in “big huge fights” and “arguing”. When the term “family” was used to describe the significance of the whole group it was often in referring to the history of the group. For example, Karla, a member of the original writing group and a member for three years, explained that she felt “so famous” during the group meetings. She explained that this feeling for her was distinct from how she felt in the context of schooling in general. She said, “But coming out of this classroom, it’s like, (exhale, deflate).” This same distinction between writing group and schooling appeared across youth in The Hispanic Movie film group, even with the same sense of deflation during description of transitioning from group to schooling. The distinction of the writing group from schooling was a major project throughout the study on the parts of all involved.
Relationships in the writing group were somewhat different from other types of relationships, in part because of the focus on silencing. One relationship was “big friends”, which was distinct from “friends”. Vicki described this relationship in the following way: “I would tell them (friends who were not Latin@) stories but they couldn’t relate. It didn’t really help them or help me…Until I found Quiana (air fist bump between Vicki and Quiana).” Another discussion clarified a role of the writing group inside a schooling context: “The group is the only place we can talk about it (silencing). Cause others will say, ‘You should tell a teacher,’ but the teacher doesn’t really help. They will just push it away.” The youths’ purposes for the writing group were multiple, but one of those purposes was to come together around the topic of silencing.

Problem-centered resistance facilitated by research design is a promising approach within silencing research. Abu El-Haj (2005) facilitated a writing, photography, and dance group with Palestinian American youth in resistance to the youths’ silencing at school. In their work the youth “spoke back” in “dissent” to silencing by “multicultural” curricula (Abu El-Haj, 2005, p. 200) and nationalist discourses (Abu El-Haj, 2015). She noted that the act of forming a youth group on silencing is a political act in and of itself, especially when formed around identity politics. As mentioned earlier, Brown (2005) and Starr facilitated the youth research groups as resistance to schooling’s silencing along gender and class. As it did in the writing and film-making group, the practice of trust emerged in those groups of White girls. The author described the groups as a place and time of “respite” and of an “active underground” (Brown, 2005, p. 158), “Movement towards collective, constructive action depended on the girls listening closely to each other, trusting each other” (Brown, 2005, p. 157). In the girls’ case, “This sense of groupness took shape, not only as a result of their increased support of one another but also as a
result of their successful political action” (Brown, 2005, p. 157). The girls’ groups furthered equitable dress code policy and equitable athletic facility access policy at their schools.

In the case of the final year’s film-making group, the political actions having taken place were not oppositional to the specific silencing practices, as they were in the girls’ case, but were political in more nuanced ways that elude this dissertation. A view of the study over time beyond the time scope of this dissertation would afford an understanding of the writing group itself and the writing group’s design as political action, of personal and technical outcomes among the members and school contexts as political action, and of the imagined reaches of the resulting data sets in teacher education as political action. In a set of writing projects Ms. Parker and I are exploring some of these school contexts, and other contexts may or may not make it to print. This analysis of the film-making group also clarifies that harmonium on the problemness of topic is not dependent upon action and/or shared understanding of the problem. In this study I was sometimes the only one who was unable to share in the telling of experience, and words such as “reliving” appeared in my field notes that described those moments. At other times I was struck by students’ enactment of support though the film-making work across experiences that were much different from each other. Many of both types of moments appear in Chapters 2, 3, and 4. The point for this chapter is that groupness is a known practice for straining schooling’s silencing.

The film-making work on silencing has been important in more ways than what it offers for educational research on silencing. There is anger and frustration that the group has had to end on account of a dissertation. The students still call me at all hours to ask me to reconsider. A typical field note on the topic read:
The students did anything they could to keep the group meeting at least one day per week. When that was not possible they made comments such as, “Wow, I missed this class.” On one week the school dance was scheduled to be held at the same time. Although the dance was the dominant topic of discussion for weeks, all of the students reported that they were going to come to the group meeting instead of attending the dance. Therefore, I cancelled the group meeting that week. The dance itself ended up being cancelled for a tornado warning, and the students were relieved that there was no net loss of group meeting time.

Our last day together was marked by a ceremonial meal, prayer, song, photo, and filming of introductions and main messages for the audience of the dissertation. Overall comments on the big group to each other included:

Amy: Pretty soon we will have to end the group. This might seem like a strange question. What do you think your last words will be for the group?

Hector: “I love this group. I don’t want it to end. This group is like the sun. It will never go out on me.”

Chelsea: “It rises but it always sets.”

They stand up, yell, and hug each other.

Peaceful: “I love you. Even if I’m not really close to them. I don’t care.”

Wendi: “Okay. I gotta think about this. It’s probably gonna be a long paragraph. I know ‘I love you’ is going to be in there somewhere. I made so many friends and I’m going to miss you guys and I’ll never find another group like you.”

Ann-Marie: “That sounds like you’re dying.”

Chelsea: “I love you.”

Olivia: “I regret nothing. I wouldn’t change anything for the world. Everything happens for a reason. Live your life and have fun. Regret nothing and keep calm.”

They reminisce, layer stories of the film bloopers.

Chelsea: “Ok, hold on. Ok here we go guys, ready. Do you have any tissues?”

Olivia: “Ok, go. Speak!”
Chelsea: “Remember this moment with me. I’ll never forget this part of the year cause it’s changed my view on many things.”

Karla: “Oh gosh you make me cry. I hate y’all but I love you too. Or maybe just cry.”

Bailey: “You guys are annoying but we gotta love ya.”

Karla: “And have a nice pregnancy, Amy.”

Quiana: “I’m going to miss you. I love this so much and I don’t want it to end. I’m going to say I love this so much I don’t want it to end.”

Vicki: “I’m going to miss you all. This has impacted me so much.”

Quiana: “It went by so fast.”

Vicki: “Yeah.”

They make plans for a reunion. Coming to the dissertation defense.

Quiana: “VIPs...afterparty...”
CHAPTER 6: RECONSIDERATION

Introduction of a Transition

The transition to Chapter 6 marks the end of the first framework layer of the dissertation and the beginning of the second framework layer. The first framework layer consisted of analyses of the three films for the purposes of more deeply understanding schooling’s silencing and the film-making group’s practices. The purpose of the second framework layer, Chapter 6, is to reconsider the account comprised of Chapters 2, 3, and 4. In order to engage in the project of relating that account with agential realist theory, the account was fixed as an artifact – as the object of study. A Chapter 6 reading approach that situates Chapters 2, 3, and 4 as object allows for the most linear experience. The account of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 is exposed as contingent but at least for now, resolution is bypassed.

This reconsideration chapter is based on a theoretical reconsideration of the constructionist dissertation analysis. The dissertation includes two distinct parts: a) an inductive analysis of the work of each of three student film groups, and b) an analysis of that constructed account through the lens of Barad’s (2007) agential realism. At first look the inductive analysis might be viewed as having centered practices. Focusing on students’ critiques of schooling’s silencing, material forces particular to the three film groups seem to be at the forefront: for example, the three film topics, the three pairs of articulated film scenes, and the three practices. Material forces of film groups surfaced as a result of the organization of methods of analysis and organization of the account. Alternate organizational strategies and methods of analysis could
have surfaced material forces of other entities, such as but not limited to, individuals, other
collectives, power relations between non-human things such as ideologies and institutions,
relationships between people and their discourses, the wider film group and its surrounding
contexts over time, roles of youths and researcher, and so on. After the analysis had taken place
and the account had been constructed, the resulting understandings of practices were closely tied
to the film groups. The problem here, however, is not with the analytic particularity to the film
groups. Recognizing contingency through the partiality of accounts that materialized is a
familiar endeavor for qualitative research, and such a project would not allow for undertaking a
drastic reunderstanding of the account through methodological reconsideration. The problem as
situated here was that a material analysis should surface an understanding of film group agency,
yet the account writes into a film group agency so constricted that the agentic happenings of the
research seem lost. Engaging the three analysis chapters with agential realist assumptions
exposed these seemingly material research writing actions that anchored to the film groups, and
others, as humanist. That reunderstanding depended on the relationship between poststructural,
humanist, and posthumanist concepts of the subject and agency.

A poststructural view of agency decenters the subject, and most notably for this project,
the individual. Instead, the practice or the event is the site of agency. Such an ontology rejects a
unique, essentialist subject, which is the basis for the humanist subject. Assuming an essentialist
subject manifests in qualitative research through, for example, interpreting meaning from
participants’ words that the researcher documented during the research. A poststructural
ontology, on the other hand, rejects an essentialist subject and instead assumes subject positions
that shift within practices and discourses.
Because an aim of this dissertation was to elucidate some understanding of agency in the practices of the three film groups, the first ontological puzzle for this reconsideration was, How is agency produced and distributed? A humanist agency, resting on the assumption of an essentialist subject, involves individual people with free will and autonomous action on the world. Although a poststructural subject shifts within practices and discourses, this shifting subject shares the humanist subject’s assumption of autonomy. Therefore, a poststructuralist agency maintains a humanist assumption that a knowing truth can be attained. For qualitative research, the poststructural path to approaching that knowing truth has been pairing a poststructural subject with researcher reflection. A posthumanist subject, however, rejects reflection as a path to knowing. Such a subject maintains the poststructural subject, yet implicates all things material in how meaning is enacted. This includes, for the purposes of qualitative research, the researcher, as well as all aspects of the research.

Although it may not appear prevalent in this dissertation, during the study the view of agency with which I was working was informed by practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977). I understood layers of context as local spaces of practice and conceptualized the dialectic of structure and agency involved in the structuring of silencing and the agency of students’ film-making. Bourdieu’s theory of practice is a social practice theory because he theorized local spaces of practice with a focus on social actors. According to Bourdieu, actors are always complexly dealing with themselves and their environments, and these social relations are not completely determined by culture. Bourdieu viewed the relationship between structure and agency as a dialectic and the study of this dialectic as central for work from the lens of practice. According to Bourdieu, by looking to agency in spaces of local practice, researchers can gain insight into how agency is used to construct meaning, especially in temporal processes of change.
and continuity. I viewed theory of practice as pushing me to theorize how the participants in the study might be complexly dealing with themselves and their environments because in this model, actors in interactions always have a great deal at stake, consider the consequences for different paths of action, consider how to use structures for agency, and shape the world with their collectively produced histories embodied. Practice theory as a commitment was the major challenge for me in my transition from a deterministic classroom teacher to an educational researcher of possibilities, so it has not been lightly that I have reconsidered once again my epistemological and ontological commitments.

I wondered how I might reunderstand agency in the account through a posthumanist ontology, with meaning as made through enactment of individuals and all things material. This situates agency in both person and material. Person and material comprise what Mazzei (2013) called a “hub” (p. 734) of connections and productions rather than a set of subject positions. This ontological hub of connections and productions, which Mazzei (2013) links to Deleuze and Guattari’s (1972/1983) concept of desiring machines, allows for possibility when individuals act on and through it. Rather than standing outside this hub searching for a knowing position, the researcher is part of this hub. Thus, the researcher in all her actions enacts on and through the “complex network of human and non-human forces” (Mazzei, 2013, p. 734). Reading into that explanation of research subjectivity led me to poststructural science studies, namely, Barad’s (2007) posthumanist theorizing of agential realism.

Barad’s (2007) overall aim is to understand epistemological and ontological issues. Barad (2007) explicated, “I am interested in understanding the epistemological and ontological issues that quantum physics forces us to confront, such as the conditions for the possibility of objectivity, the nature of measurement, the nature of nature and meaning making, and the
relationship between discursive practices and the material world” (p. 24). Such confrontation interrogates many issues but this dissertation heightens intra-action/agency/relationship between discursive practices and the material world. Barad (2007) called theorizing the relationship between discursive practices and the material world to have been the “main problematic” (p. 28) for her work. Additional issues in question in the work include, “matter, discourse, causality, agency, power, identity, embodiment, objectivity, space, and time” (Barad, 2007, p. 26). As the scope of issues at question for an agential realism framework is vast, and the classical analysis of the students’ critiques of silencing culminated with the issue of agency, agency is an apt issue for taking up.

**Introduction of the (Re)analysis**

This reconsideration chapter takes the form of an agential realist reconsideration of the dissertation analysis. An unexpected interpretation ignited the reconsideration: in the constructivist analysis there was a sense of agentic deficiency when it came to the film-making and the research. I pivoted to agential realism on a certainty about material happenings having taken place during our four years of work, and as I began to read in another paradigm an unexpected sense of ethical urgency grew. The analysis of practice had assumed and constructed agency as an attribute. An agential realist approach situates agency in both the discursive and the material. In the second analysis then, I hoped for agency to be relational, and I aimed to bring realism to center by questioning how the material (re)configures and is (re)configured by the discursive.

Barad (2007) argued, “Matter and meaning are not separate elements” (p. 3). The purpose of agential realism is to theorize the relationship between discursive practices and the material world. Because “The notion of intra-action constitutes a radial reworking of the
"traditional notion of causality," (Barad, 2007, p. 33) and part of causality is the concept of agency, study of intra-acting components of a phenomenon allows for study of agency. When the phenomenon is research, which it became in this case, study of agency through study of intra-acting is study of what Barad (2007) theorized as cuts. Made by apparatuses, these cuts separate study from the object of study, which are not inherently separated. More specifically, “Apparatuses enact agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of ‘entities’ of agentially intra-acting components” (Barad, 2007, p. 148). Her concept of apparatus is about measurement of boundaries and properties of phenomena. She wrote, “The boundaries and properties of component parts of the phenomenon become determinate only in the enactment of an agential cut delineating the ‘measured object’ from the ‘measuring agent’” (Barad, 2007, p. 337). Apparatuses are the tools of science. She continued, “This cut, which enacts a causal structure that entails the ‘causal agent’ (‘measured object’) marking the ‘measuring agent’, is determined by the specific experimental arrangement, or material configuration” (Barad, 2007, p. 337). Such agential realist study of research apparatuses and their cuts exposed here the contingency of boundaries and properties. For instance, the way in which the wider study built itself upon itself over time is called up considering Barad’s (2007)’s argument that, “Different agential cuts produce different phenomena. Crucially, then, the apparatus is both causally significant (providing the conditions for enacting a local causal structure) and the condition for the possibility of the objective description of material phenomena” (p. 175). This reminds a reader that the quickly emerging apparatuses of study in this chapter, the research writing cuts of Chapters 2, 3, and 4, are not isolated but themselves artifacts of a long history of agentic action.

This is not to say that agency is the only concept surfaced by an agential realist reworking of the traditional notion of causality. Other concepts involved in causality include, for example,
“space, time, matter, dynamics, …structure, subjectivity, objectivity, knowing, intentionality, discursivity, performativity, entanglement, and ethical engagement” (Barad, 2007, p. 33). This dissertation leaves these concepts at rest in their classical states in the original analysis of the film-making. Agency is not inherently important in a hierarchy of causality. Agency surfaced in this dissertation because the writing constructed the three articulations around agency in order to access students’ theorizing on silencing and change.

Of course during the reanalysis it became clear that the reconsideration chapter would be about something very different, but I initially returned to the written account of agency with the concept of intra-action rather than the concept of practices. At each of the points in the agential realist analysis I also interrogated apparatuses that made cuts of inclusion and exclusion at the layers of study design and analysis. In addition, I read for the humanist assumptions as described in Barad’s (2007) call for posthumanism. If I had to name an overall direction and phenomena for the reanalysis I would say that the research questions were:

- How did the research writing cuts materialize what has happened in the film-making?
- What are ways in which this might matter, and of what responses is science, in this case ethnography, capable?

The ultimate outcome of the reconsideration was what I call an implosion of the analysis of the film-making, despite the careful crafting (e.g., descriptive, emic) done to situate the analysis with youths’ storying. In this reconsideration chapter I discuss a set of such ways in which the research writing dehumanized the youth as well as possibilities for how it may be otherwise.

What’s dehumanizing about constructivism? According to Barad, (2007), the problem with constructivism is its false distinction between epistemology and ontology. Although this is
not her only paradigmatic placement, it is an important placement for this research because throughout the research the relationship of my own learning to a set of constructivist assumptions has been the most influential to all aspects of the work. Barad (2007) names a tendency called “linguistic narcissism” (p. 42) in centering semiotics, representation, and discourse while at the same time marginalizing the material. This tendency has certainly been at play in a multiplicity of ways during this research, especially when it comes to making decisions about analysis and representation. However, in this section I focus on Barad’s (2007) placement of agential realism in relation to constructivism because I believe constructivist assumptions to have become dominant not only in this dissertation but also in my understanding of what happened with the film-making group.

Barad’s (2007) first concern with constructivism is its antithetical positioning with realism. She explains, “[A]s constructivists have tried to make clear, empirical adequacy is not an argument that can be used to silence charges of constructivism. The fact that scientific knowledge is constructed does not imply that science doesn’t ‘work,’ and the fact that science ‘works’ does not mean that we have discovered human-independent facts about nature” (Barad, 2007, p. 40). Because science is “allied along particular axis of power” (Barad, 2007, p. 40), constructivists have an obligation not only to make this claim but also to theorize how constructions work. This issue of how is exactly what Barad (2007) aims to confront in her theorizing of intra-action. In other words, she avoids the easy side step of describing a little black box called mechanism or practice (or others) and instead embraces the complexity of how. Barad (2007) argues that in this side step constructivists privilege issues of epistemology over issues of ontology.
Importantly, she attributes this privileging not to the tradition of constructivism but to the dominance of Western philosophy in science: “There is good reason to question the traditional Western philosophical belief that ontology and epistemology are distinct concerns” (Barad, 2007, p. 43). One approach, according to Barad (2007), is for constructivists to disengage with the opposition to realism altogether. She further argues that the dominance of Western philosophy has led constructivists to polarize from realism as realism declines in science: “[T]he pairing of constructivism with some form of antirealism has become nearly axiomatic” (Barad, 2007, p. 43). This antirealism has certainly been the basis for my own paradigmatic commitments and their foundation for my own research. Still, Barad (2007) bolsters me as the ground beneath my waves. Her theorizing of intra-action urges constructivists to bring realism back to the center in a new way—by questioning how the material (re)configures and is (re)configured by the discursive.

She argued that science is in urgent need for a framework for investigating the physical and the social through one another.

What is needed is an analysis that enables us to theorize the social and the natural together, to read our best understandings of social and natural phenomena through one another in a way that clarifies the relationship between them. To write matter and meaning into separate categories, to analyze them relative to separate disciplinary technologies, and to divide complex phenomena into one balkanized enclave or the other is to elide certain crucial aspects by design (Barad, 2007, p. 25).

Perhaps this elision leads to some of the paradigmatic problems in science.

The most fundamental claim in the set of assumptions underlying the agential realist framework that allows for theorizing the social and the natural together is, “Matter and meaning are not separate elements” (Barad, 2007, p. 3). Foundational to this claim is the relationship between classical physics and quantum physics. Classical physics is the model to which
quantum physics speaks. Humans still rely on the model of classical physics in science; science has not moved alongside physics. This is not to say that quantum physics is the correct model, just the best model currently available. Barad (2007) calls, “We need a reassessment of [physical and metaphysical] notions in terms of the best physical theories we currently have” (p. 24). Barad (2007) contextualizes her argument in the assumption that science studies has not moved from its basis in classical physics, even though it is widely accepted that quantum physics is the best available model at this time. She argues for bringing matter and realism back to science studies. This is not to say that matter is to replace meaning. She clarifies, “Mattering is simultaneously a matter of substance and significance” (Barad, 2007, p. 3).

Barad proposed the new framework of agential realism to address these purposes. An important assumption of this project to bring realism back to the questioning of how constructions work seems to be that the distinction between epistemology and ontology is one constructed over time by science. Barad (2007) locates this assumption in Haraway’s (1988) work on the instability of boundaries, exploring the agentic aspects of the material and conceptualizing agency as relational rather than as an attribute using work in that tradition. She called agential realism “an epistemological-ontological-ethical framework” (Barad, 2007, p. 26). In this descriptor her purpose is to claim that the distinctions between epistemology, ontology, and ethics are false and moreover, lead science towards one while ignoring another.

Barad (2007) argues the case that a material project is an urgent project for science studies. She draws upon Haraway’s (1988) reminder that, “What counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about” (p. 588, as cited in Barad, 2007). This chapter eventually discusses how quantum physics contributes to that project, but first the chapter illustrates some of what quantum physics can do. Barad (2007) argued that agential realist
interpretations could offer researchers resolution to some “long-standing paradoxes” (p. 35) of science. In this dissertation agential realism was not a solution. It was a way for me as a research writer to enter the dissonance head-on.

An ethical implication for reconsidering what counts as an object is that dismissing the material leaves humans unaccountable for history. Because realism has been appropriated for “both oppressive and liberatory positions and projects” (Barad, 2007, p. 43), Barad seems to view the employment of theory of intra-action as especially urgent in a continuing project against modernism and its scientific handler, positivism. With the imminent danger of that handler alongside constructivism’s ineptness at capturing the agency taking place with the writing group, I turned the emerging dissertation to face its written research account of the three film groups’ practices.

Returning to the classical account of the film-making surfaced its humanist assumptions, especially when it came to agency. A current project for poststructuralists is understanding phenomena with posthumanist assumptions, and an important part of this project is theorizing towards a new understanding of agency that detaches from subject or event and includes the cuts of inclusion and exclusion made by material flow. Agential realism is a theory only recently brought to educational studies by Jackson and Mazzei (2012), and even when employed in other fields, has very rarely touched qualitative data. Application fields I noticed during my reading included: human resources management; chemistry teaching foundations; medical practices; sex assignment for laboratory animal experiments; biopolitics—epidemiology, HIV, hepatitis C and contraceptives…; technology engineering; gender and engineering; biomedicine; critical animal studies (e.g. an ethnography with bees and their keepers); species and animism (the attribution of a soul to plants, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena); fathering (sociology); representation
of Alzheimer’s; religion and rituals; queer theorizing; Deleuze scholarship; legal depositions of
science “experts”; business and organization/management of people; archaeology and artifact
study; and media controversy studies.

It is my current understanding that engaging qualitative data with agential realism has
been identified as an important poststructural project, yet that project is only just underway. The
exploratory form of this reanalysis, paired with the opportune space of a dissertation chapter,
lends itself to such a project. What a classical account might position as a representation, an
agential realist account would position as a trace of a material practice. Data then, are not
representations for even partially unpacking meaning, but rather points of invitation for science’s
consideration. This chapter can offer material glimpsings of some elements of a classical
analysis of a participatory ethnography with youth in schools to ongoing posthumanist
discussions, especially those that center agency.

Containment of the Reanalysis Scope

Although I aimed to reanalyze what had happened during the writing group through a
poststructural lens turned on the classical analysis, the paradigmatic misalignment of that project
surfaced with full force. A key assumption of agential realism is that phenomena are “basic units
of reality” (Barad, 2007, p. 33). Barad (2007) theorized,

In my agential realist elaboration, phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological
inseparability of observer and observed, or the results of measurements; rather,
*phenomena* are the *ontological* inseparability of agentially intra-acting components (p. 33).

Therefore, I set out to interrogate the classical analysis of the film-making for agentially intra-
acting components. By positioning phenomena so defined as the basic units of reality, Barad
(2007) aimed not only to bring matter back to social science but also to bring investigation of the
social and the physical together in a particular way. In the reconsideration then, I believed
myself to be studying the intra-actions involved in the film-making. Yet I had trouble answering
my question of, What exactly are the phenomena here? or even, What are some phenomena that
could be here? It seemed to me that a study of some phenomenon is a study of the intra-actions
involved. So, a study of agency with the writing group would be a study of intra-actions
involved in the writing group. I quickly began to understand that the phenomenon I had in hand
was specific to a written ethnographic account of film-making practices, not a representation of
intra-actions that had taken place during the film-making. That seemed like almost nothing until
I turned to agential realism’s reminder that any materiality is agentic. The phenomenon of study
became the set of three chapters that constituted this dissertation analysis. This thinking
emerged entangled with the foundational distinction between quantum and classical physics.

Out of necessity I came to boil down Barad’s (2007) physics expertise to a minimal set of
quantum explanations, and one of those was particle and wave behavior as a function of what she
calls “apparatus”. More discussion on apparatus as it relates to exclusion and inclusion will
follow later in this chapter, but for setting the scope of the reanalysis, diffraction is the relevant
concept. Diffraction is a method that Barad (2007) suggested for the study of exclusions and
inclusions made during scientific study. She turned towards this method of diffraction because
the method avoids setting out subject and object of study in advance of study. It allows fluidity
between subject and object during study as well, which Barad (2007) argued “involves reading
insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how
different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter” (p. 30).
The fluidity of diffraction when it comes to subject and object is in contrast to the setting up of
approaches in which one set of ideas serves as a framework or a lens for another set of ideas.

175
Diffraction is still study of patterns, but instead of marked by study of patterns of sameness, diffraction is marked by study of patterns of difference. Difference in this case refers to, most importantly, differences of knowledge-makings’ influences on the world. Influence is what is patterned; mapping differences is not the aim. Barad (2007) calls for patterning “patterns of difference that make a difference” (p. 72). This distinction of diffraction situates difference as relational. In a diffraction, then, a researcher attends to differences that matter in a realist sense of the word. Barad (2007) claims that the method maintains the stance of agential realism across science studies because diffraction in quantum physics created the explicit downfall of classical physics. As I aimed to employ the method of diffraction to my classical analysis, I explored this claim in setting the scope of the reanalysis.

In classical physics, diffraction is about how waves combine when they overlap. Waves are distinguished from particles in that more than one wave can occupy a particular point in space at a given time. As they combine, they interact in what is called superposition. Because particles can only occupy one space at any given time, they do not produce diffraction patterns. Diffraction occurs in patterns of bending and spreading when waves encounter an obstruction. The obstruction is the diffraction apparatus yet diffraction is also the phenomenon that occurs as a result of superposition (Barad, 2007). The logic thus far comprises a classical understanding of particles and waves. In a quantum understanding, the additional key element is that particles sometimes behave as a wave and waves sometimes behave as particles. Quantum physicists explain this behavior by theorizing behavior as a function of apparatus. In other words, phenomena pattern based on how scientists understand them; understanding precedes pattern. This claim is called the entanglement of states and is the basis of all quantum theory. Entanglement is the concept to which Barad (2007) builds her theory of how matter and meaning
relate to one another, but I bind the scope of this dissertation short of the concept of
entanglement.

Diffraction, like any other apparatus, is itself a phenomenon. Barad (2007) argues that it
is absolutely necessary to attend to whether diffraction is situated as the phenomenon or as the
apparatus for studying a phenomenon. The mutual exclusivity of these approaches presents both
a need for careful stepping and an opportunity to add yet another layer of analysis. For this
dissertation, it would be possible to employ diffraction as apparatus in order to pattern
differences created by the three accounts of the film groups’ practices and then also pattern
differences that happened as a result of that diffraction. The latter project would grow another
dissertation framework layer so I leave it for a future project. I acknowledge Barad’s (2007)
claim for the golden nature of diffraction and ascribe to its aesthetic when it comes to patterning
complexity. However, in this dissertation I expected to have to make a decision about containing
analysis at a particular layer in order to maintain the focus on the students’ practices or risk
losing that focus through exploration of the golden methodological claim. I am also aware that
yet another proposal for diffraction in qualitative research is not a methodological contribution,
as others have written well into call for diffraction.

In short, I quickly came to the realization that once understood as a classical account, the
account could only behave as classical. In other words, a posthumanist account about a classical
account would not be possible. However, a reconsideration of a classical account through a
posthumanist lens would certainly be possible. The question arises, Why not revisit the data
prior to the construction of the classical account, this time through an agential realist lens? There
are two issues with that very promising project. First, the time I would need to complete that
project would wilt too many materialities in my life story. Second, the concept of diffraction
precludes the already slim possibility of returning to an apparatus zero in the prolific series of classical research cuts of this participatory ethnography. For instance, just Chapter 1’s brief story of how the study emerged over time shows that mapping apparatuses in a single web of causal explanation is neither possible nor desirable. Fortunately, agential realist inquiry has no concern for structural, complete, or grounded explanations of material engagements.

(Re)analysis strategizing: Poststructural interrogation of the classical analyses

Three preparatory phases comprised the poststructural lens for the analysis of the classical account of the film-making practices. First, I pulled and reorganized Barad’s (2007) poststructural logics around the concept of agency. Second, I developed a list of humanist and posthumanist tendencies for which to look while turning back to the classical analyses. Third, I returned to the classical analyses, situating them as artifacts for examination with these potential markers. My interpretations during this return to the dissertation text ultimately emerged from what could be called an abductive approach (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). In an abductive approach, qualitative researchers move back and forth between data and theory, beginning with the particular and connecting the particular with broader concepts as they interpret. This strategy allows for consideration on how the data speak to theory and existing literature rather than confining interpretations to existing theoretical and empirical frameworks (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Qualitative scholars Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argued that abductive reasoning “allows for a more central role for empirical research in the generation of ideas as well as a more dynamic interaction between data and theory” (p. 156). As I began to return to the dissertation analyses, a need for more dynamism emerged. More specifically, using the set of theoretical tendencies drew attention to what qualitative research might call the empirical research cuts, so I expanded the analysis strategy to include inductive interpreting of those cuts.
Although these strategic concepts are classical ethnographic analytic apparatuses, I resorted to thinking with them because in my review of the literature on agential realism I noticed that a set of conceptual strategies for poststructural ethnographic data analysis has not yet been theorized. After searching for what I can best describe as sensitizing concepts (Patton, 2002) within writings that brought agential realism alongside research, I came to understand that the writings that most closely bring the two together are positioned as calls for poststructural (re)analysis of qualitative research. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) claimed that the identification of sensitizing concepts is, “the most general value of wide and eclectic reading” (p. 158). In this widely accepted approach the qualitative researcher uses literature to identify sensitizing concepts and then goes to the data for what seem to be important themes, returning once again to the literature to interpret what the data and the literature might say about each other. Upon reviewing what seems to be, at least in research writing, a relatively new project, I strategized staying close to Barad’s (2007) logics and the dissertation stories themselves. Poststructural research writings are powerful in their justifications for their call as well as optimistic about possibilities, so in strategizing the reconsideration I aimed to enter that discourse as engaging in a (re)analysis.

**Interpretations**

During reanalysis the analytic cuts were overwhelmingly science-serving. Those cuts took place at the expense of violence to the students and their social groups. For example, viewing the cuts as science-serving surfaced hidden representational materialities such as deficit language of students being “unable to” do something, instrumentalizing students’ stories, speaking for students, and reporting at length on research decisions. These materialities, created by research cuts that I enacted along participatory ethnographic practices, centered researcher
and research. The following interpretations destroyed what I have learned to embody as morally just science. Their description can provide a sense of the implosive nature of the (re)analysis so I include here a set of brief, somewhat unstoried points of departure back into the three film group stories of this dissertation.

Justifying cuts

The sheer volume of attention devoted to justifying research cuts was striking. The writing cut of scene selection for the Classrooms film is a strong example of justification of research writing cuts. The four sets of classroom silencing scenes produced by the film group, which were about writing, wearing hats, group work, and helping, seemed to be organized without a hierarchy. Emphasis being in evident in the film-making practices, the writing-centered study assigned an emphasis. More specifically, the pair of scenes about writing became the articulation that would eventually set up the understanding of silencing in classrooms and the practice of adding alternate endings. The chapter’s justification for this decision was the claim of “writing’s importance throughout the study”.

That claim was science-centered and science-serving. Even with writing having been at times even almost synonymous with the study, that relationship did not carry into the dissertation. The justification, then, reads as a violent ethical justification of a cut of inclusion and exclusion. Understanding that could have been explored through the other three scenes was closed when those scenes became the descriptive illustrations of the practice of adding alternate
endings. The dissertation storying grew from that quickly swiped cut, further and further excluding the possibility of reconsidering it.

It did not end with violence to the group’s film. Justification bolstered with the appropriation of Karla’s final storytelling\(^\text{10}\). Her storytelling became tooled, a research instrument with no hope for a turn towards another meaning of her storytelling. From a classical research writing perspective, the section reads as an effective justification for the research cut of scene selection. However, from a poststructural perspective, the materiality of the story became in its enaction as a justification. I wrote a note to myself in this location in the story to, “provide data from earlier years on Karla and Bailey’s writing together,” but as this would have disrupted the cogency of the logic of the writing of a dissertation analysis chapter, description that could

\(^{10}\) Chapter 4 in its draft form included the following omitted section: “As a further resource for contextualizing writing as it related to the work on classroom silencing, I provide a glimpse of a story of silencing. This case, which I would describe as an exemplar case of classroom silencing in writing contexts, occurred over the four years of the writing group. The case involved the writing of Karla and Bailey. During the early years of the study, Karla and Bailey often wrote as a team in the context of the writing and film-making groups but also during times they called “free writing” at school. They reported that over time these times for free writing and for writing together had disappeared.

Karla took the opportunity of her final interview time with me to share a story she had created. For the past four years, discussing her story creations was how we spent most of our time together.

Bailey: “Teachers don’t let us free write like Ms. Parker did...I found the writing that we [Karla and I] did...”

K: “Awesome!...I want to continue. Want to hear my new story I’m making in my head? It’s based on my dad’s life when he was a child. My dad, he suffered a lot in his childhood so I dedicated this to him.” Two girls (her and bailey) 6 years old, “Father comes in and he’s drunk and all...sharp cowboy boots...I start off with: Most girls who are six years old don’t understand what’s going on in their life. But my eyes were opened as soon as my father did what he did to me. So he was drunk and all. He came inside the house...he was so mad he had metal in his boots and all. He kicked the girl. He made a hole in her back. She suffered. Now when she was older she’s a quiet person. Really shy. That is, until they meet two guys and fall in love...I got this based on my dad. When he was little his dad was a player type. He took my grandma when she was 13...kept having children...no Christmas presents, weren’t poor, kind of wealthy because they owned a farm...very violent, hit them all the time. So my dad’s never laid a hand on me. Cause he knows. Even when it’s a tough economy he still gets us a Christmas present. He doesn’t even yell at us. (He tells her mom not to either.)”

I include this story in its complete form in order to point to the wider group’s attribution of importance to writing contexts when it came to classroom silencing.”

\[181\]
allow material movement of Karla’s storytelling in a different way never appeared. This was a betrayal of Karla’s relationships over the four years of the study. In more ways than one, which are beyond the purpose of this chapter, ever since the study’s very beginning, the study has been about Karla’s schooling experiences. Worse, from a poststructural static time perspective, the cut can be understood to have already happened and therefore to have rewritten Karla’s participation in the story to have been a story of dehumanization. Provided the set of research cuts already enacted up to that moment in the dissertation writing, it is unlikely that any classical considerations, no matter how careful, would have overridden its production. In this sense I am both grateful for and fearful of agential realism’s potential for imploding classical analysis.

**Linearity and parallelism**

The strongest threat to the linearity and cogency of the account was material dilemma. When the material surfaced in the logic, the linearity was stalled, and sometimes unrecoverable by even parallelism. Even when linearity was recovered by parallelism, in those cases the only way it could be done was with a return to the discursive to make a link forward in the linear argument. It seems that material explications do not have a procuring place in linear argument.

For example, the Classrooms film group’s actions to reduce researcher interference in their collective writing time was a relatively descriptive event. That illustration was followed with a description of their groups’ inclusion of images of their collective writing time into their film. This development began to provide some understanding of the happenings of that film group as well as the wider film-making group. However, the linearity and parallelism of the written account required that the story pivot the story back to the linguistic. In going to the linguistic, the opportunity to explore materialities was lost. In at least one case as the writing moved on from the material the opportunity to explore the moral implications faded. In another
case I named turning towards an emerging opportunity to explore the material as “tempting” and resisted by further building upon a characterizing argument. The closest thing to a material-to-material pivot was a set of experiential student reportings of the material. Ann-Marie even said, “It was kind of hard to put the words”. When approaching a material theme at that point, it couldn’t seem to flow inside the argument. The writing problem remained unresolved, as indicated by a note in the margins reading, “I did not really characterize the working practices of each group and the relationships between those practices. Not sure if it would detract. Maybe offer a summary somewhere or more information, at least in this chapter. Putting some here might make this chapter make more sense, as a characterization seems necessary here.” Despite these red flags, the chapter never went in a material direction.

When the discursive pointed somewhere, and that direction threatened the linearity and parallelism of the account, the account over argued materialisms in order to convince otherwise. Rudders included, for example, history, context, and pulling away to the wider film-making group in order to stay on a linear and parallel course. The result of this problem was a privileging of the discursive that was so powerful, the research writing could not possibly allow the discursive to become buried. The morality of that result is something I will be taking on in thinking about research writing. In one instance in this account, the invincibility of the discursive and the material tension it elicited seemed to materialize in a particularization against generalization, which leads me to believe that the privileging of the discursive can at least sometimes materialize as just.

When I think about the relationship between the discursive and the material in the production of a linear and parallel argument, I interpret that the overall problem with the writing account is that the account comes to a material conclusion from discursive creations. The
writing claims arrival at some understanding of how silencing works: through action without understanding. The research writing built this claim not by experiencing schooling’s silencing as silencing materialized in schooling, but instead by stringing discursive reportings together in a linear and parallel fashion.

Linguistic situation of understanding

The account assumes and builds a linguistic situation of understanding. First and foremost, the account highlights where the students spoke their own understandings. That pattern, which is skeletal to the logic, stands on a knowing that individual people can understand and represent understanding of their own experiences.

Also, the stories rely on students’ reporting for patterning across individuals. In this pattern there are at least two humanist layers. In addition to assuming students spoke their own understandings of their own experiences, what was thought to be known about their understandings led to interpretation across individuals. For example, the account relied on their reporting of experiences with schooling’s silencing. Even then, the account didn’t stop at using their reporting for interpreting their thoughts. It continued by using sets of reportings to interpret sameness within the group. Classical science is about studying sameness, and the humanist assumption that people know their own knowing, as well as that assumption’s ascriptive property, stealthily built the analysis. Even when the account represented differences, those representations were more about building an analysis around sameness. One method that highlights this is the labeling of data excerpts. In classical analysis the practice of labeling data excerpts that were selected for inclusion in the writing as they are related to the set of data as a whole is a technical response to the problem of inevitable exclusion of data. From a
poststructural perspective, claiming that a data excerpt is “typical” or “distinct” or “exemplary,” for example, could be understood to be heightening a classical hunger for sameness.

Even when the storying relied heavily on my observations of events, which I interpreted as relatively material, research writing privileged students’ reporting to assign meaning to those observations or using observations of what they said as claims to having observed them doing. The students’ reporting became a hinging tool. Returning to Ann-Marie’s comment on storyboarding and thinking, the writing seemingly excised what was most significant in her comment and positioned that single point as a hinge to the story’s main argument. This reads as dehumanizing Ann-Marie, dismissing her reporting of her own storyboarding and thinking experiences. In other words, the hinging cut speaks for Ann-Marie.

The writing didn’t stop at a dehumanizing ownership of understanding based on students’ reporting of their own experiences. The stories also rely heavily on establishing relative importance. The cuts into the data and happenings are justified with statements of relevance to the students. The primary measure relied upon to work up justification was students’ discursive reporting of their own thinking. Interpretation even drew from presumptions of how they were feeling, using those claims to contribute to relative importance. In one case a single student’s reporting on a film scene marked that scene as “important for the film-making group as a whole through its history”. That is a major representative claim, and the account is full of them. After interpreting and denormalizing this strategy, its overwhelming role as controlling the construction of materialities related to the happenings of the film-making group is exposed. In other words, what was cut as important dissolved what was therefore implied insignificant, building not just a story about real happenings but also the happenings themselves.
From the temporal possibilities inherent in an agential realist perspective, causing a material effect on the past is entirely possible. In the places where philosophy and physics meet, effect preceding cause in a classical temporal structure is named “backwards causation” (Faye, 2010). When separated from the assumption of dynamic progressing time, the concept allows for cause and effect materialities to become more fully relational. The role of people in a “static and tenseless” (Faye, 2010) theory of time is to assign events to temporal positions in relationship to their own experiences. In other words, people’s sense making makes time. I suspect that a reanalysis through such a concept of time would allow for complicating time as the youth made it. For example, I noted a potential material glimpse in the Relationships group’s organization of time by people. More specifically, the presence and roles of people organized time; time was not a binding force.

More generally, in the case of this dissertation, a static and tenseless theory of time would allow knowledge that the dissertation storying assigned realness, through the marker of importance, to the happenings of the film-making group. Crucially, it would not be that the past happenings are distinct from the storying, but that the storying caused the happenings to materialize. That doesn’t mean that the storying influenced what happened with the group, but that the storying influenced the happenings to become what they were. Under the idea of backwards causation, the past cannot be changed, only materialized as it is. Quantum physics asserts this in part by logic that by attempting to change the past, all alternate paths to the future become impossible, leading inevitably to the particular future that has already happened (Faye, 2010). To me, because it involves human action, discursive materiality, and inevitability, this causation reasoning presents a multiplicity of agencies. For this dissertation the backwards causation dip into a static time serves mainly to destroy the representative classical strategy of
arguing importance to students. For a frame of reference on backwards causation I have been
and will be thinking primarily of Rust’s squashed beer can description in Season 1 of True
Detective. The imagery and Rust’s affect resonate with me, as I pair poststructuralism with living. Faye (2010) catalogued,

> It may intuitively sound strange as long as we think of backward causation as consisting of something we can control directly by our everyday actions. But if backward causation is a notion that is applicable only to processes that human beings are unable to control in any foreseeable way the notion would not provoke our intuitions so much.

Some of the students’ reportings within the analyses seem to challenge classical notions of space and time, explaining to me how they are together but not “with each other”, leading me to believe that bailing the control of humanism may be less imaginable to me than to the youth. Reasoning that people and their thinking are not distinct in the world eases the possibility.

**Concept grasping for argument**

The linguistic frame of the account seemed to leave the account concept grasping. Grasping for concepts would seem to be an inherent practice of writing an ethnographic account, but the return to the account suggested that in many of those places that were linguistically gasping for air it was because describing materialities was proving troublesom. Most notable, Chapter 3 (un)settled on the emic term “bonding” to move something that was very real for the group into a parallel and linear set of analysis chapters. Reconsidering those happenings for what they are, instead through agential realist ideas of intra-actions or becomings, would produce an entirely different understanding.

**Tracing source of ideas and scenes**

Another classical pattern here is tracing the source of ideas. The assumption behind this tracing is that ideas reside in and can be traced through individuals. Tracing discursive ideas
through individuals was a foundational strategy throughout the account, but the underlying assumption manifested in other kinds of idea sourcing. For example, other sorts of constructions included tracing to a group and initiation of a tracing of a materiality. Although a qualitative researcher might have liked to think that positioning ideas within individual students would center students’ knowing and the particularity of their experiences, the poststructural return to the strategy suggests that tracing the source of ideas dehumanized the kids. Many of the data were pulled into the story for purposes, often exclusively, of idea tracing. That strategy dehumanized not only the individual kids, but also their social groups. Language such as “birth” about origination in the group implied a specific power relationship between the study and the students’ ideas.

Notable for a dissertation chapter on a critique of silencing, premising that the selection of silencing as a topic originated within experiences with school writing time, which was the time most closely tied to the film-making group, even at most times either counter to or synonymous with the wider study, claimed knowledges about silencing for research. In a physics explanation of measurement, measuring momentum requires a moving mechanism while measuring position requires a fixed mechanism (Barad, 2007). The articulations created fixed mechanisms for measuring positions of silencing. In the fixing, articulation manipulated timespace in order to surface position. This fixing influenced how silencing surfaced, or what silencing became in the measurement. The point of this is not to measure or describe the influence but to note that the surfacing was silencing becoming. The more detailed the tracing of the topic of silencing, and the more invisible the measurement mechanisms, including but not limited to articulation, became, the more the account indulged in scientific self-congratulations. In this fixed articulation, silencing was as position. Therefore, according to quantum physics,
momentum went unmeasured. Was this why agency comes across in the analysis as so flat, so crushed by schooling?

Classical science elevates science’s claiming of the origin of ideas as its property. Considering how this seizure is positioned, I am left wondering if dehumanization could be reduced with an approach that aimed to describe the ideas present rather than trace ideas. Ideas, then, would be more material in the analysis, and their agentic influences could become phenomena. On the other hand, I could imagine such an analysis to pull ideas away from the people involved in the study, representationally dissolving the materialities of lived experience. Exploring practices without their humans could be a production approach, but research demands representation as its ultimate. Such an approach still seems dehumanizing, which leads me to question research as it is enacted as inevitably dehumanizing.

**Individual things with own properties**

The classical account was built on the assumption that individual things possess their own properties. The major pattern for this revisiting was how the writing assumed individual people to have their own properties. A definitive research writing cut that aligned the account with the classical assumption of individual people possessing their own properties was the organization of the analyses using the concept of film group membership. As it was an organizational concept, the analyses were determined to follow suit.

Despite open and incessant dehumanization of themselves and their peers caused by research demands such as storying decisions, the students sometimes described themselves in ways that were relational rather than properties-based. For instance, the introduction of The Love Movie consists of descriptors that name each film group member’s relationship to the group. This opened the analysis but rather than following how those relationships worked the
chapter moved towards characterizing each of the group members. The ways in which power
relations were at play in the practices glimmered in the account but the account turned away
from exploring them because of such an exploration’s inevitable domination of the topic of
power relations within the film-making group.

Some techniques for writing towards characterization of individual people with their own
sets of properties were setting the story along a dynamic and progressive time, highlighting
where the students spoke their own understandings, and cutting with categories of difference.
Those categories of difference were normalized outside the group, such as gender and race, as
well as constructed specifically with cuts of inclusion and exclusion within the film-making
group.

Another interpretation is that the account assigned importance to measuring complexity
through a dualistic tension between absolutism versus relativism. For example, the
representation-based study created a duality of having/not having had particular experiences.
This duality was set up for both the youth and for schooling. Also, patterning became about
frequency when it could have become about materiality. In other words, the writing pointed to
how often something was happening instead of description of what was happening. The dualistic
tension between absolutism and relativism drove much of the study design as well as the
analysis. For instance, reviewing the literature on schooling’s silencing ensured that the youth
report on any potential good coming from schooling’s silencing. If knowledge is material
engagement, this emphasis did not yield any knowledge. Although students in this study were
not organizing their work using the concept of good coming from a problem, that concept
became an important part of the design and the reporting. This concept organizes many sorts of
analyses of social problems. The reanalysis of the account leads me to believe that science,
having assigned importance to absolutism versus relativism, has a particular and limited approach to complexity.

By assuming that individuals possess their own properties the research writing lost a handle on the very topic the film-making group was studying. The storying somewhat attributed silencing to institutions but situated the effects of silencing within individuals. The humanist study design was not able to capture distress as a powerful, moving consequence of silencing. The study situated distress as an individual state of being, pathologizing youth. When a problem arose, it was written as a problem being carried by and created by people, even though the youth had pointed towards distress not as present in individuals but rather as present in schooling. The account overwrote that pointing.

**Material opportune glimpses**

Earlier in this chapter I claimed that the material does not have a procuring place in linear argument. At close read of the dissertation stories there were however glimpses of the material. Those glimpses served purposes that were marginalized to the purposes of the discursive. For example, they sometimes read as optional boosters for discursive claims. In the return to the stories I interpreted them to be opportunities for possible material entry into the happenings of the film-making group.

One type of material opportune glimpse was a working solution to a problem that arose with the humanist assumption of individual people possessing their own sets of properties. The film-making required a certain set of material actions, one of which was representing people. The Relationships film group knew that representing people did not require representing the people and their properties as paired. They talked about each other using relational ways of being, such as reliance, love, and care, instead of using characteristics. They situated film group
as subject. The analysis turned away from group as subject back towards subjects as individuals with characteristics. At the most, the research writing grouped individuals using categories of difference and then assigned characteristics to theoretical individuals who could be described with those groupings. When trying to describe the object of silencing, I came up short of a linguistic tool. The best language available was person-centered, relationing individuals, most notably in the inadequate concept of “consequences”. The students understood this before and much better than I did or have since. For example, concepts such as “freedom” and “sending out” were framed as group-based rather than as characteristic of individuals. Even concepts of change such as “rebellion” and “inspiration” situated change in individual decision making. Linking concepts to the discursive writing storm of academic argument ensured that exploration of their materiality would not take place. Importantly, these concepts were very real things, only withered by the individualized account, stripped of their spatial aspects. While applying relational ways of being to their film representations, at one point the group even demanded that I get out of their way with all of this problem solving towards individualization.

Another type of material opportune glimpse was historicity of group formation. This leads me to suspect that historicity in general could be a promising possibility for material entry. For example, Chapter 4 posits, “a sense of duty regarding film production of the classroom and teacher scenes from the wider film-making group’s brainstorming session”, as well as race, played important parts in the formation of the Classrooms group. Although the writing relied heavily upon discursive indicators in the effort to story the historicity of film group formation, there were several times in which I would call the indicators for that historicity more material. For instance, the film groups’ formations in relationship to one another was a set of happenings that was more material. However, when I return closer to those arguments and imagine the
discursive contributions away, the indicators that remain would be, in a scientific writing sense, weak. Still, I attach then and now almost certainly to the claims I made from those more material indicators.

Connections among collectives with vastly different experiences with silencing were another material glimpse. Ann-Marie’s and Scott’s involvement, for example, demonstrated that students worked for at least partially shared purposes in common projects despite having not only different experiences with but also different views on the three forms of silencing as well as silencing in general. Discursive concepts fell short for explaining those connections. I even struggled to understand them at all from the outside, despite the sense of knowledge ease about them on the insides of the collectives. Still, I know that those connections were real and played more heavily into the happenings than I was able to know. I wonder if connections among collectives could be materially explored.

Pairing observation with experience reporting seemed to offer a relatively material glimpse of the happenings. Those pairings can be found at places that appear as, for example, locating moments in the group to which the students were referring or asking students to speak about moments in the group. From what I understand about participatory ethnographic methods, this pairing strategy is encouraged in qualitative research. However, the dissertation storying relied on pairing observation and reporting most often at times when linguistic storying alone was not sufficient for making a point. Even if observation might cut closer to the material than experience reporting, the consideration that as observation increases, surveillance by the dominant also increases, haunts me. Yet acknowledging that ethnographic observation is still a representative tool, and research as it is depends on representation, this type of opportune glimpse is just hardly more material than stringing together experiential reportings.
Another type of material opportune glimpse was students’ attribution theorizing. Throughout the study the youth were adept at attributing outcomes to structures as well as how individuals are connected to those structures. Tragically, the material aspects of those attributions became buried in the argumentative research writing. Attribution theorizing glimmered along the student reporting included in the account. A good example is the description of the Classrooms film group’s scripting technique because that technique was a practice that was enacted as part of the film-making. The Classrooms film group used a practice that involved composing script for their characters that embodied complex roles. For instance, they carefully wrote brief lines for each of their teacher characters, and those characters embodied their overall stance on what teaching did and could be. In the happenings of the study all of the students engaged in storytelling about experiences with individual teachers. The scripting for the teacher characters was distinct from that more frequent sort of storytelling about teaching in that it was carefully flattened away from individual teachers and towards teaching as an institution. The writers seemed to pattern phenomena away from individual teachers, writing individual teachers out, and then represent those phenomena in teacher actions within their films. The students flattened their knowledges in order to allow them to have an attribution relationship to institutions of teaching. Aside from the complex attribution theorizing taking place in the scripting, that theorizing also involved a materiality. Specifically, this practice produced agentic materiality. Thinking about the material agency of how and what the students were theorizing here presses me to reconsider the silencing mechanism explanation of “movement of understanding”. I wonder, In what ways was that movement of understanding taking place during the film-making? In what ways was it not? Peaceful, for example, theorized one way in which a generalized teacher understanding might move: “I wish I could just hear a teacher talk
once about why they do it.” In this way, which I offer here as only a single instance in an expansive set within the study, youth practice deploys the theorizing that research tirelessly pursues. Shortly after the glimpse in the chapter, the classical writing extinguished it by linking from structural attribution to effects on individuals. In other words, although fascinating from an educational research perspective, youth theorizing was immediately stifled by research’s classical humanist hold.

This set of material opportune glimpses might read as a merciless destruction of the research. In the context of my interpretations the set is only the tip of the iceberg. I intend for this set to be an illustration of play between classical writing and poststructural reconsideration. In selecting the small set of material opportune glimpses from my interpretations, I performed a writing cut that included material opportune glimpses that were both tight with the writing aspect of the research and sites of especially violent dehumanization. The set of material opportune glimpses that I excluded, even just the known set, would have allowed for reunderstanding of design cuts, pedagogical cuts, and so on.

I want to emphasize that although the classical account included some material opportune glimpses, the material was dwarfed by the power of the discursive. In one instance, a section of promising writing about (e)valuation within the group was displaced from its chapter to be “a floating point without a place”. The power of the discursive was so great that I suspect a classical account, whatever the justness of the result, doesn’t allow the discursive to become buried. In the dissertation stories the discursive carried the project of claiming influence. In the few places where a claim of material influence seemed to emerge, there was a sense that those places were dangerous. For example, I noted to myself, “Watch out! Spiky,” when, following the students’ theorizing, an argument that classroom silencing influenced students towards
disengagement with class work built towards a teacher audience. From an agential realist perspective, both the claim and the way in which it was reasoned could be understood as material agentic influence. A rethinking of the claim in terms of material agentic influence would complicate the claim and raise questions about the materiality of the class work happenings rather than what was described as the students’ disengagement. Returning to the students’ theorizing with that question in mind would certainly lead to interpretations that are, for example, less deterministic in a humanist sense or less appropriable for attributing problems to students. Instead, with Barad’s (2007) theory, causality could be theorized through careful study of the many cuts having taken place in a classroom, attributing outcomes to the layers of apparatuses operating as and within schooling.

Resorting to the discursive for the sake of linear argument may have been the only way for the ethnographic dissertation writing to move forward. There were some locations where the writing came to a full stop. Some of those locations never achieved resolution. They are marked by underdeveloped statements or lengthy margin asides on additional material happenings from the group. One such break in the discursive flow read, “There is no good way to transition from metaphysical to consequences.” Although this problem could be situated with many factors that play into the writing, when considered alongside the interpretations here, classical cogency comes up short when handling materialities such as students’ theorizing.

**Epistemology and Ontology of Complementarity and Uncertainty**

How could these outcomes have taken place during the research writing? As agential realism is based in the epistemological and ontological assumptions of quantum physics and is also a response to the same in classical physics, some understanding of quantum physics can inform an exploration of how research writing could have been so disastrous. In this dissertation
I use Barad’s (2007) definition of epistemology: “the nature of knowing” and ontology: “the nature of being” (p. 18). This brief overview is my reading of Barad (2007), whose PhD is in theoretical particle physics and quantum field theory.

Although it is still humanist, centering humans and their knowledge, quantum physics challenges modernism. Among other things, it is postmodern. Splitting the nucleus of the atom was the event that brought atomic physics out of purely theoretical domain, and a debate between Bohr and Heisenberg at least somewhat organizes the field of quantum physics. “Public fascination with quantum physics is probably due in large part to several different factors, including the counterintuitive challenges it poses to the modern worldview” (Barad, 2007, p. 6). The counterintuitive challenges seem similar across Bohr and Heisenberg. The debate between Bohr and Heisenberg centers on epistemological and ontological assumptions. Barad (2007) summarized,

The nature of the difference between their views...can be summarized as follows: For Bohr, what is at issue is not that we cannot know both the position and momentum of a particle simultaneously (as Heisenberg initially argued), but rather that particles do not have determinate values of position and momentum simultaneously (p. 19).

Bohr interpreted quantum physics to be based in this complementarity principle. Barad (2007) reasons the unfamiliarity as,

In essence, Bohr is making a point about the nature of reality, not merely our knowledge of it. What he is doing is calling into question an entire tradition in the history of Western metaphysics: the belief that the world is populated with individual things with their own independent sets of determinate properties (p. 19).

Barad (2007) argued that for Bohr, philosophy and physics were already one practice, or “philosophy-physics” (p. 24).

Heisenberg interpreted quantum physics to be based in uncertainty principle. If we can’t know anything about an object, we can’t ever make a prediction. To clarify:
Heisenberg does not say that we can’t have any knowledge about a particle’s position and momentum: rather, he specifies a trade-off concerning how well we can know both quantities at once: the more we know about a particle’s position, the less we know about its momentum, and vice versa (Barad, 2007, p. 7).

Barad (2007) describes Heisenberg’s explanation as more mathematical, the perfect pairing to Bohr’s theoretical.

For Barad (2007), the problem with the uncertainty principle is that it is an ethical dismissal. In other words, the dismissal that all is always uncertain relieves us of any responsibility because if there is no way to judge then we don’t need to judge. The complementarity principle, on the other hand, conscripts ethics because the very nature of measurement is determinate and therefore exclusionary. In other words, objects and agencies of observation cannot be separated from one another; distinction between knower and known is false. Importantly, failure is not in the construction of dualisms, but rather in humans’ construction of the concepts of space and time. Because representationalism is based in those dynamic and progressive concepts of space and time, representationalism is faulty. Barad (2007) argued that the false dualism of subject and object also led to the false distinction between epistemology and ontology and that anthropocentrism privileges epistemology in this false dualism. Dualism of subject and object is the root of existing concept of agency because that dualism constructs the concepts of determinism and freedom that operate a sense of causality. Barad (2007) argues that viewing subject and object as one in a phenomenon can lead through these same links to a new agency.

Barad (2007) seems to argue from these assumptions that life’s meaning is in its moralities, and she certainly does not apologize for morally judging. It is clear that quantum
physics denies science absolutism. On the other hand, absolute relativism is not what a quantum physics basis offers science. Barad (2007) argued,

Quantum theory leads us out of the morass that takes absolutism and relativism to be the only two possibilities. But understanding how this is so requires a much more nuanced and careful reading of the physics and its philosophical implications (p. 18).

Eventually, Heisenberg came around to agree with Bohr that the complementarity principle was the basis of quantum mechanics, rather than the uncertainty principle, so here when I refer to quantum physics assumptions I am wrestling with the idea that individual things do not possess their own sets of properties. That idea of the subject reimagines the ethics of the research writing within this dissertation.

**Exclusion and inclusion**

Barad’s (2007) work contributes an explanation of how classical and quantum assumptions play through science practices. For an explanation of how things materialize, she deploys her concept of apparatus. Barad’s (2007) notion of apparatus is broad. It includes not only scientific practices but also practices more widely defined such as social practices like colonialism and democracy. For this dissertation, the focus apparatuses are research writing apparatuses, but more broadly, theorizing. Due to its nature as a practice, theorizing, according to Barad (2007), and in critical response to Hacking, is as real as intervening. She wrote, “To theorize is not to leave the material world behind and enter the domain of pure ideas where the lofty space of the mind makes objective reflection possible. *Theorizing, like experimenting, is a material practice*” (Barad, 2007, p. 55). When I refer to theorizing I am referring of course to my own theorizing as the dissertation writer, but I am also referring to the students’ theorizing. An important assumption of agential realism is that materialism is in phenomenon, or in practices of knowing and becoming, rather than only in entities. Because in science the concept
of realism is so tightly associated with entities, locating the real in phenomenon in a science account requires vigilance of this assumption. Maintaining the frame of research writing as a practice, or more specifically, a practice of cuts of inclusion and exclusion, has been essential for reunderstanding the dissertation account.

Through an agential realism lens, research writing can be understood as measurement. The nature of Barad’s (2007) concept of a measurement brings ethnographic writing to ethnographic mind: “[G]iven a particular measuring apparatus, certain properties become determinate, while others are specifically excluded” (p. 19). An organizing question for the reanalysis became, What properties became determinate and what properties were excluded in my measurement, and how did the apparatuses influence that?

In order to hold on to my purposes for the reanalysis and ensure that the job would get done I grounded not on the technical mechanisms of intra-action but on the logic embedding inclusion and exclusion in ethics. Barad (2007) summarized an agential realist understanding of ethics as, “[E]thical concerns are not simply supplemental to the practice of science but an integral part of it. But more than this,…values are integral to the nature of knowing and being” (p. 37).

Barad’s (2007) claim that agential realism integrates ethics is not simply another paradigmatic and easily appropriated move to consider the ethics of research or science. Rather, as intra-actions (re)configure the world and intra-actions are about exclusions and inclusions, the world through intra-action is of ethics. In other words, the distinction between what is real and what is valued is false. It is my understanding that this claim is a major distinction when it comes to the concept of realism. She wrote, “Realism, then, is not about representations of an independent reality but about the real consequences, interventions, creative possibilities, and
responsibilities of intra-acting within and as part of the world” (Barad, 2007, p. 37).

Furthermore, what becomes real matters for both the included and the excluded: “[E]xclusions matter both to bodies that come to matter and those excluded from mattering” (Barad, 2007, p. 57). It is important to note that in her footnotes she acknowledges that the terms “consequences” and “interventions” beg redefinition within an agential realist framework. One urgent project for researchers employing agential realism, then, is to explore discourse that might allow for cracks in classical notions. Upon returning to the classical analysis I notice tired concepts when it comes to ethics. For example, the analysis relies on the concept of consequence in particular. Because it is a major move for agential realism to describe a realist ethics, it is not surprising that a post-critical account would turn to the concept of consequence when trying to get at the students’ knowledge of the ethics of the mattering taking place in their lives.

**Representation and production**

Returning to this dissertation with the notion of the subject, the films can be understood as representations. By representation, I mean the use of language to produce meaning (Hall, 1997). By production, I mean the material and the discursive becoming to produce meaning (Barad, 2007). Instead of representationalism, which assumes that representations and what they represent are separate, Barad (2007) suggests performative approaches, which focus on practices around representing instead of on the representations themselves. This study framed production as merely a means for representation. It was expected that the group would develop practices that would lead to representations about the group’s topic. Even though the purposes for the representations shifted, the study demanded that they remain centered if not in purpose then in presence. Film-making required a certain type of material action. It demanded set-up and a need to come to a singular solution to problems that arose. From here the study design raged on with
humanist concepts. For example, a major aspect of the design became discussion and
documentation of what we called “conflicts” and “decisions”. Aimed at what I would now call
representing production, those concepts could be reimagined more materially, perhaps as intra-
actions or becomings taking place during the work. Rather than complexifying process,
representation flattened complexity. For example, the Relationships group was initially about
the complex idea of love, and students explored the fluidity of the idea through storying,
imagining, and the arts. When it came time to work towards representation, a duality of having
or not having a love relationship materialized. Writing the analysis using that duality produced
silencing-linked claims that when considered alongside the early work of the film group seem at
best interesting.

Understandings of the material tools that students had and used to allow speaking and
being from a stance faded behind discursive tools they had and used for those same purposes.
For example, the tool of metaphor surfaced as discursive in the caged lion storying, while the
materiality of the ISS scene creation by metaphor was reduced to the messages of that scene.
Another material tool the students used was detailed scripting for teacher characters. This
flattening tool allowed the students to theorize away from individuals and towards systems. A
deeper understanding of such material tools was lost when the story barreled towards how the
students described their practices. However, if representation keeps meanings going, it could be
argued that the dissertation keeps the youths’ critiques going. Hall (1997) argued that power
intervenes in meaning making in this way, so isn’t the classical account set up to play to this
power intervention in a particular way – a way that stays close to the politics the youth claimed?
Even so, these lost materialities of metaphoring and scripting illustrate that the classical account
is a diminutive representation with an indeterminate intervention scope.
Questioning representationalism’s assumption that words and things are linked is nothing new for science studies. Barad (2007) mentions feminism, poststructuralism, and queer theory as questioning fields. For this dissertation, questioning aspects of the research that, whatever the intention, resulted in representation, provides one way to reach out to the stories with an agential realist push. A classical approach to the stories would culminate in an argument that the stories are, albeit partially and singularly, a representation of the group and the work. However, a poststructuralist approach to the stories as they stand would ultimately position what happened and the people involved as constituted by the classical participatory ethnographic approach of the research. Ends of the research then, especially when considered alongside the purposes of participatory ethnography, are tragic. What does this mean? Does this mean the humanist account and the posthumanist account depend on one another for this particular set of ends? Is it in tandem with rather than instead of?

How can the stories be understood as performances instead of (in tandem with) representations? Even performances of representation can offer an understanding that is not so subject-centered. Barad (2007) explained, “A performative understanding of scientific practices, for example, takes account of the fact that knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but rather from a direct material engagement with the world” (p. 49). A performative understanding of the stories then, would center material engagements of the writing group.

The stories of this dissertation then, may offer opportunity for an understanding of some material engagements of the writing group through the description of the three “practices”. Barad (2007) wrote,
Performative approaches call into question representationalism’s claim that there are representations, on the one hand, and ontologically separate entities awaiting representation, on the other, and focus inquiry on the practices or performances of representing as well as the productive effects of those practices and the conditions for their efficacy (p. 49).

The practice section of each story chapter moves towards such inquiry. Importantly, the dissertation analysis explores only three practices in any depth when the material engagements of the work are so multiple and intra-related that (re)understanding could have no limits. However, it seems to me that agential realist performative inquiry has no concern for structural, complete, or grounded explanations of material engagements. Rather, complexity seems beautiful in the multiplicity it can offer.

Because the work itself was and always has been about representation, it may seem to follow that this dissertation would unpack that representation as critical theory’s representation. Even the classical analysis of the three film groups’ work centers representation because it is woven along representative purposes such as film-making, illustrating a problem and social change possibilities for that problem, and a distinction cut between off- and on-film. However, through an agential realist lens, representation is understood through the concept of engagement. In this case, what a classical account might position as a representation, an agential realist account would position as a trace of a material practice. Data then, are not representations for even partially unpacking meaning, but rather points of invitation for science’s consideration.

Barad (2007) argued,

[R]epresentationalism is a practice of bracketing out the significance of practices; that is, representationalism marks a failure to take account of the practices through which representations are produced. Images or representations are not snapshots or depictions of what awaits us but rather condensations or traces of multiple practices of engagement (p. 53).
An analysis then, is a becoming set of traces of material engagements. The idea of bringing practices to the center of study is not new. The call for studying practices in order to come to understandings of phenomenon resonates in many disciplines and fields. For example, although not the framework for this dissertation, studying practice for the purpose of understanding and modeling mechanisms between identities and agency is one of the major traditions underlying the classical account in this dissertation. It is my understanding that agential realism ascribes to a denial of mechanism between practices and phenomenon. The question that lingers for me is how science could welcome an analysis that is not an account but instead an accounting. The following section includes some problems for accounting.

**Problems for classical science**

Cutting by person created deterministic causalities. It situated power within individuals or between individuals. In the context of a topic study, cutting by person didn’t seem to allow for deeper understanding of silencing. Instead, what surfaced as material was of or among film groups. Cutting by person surfaced an ironic closing door to interrogating schooling’s silencing. What was available for study then, were tellings of experience, yielding an inevitably humanist account. In the reanalysis I noted that in building beauty of the group, the account lost an understanding of intra-action between the group and schooling. For instance, locating power within individuals and power relations as between individuals missed the whole point of power vis-á-vis the writing group. Related interpretations were offered as complexifiers but not as centered. Centering this point would have offered a more material picture. In getting at the silencing of the group, the group’s silencing, and silencing in the group, representation (i.e., the films) would fade away.
When the account wrote into power relations there seemed to be no choice but to write that an analysis was beyond the scope of the dissertation. For example, a passage I wrote early on read,

Because materialities are produced by entanglements, and intra-actions involve cuts of inclusion and exclusion, the ultimate concern that surfaces with an agential realist approach is power. However, in this dissertation, I steer away from the topic of power and power relations. In fact, I even steered the classical analysis away from power relations. I made this exclusion because power relations are so central to materialities and therefore to everything that happened around the research. In order to enter a just analysis of power relations around the research, I would have had to engage in an analysis of the history of the study. As that involves five years of rapidly morphing participatory ethnographic research over many layers of social contexts with so many people directly involved, such an analysis, which I would call more social constructionist in nature, is beyond the scope of one dissertation. In addition, and most importantly, such an analysis would center the research rather than the students’ accounts of their own schooling.

Cutting the three film-making groups’ work on school silencing was a way to center students’ critiques of silencing in the writing. Even so, the writing group positioned groupness as a subject, calling attention to at least some exploration of power, but in the dissertation groupness ended up as only a means for humanist argument about valuing.

I wonder, if subject did shift away from individual person, from where would come stance? If morality does not rest in individual stance, could morality rest here in the knowing about silencing’s forms? Could morality rest in the (re)materializing of moving groupnesses? Could morality rest in the materializing of the three practices of using extras, bonding, and alternate endings? The film-making was not an exercise. The films were a statement and their making was a stance about silencing. Gia compared that stance to a sentence. She described the film-making by saying, “We just made a big sentence. We just made a big sentence, took all the big words, and left all the details.” She made this parallel in response to my question, “How would our group need to be if we kept a group on silencing going next year?” During this
exchange we discussed how the film-making maintained the big ideas related to silencing but neglected nuances. She said that our future work on silencing would bring those nuances to the center: “It would be more detailed.” The best singular descriptor I can imagine for how students knew silencing to work is: action without understanding. I wonder if the students’ concept of movement of understanding as well as its nuances could be dehumanized, for purposes that might even be shared by “Gia” and science, to inform material work on the problem of schooling’s silencing.

An account that shifted subject away from individual person would be unrecognizable to the dissertation analysis. I know this because turning to humanist individual consequences was a move that was irresistible. This turn was most certainly about my own position I call White teacher lady, amplified by my ethnographer position’s fixation on attention to a humanist concept of utterance. In the writing it seemed to go hand in hand with subjecting language, much of which I marked for shameful striking during my return to the analysis. The account marks that I began to understand how the forms of silencing were wider social problems during the interviews with students. Revisiting those notes, it is not surprising that my understandings of the forms of silencing as wider social problems were and still are cursory. A poststructural consideration of how the material was marginalized in this dissertation surfaced a knowing that I cannot and will never be able to understand oppression because of my positions of oppressor. This surely contributes to my classical writing towards reporting, to data that report, and so on.

**Problems for poststructural science**

In addition to raising problems for a classical science, the reanalysis also raised problems for a poststructural science. The issue of representationalism lingers, as students asked each other to speak their own experiences. The variation in how those experiences were related to one
another, for example, with similarity or difference, points towards representationalism’s beauty of particularity. Also, students referenced each other’s own experiences when describing valued relationships between individuals, embodying the representation of reported experiences that ethnography also enacts. Because the students at least sometimes assumed representationalism when making sense of life, I am not quick to dismiss humanist assumptions. Even after an attempt at taking on some poststructural thinking, I remain convinced that people have the ability to speak their own experiences, and that pursuing the complexity of understanding that emerges from the particularity of those experiences is a morally just project. I acknowledge that the history of representationalism is vivid, and when I read that history I will do so with the following questions in mind. In work with people, what could possibly challenge the dehumanization of rejecting their reporting on their own experiences and the meanings of their own experiences? How can people set the stance and therefore the morality of their own work when their experiences are decentered from the work? Is there another idea besides the subject that can situate stance with persons while at the same time decentering what science calls the subject? When subject is decentered, is stance in complexity?

For instance, in agential realism emotion does not set stance. Can production explain the humanness of the feelings of performance? Thinking through my experiences with youth I have to maintain that pain and feeling are material, and agential realism doesn’t seem to have a way to work with that. In the dissertation stories there was no way to transition from metaphysical concepts to consequences. This might be a problem with classical accounting, with writing, or a problem with my researching, but it is certainly a problem. In my future work with agential realism emotion will, in part, move interrogation into how agential realism theorizes the relationship between meaning and matter. Stuart Hall (1997) theorized emotion within a practice
variant on constructionism, drawing attention to emotion as a political consequence. In this view
shared meanings, which construct culture, are not always cognitive or explicit. They include
things like emotions and senses of belonging or attachment. Shared meanings influence social
practices and are therefore real in their consequences. Barad (2007) shares the attribution of
realness to consequences in her claim that the distinctions between epistemology, ontology, and
axiology are false. Because emotion stems from our relationships with meanings, representative
constructionism may have much to offer a realist understanding of emotion.

In any case, emotions certainly signal to me that this reanalysis flattened the film-making
group, so I wonder if individualization is necessary for honoring complexity. When weighed in
comparison to the sorts of complexifying that come from mattering during research, such as
complexifying pathways of research cuts, does the unequivocal extraction of knowing from
individuals merit the resulting flattening? I suspect that such a sweeping act of dominance
silences complexity of knowing that could otherwise be further enacted for challenging unjust
materialities. Barad (2007) calls out science for the black box of how. The dissertation stories,
when called to resist temptation to black box the how of schooling’s silencing, illustrate well that
a how that is not a black box inevitably means how for more than one person. Flattening must
therefore occur for searching how. Material conclusions, then, are made from discursive
creations. Across all three stories, I can best describe the how of schooling’s silencing to be
action without understanding. What a flattened idea! Built from such complexity to such
sweeping obviousness, such a flattened idea is scientifically anticlimactic. As science does not
have a way to speak about students’ experiences with schooling’s silencing, I reject a
poststructural discounting of the students’ reporting on their own experiences.
Humanist theories assume that human subjects are capable of understanding their own thinking. For Barad (2007), this assumption is a structuralist misconception. She argues, “Challenging the notion of the humanist subject as radically free and constituted through self-determination and transparent access to its own consciousness, structuralists argue that the subject is a product of structures—whether of kinship, language, the unconscious, cognitive structures of the mind, or economic, social, and political structures of society—and hence must be understood as an effect rather than a cause” (Barad, 2007, p. 45). Poststructuralists reject the notion of the structurally-determined subject and turn to study of agency within and on structures. Poststructuralists even reject the grounds of science’s pitting of agentic and structural explanations against one another. Barad (2007) continues, “Rejecting both poles, that subjectivity is either internally generated or externally imposed, poststructuralists eschew not only the very terms of the debates over agency versus structure and free will versus determinism but also the geometrical conception of subjectivity, which would validate ‘internality’ and ‘externality’ as meaningful terms in the debate” (p. 46). It is this place where agential realism stands.

Why is this important for this dissertation? Subjectivity, and therefore subjectivization by research, is about agency and agency is about change. Barad (2007) claimed, “What is at stake is nothing less than the possibilities for change” (p. 46). How can agential realism account for students’ knowing that social change depends on relational movement of understanding? For example, students performed that movement of understanding within relationships with individual teachers was necessary for challenging silencing in classrooms.

Thinking through the students’ storying of their own experiences alongside this aspect of Barad’s (2007) argument leads me to suspect agential realism as a supremacist paradigm. Doubt
of humans’ ability to understand their own thinking, even if it were a pinnacle of good science, seems to me to be a doubt dangerous enough to offer opportunity for appropriation leading to oppressive materialisms. For instance, I find it easy to imagine the Western whiteness that dominates science to root spread into this crevasse that posthumanists open. Especially when considered alongside traditions that have implicitly influenced this dissertation, such as Stuart Hall’s (1992) analysis of discourse and power in Western othering, there can be no assurance that this critique of an assumption would not become isolated by the othering practices of science rather than paired with a posthumanist perspective on the humanist assumptions behind the dominance of the researcher. Furthermore, a posthumanist way of knowing likely seems novel to research/educational research/me because of science’s basis on dominant ways of knowing. Posing it as novel and as originating as a paradigm in science studies are likely supremacist acts.

**Hauntings for research**

**Reflexivity**

During my poststructural reading of the dissertation analysis, I was surprised to learn that the strategy of marking an interpretation as my own interpretation either did not change the nature of the interpretation or did not prevent the invisibility of that change. This seemed to echo Barad’s (2007) critique of reflexivity. A major project in feminist science studies has been a call for the method of reflexivity. Barad’s (2007) call for diffraction is a response to the classical underlying assumptions of reflexivity. Although it brings the previously omniscient researcher into analysis, reflexivity still assumes that there are no effects between objects and representative practices. In science studies critique of reflexivity, and its closely related method of reflection, is not new. Barad’s (2007) particular argument is that reflexivity as method is based on representationalism. She wrote,
Even in its attempts to put the investigative subject back into the picture, reflexivity does nothing more than mirror mirroring. Representation raised to the nth power does not disrupt the geometry that holds object and subject at a distance as the very condition for knowledge’s possibility (Barad, 2007, p. 88).

Barad (2007) argues that the performative method of diffraction can better push researchers towards studying materialities, or, “moving away from the familiar habits and seductions of representationalism (reflecting on the world from outside) to a way of understanding the world from within and as a part of it, as a diffractive methodology requires” (p. 88). In this moving away, research can approach a “commitment to understanding which differences matter, how they matter, and for whom” (Barad, 2007, p. 90). She argues, “Turning the mirror back on oneself is not the issue, and reflexivity cannot serve as a corrective here” (Barad, 2007, p. 58). Instead of in reflexivity, she sets ethics in the performance of cuts of inclusion and exclusion.

In setting ethics in cuts of inclusion and exclusion, marking interpretations becomes a thin and devalued layer of research reporting. In a qualitative approach, this marking may be thin, but it is membranic in nature, meticulously grown to comprehensively contain the storying within ontological and epistemological assumptions. Given the strength and adaptability of dominance’s grasp on science, the poststructural devaluing of such a membrane is materially dangerous and possibly even malevolent. One project for poststructural research reporting, then, is study of the materiality of the membrane itself and acknowledgement of works that have revealed its agency in the history of science.

**Design**

The problem of making cuts by individual person raised many questions not only for research writing but also for research design. Cutting by person in any way is humanist and therefore a problem from an agential realist perspective. Exclusion by person was an important
part of this study’s design. For this final year of the study, only existing participants were invited to continue with the group. As discussed in the analysis of The Love Movie, exclusion by person was a point of contestation within the group, especially because over time the schooling context of the group expanded across schooling categorizations such as grade level and course placement. The youth called on research to expand the group, and research’s exclusion by person turned away from that call.

In designing a posthumanist study, cutting inclusion and exclusion by person would make no sense. However, it is difficult for me to imagine how we might have designed this study or one similar to it without cutting by person. In fact, the way I am thinking about cutting by person at this time is that a study design with no cuts by person would not be considered to be participatory ethnography. Participatory, as everyone involved in the writing group enacted it, meant participatory with people. That contradiction is one with which I’ll be wrestling as an “ethnographer” already becoming embedded in schools. For this study, the further away from cuts by person we designed, the less educational research considered the study research. With such a detailed yet ever evolving method for inclusion and exclusion by person, which emerged in concert with the happenings in practice, when research interjected to expect an analytic representation, the study had no way of representing its knowledges in a way that research could decode.

Methods of analysis

Similarly, even when cut by person in a way compatible with ethnographic analytic representation, which in one instance was by year for this dissertation, science could not access the existing knowing without a discursive cut. In this case science accessed a bit of knowing through the discursive cut of articulation. Although the scenes in the articulation became
discursive in the dissertation, I can say that they were material happenings, at least at the time of their production. Still, they are representations of engagement with the material. Production can’t quite explain performance. The scenes themselves can be understood as material, as discursive, as imagined material, and so on. They were not merely representations but happenings that were real because they were real in their consequences. I ascribe to the theorizing of Thomas and Thomas (1928), who wrote, “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (p. 572). It is overwhelming to think about how relatively miniscule the set of the material is within this dissertation compared to the material happenings that took place during the study. Even if the articulated scenes that advance in this dissertation are considered artifacts of the material, from an agential realist perspective, the resulting research-invisiblity of almost all of the happenings is tragic. Tragic, that is, for representative research purposes, but not a concern for productive explanations of meaning.

I remember the moment in the research when I became party to what the youth already knew about productive meaning. This knowing absolutely countered what I had maintained as a primary purpose for the study, which was representation of experiences with schooling. From the questions I have fielded about the study over the years I know that representative purposes hold fast in educational research. I have not yet found a way to represent the primary productive purposes of the study because research is representative.

“Conclusion”, or, Invitation to Imagine

In this return to the dissertation stories, it would seem that storying in classical research accounts depends on an end. In agential realism, however, ends are beginnings and beginnings are ends. Timespace becomes viscous and that invitation to imagine ways to organize story is the only possible material end. Quiana and I once discussed our common struggle with
overanalyzing what we say as we are saying it. She advised me, “That’s mostly what the group is about. Go with the flow. You don’t have time for regrets.” In conclusion then, I appeal for a reader to imagine possible productive purposes that have faded away by this representative dissertation. Diffraction may present tragedy for research writing, but it is of little concern to other aspects of this research, such as how the happenings of the research materialize embodied in the experiences of all involved.
EPILOGUE

Situating study at how things work is not a new idea. Questioning representationalism is not a new idea. Conceptualizing discourses as agentic in their materiality is not new. Exposing anthropocentrism is not new. Still, heightening research’s complicity in all of these processes is a rich project.

What was accomplished here? I ran out those processes on what seemed like an ethically sound and methodologically tight ethnographic analysis. Doing so allowed for contingency’s permanence to be exposed on both counts. In agential realist language, attending to the research writing apparatuses situated ethical stances based on the cuts of inclusion and exclusion, namely, how those cuts played out. In constructionist language, the students’ theorizing on silencing was agentic within and upon silencing in their schooling contexts and in educational research.

Regarding silencing, the obviousness of the overall interpretation that social change of silencing happens through movement of understanding planes along qualitative research discourses. In other words, research here claims to deepen understanding by deepening understanding. Poststructuralism was a way for me to turn in on that lineage and at least think differently about how the purpose of “understanding” and its movement are tied to personhood. As the film-making group stories soaked longer and longer in a poststructuralist soup the particularities of the imploded analyses became shrugged off the project. If complexity is an ethical end for poststructuralists, this effect of their method presents contradiction.

216
Learning to theorize myself in a posthumanist way, as an enactor of apparatuses, was instrumental to the implosion. Feminist science studies seems to be home in the tension between the human and the apparatus. Still, learning to theorize myself in a posthumanist way was also instrumental to transitioning from the implosion. I wrote the following passage after engaging in the reanalysis.

Organizing the account using a technique that I imagined as staking to practice, although still classical, was my best attempt at analyzing and writing on material terms. When practice emerged as central, the study and analysis still moved towards the discursive. I wonder what opportunities present for following the material during the design and analytic cuts. Because it inevitably reads as a reflection, my attempt to take a poststructural turn in this reconsideration remains classical. In this reconsideration I interpreted glimpses of lost opportunity, but no matter the research cut to take place at this point, the dissertation’s cuts and the study’s design cuts are all classical in nature. My analysis and attempt to revisit that analysis materialized to perform as classical, leading me conclude that any analytic layering from this point will behave as classical, because as quantum theory reminds us, once viewed as a wave, always behaves like a wave, and once viewed as a particle, always behaves as a particle. Reunderstanding silencing through an agential realist agency lens on the filmmaking did not occur given the materialities of classical research writing. This dissertation then, is not posthumanist like I had hoped. The futility of work to that end has challenged all that I have known in qualitative research. I called this moment “implosion” in an admittedly discursive effort to think about it…

I constructed a now abandoned chapter in response to this sense of fatality. My aim was to construct a representation that could be interpreted as either: critical constructionist/posthumanist; ethnographic/agential realist; classical/quantum. The idea was for it to allow for a multiplicity of readings along these dualisms. However, as materialized it seemed to privilege the posthumanist, flattening the youth and their accountings of silencing. In response I seasoned it towards a constructionist discussion chapter. The purpose of this decision was to center the youths’ theorizing as story instead of as object of scientific study. The problems that arose during the attempt to resolve ethnography and posthumanism by way of
representation will come along with me as I return to the dissertation to write a manuscript for a posthumanist audience (pun intended).

Revisiting the aim to strain the notion of silencing will help me to write some sense of what happened in this dissertation. Jackson and Mazzei’s (2009) call for interrogating critical and constructionist qualitative approaches with posthumanist assumptions certainly deconstructed the qualitative accounting. It also certainly exposed and questioned ontocritic assumptions. Jackson and Mazzei’s (2009) call for interrogating critical and constructionist qualitative approaches with posthumanist assumptions certainly deconstructed the qualitative accounting. It also certainly exposed and questioned ontoepistemological assumptions. Barad’s (2007) agential realist theory drew attention to the contingency of sense making by participatory ethnographic apparatuses. The “problem” of representationalism, though, lingered throughout all of the aspects of the study. Following the commitment that something must be said generated a paradox. Representing contingency of assumption through research writing proved a project both initially exciting and ultimately tepid. I will revisit the question of how these commitments might be carried out after embedding further in post-critical and posthumanist discourses, I am sure from the standpoints of each of those discourses. That methodological writing project will have to smolder while I fulfill the students’ and families’ publishing wishes, which since 2009 have been pushed aside by the insatiable impatience of academia.

Imploding qualitative projects that emerge with people in their immediate contexts is not a sustaining project for research. Instead of a solution in a White feminist sense, it is an approach to be learned in a set of approaches for specific purposes. The promise of posthumanist (re)consideration of qualitative accounts echoes in the conclusion of my writing passage introduced above. “…Greeting a state of destruction of what I learn to embody as morally just science, I am learning to embrace implosion as a tactic for tempering recklessness in research with youth.” In this case, layering a posthumanist approach served well to ignite
uncertainty and move both the material and the discursive into relationships that will inevitably always be becoming multiple and complex. For my own learning, my hope is that what I experienced as implosion might become generative or even beautiful through the multiplicity that is tied to contingency.

Agential realism does however somewhat reek of modernism, as the theory’s logic encases it in the physics search for a grand theory as well as its encasement of itself in what it frames as an historical progression. Quantum physics is positioned as an evolutionary step in a singular pathway of human understanding of world(s). Critical and constructionist social theory as well as the representations of lived experience that compose “silencing” research much more broadly than defined here lead me to believe that science, including quantum science or any other science named “best” in a hierarchy, excludes and will continue to exclude knowledges in service of its own adaptive dominance.
APPENDIX 1: READER’S GUIDE TO RECONCILIATION ATTEMPT

Methods of analysis

The reconciliation chapter design took place as follows.
1. Final chapter in the dissertation writing process
2. Informed by logic of the sonata form A, B, A# with consultation of a musician
   a. With A being the account comprised of the three analysis chapters, B being the reconsideration chapter, and A# being the reconciliation chapter
   b. A# brings back the principal subject matter from A in a new state of equilibrium.
   c. Same order of theme exposition having already taken place in A.
      i. Group formation/dissolution
      ii. Silencing
      iii. Isolation/pain
      iv. Practices/power/change
   d. Changed late in the writing to
      i. Silencing
      ii. Isolation/pain
      iii. Practices/power/change
      iv. Group formation/dissolution
   e. Listener sees new relationship among the elements in the order for the first time
      i. 1st read question: What is silencing? How has it been studied?
         1. Silencing studies theoretical traditions, purposes
         2. Write towards complexity with shared problem at the center
         3. Argue beauty in the concept widely defined because of complexity generated and allowed
      ii. 2nd read question: What new things can this say about silencing?
         1. Not in identity but in groupness
         2. Shared experiences and groupness operate at same time
         3. Resistance and audience
         4. Youthness and theorizing
   f. Some reconciliation of opposites.
      Humanism / Posthumanism
      Researcher / scholarship or educational research
      Editor / Ethnographer
      Student / Youth or child(ren)
      Thoughts / Happenings
      Relative Importance / Active reading
      Hierarchy / Multiplicity
      Etc / Emic
3. Data excerpts from
   a. Original code, “Exercising power and social change” (original themes 1, 3, 4)
   b. Matrix column, “Silencing in general” (original themes 1, 2)
   c. Parking lot of excisions from the account (original themes 2, 3)
4. Silencing scholarship
   a. Agency is not in people or moments but in material flow. Discursive approaches attach on at points that are discursive and influence the flow, then follow those to make major or insignificant. This view of agency sees them like any other moments, material moments, as only a small point in the flow of agency.
   b. Scholarship excerpts are discursive approaches, influencing the flow, to make ancillary to silencing as theorized by youth. Placed in order to better understand silencing as theorized by youth for the particular audience of a dissertation.

Adjustments made towards a multiple reading
1. Removed some first person subject terms (e.g. “I think,” “I”, replaced with … to mark location) (“we”, “us” was much more difficult to remove, which means film group or film-making group remained a subject). Inspiration from novels written with “a man” like “an (any other object)” – used “a child”, “a researcher”.
2. Removed individuals’ names unless nestled in an exchange (trouble when introducing a comment)
3. Verbed or adjectived some nouns (e.g. silencing)
4. Subjected against all subjecting rules learned in doctoral Fundamentals of Educational Research course that assumed a universal unifying paradigm.
5. The end of the chapter reads well as the end of the dissertation. Materializes as an ending that is an invitational beginning as well, responding to the youths’ call for continuation.
6. Returning to some names at the end of the chapter, connecting them to youth having strained silencing before, rehumanizes.

Adjustments made to explore aspects of voice other than humanist/posthumanist
1. Reduction of number of data points in effort to strengthen claiming confidence
2. Simplify towards silencing and movement of understanding as main ideas
3. Exploration of relational writing – relationships between relationships or between relationships and institutions.
4. Moving concepts around. E.g. moved isolation around in contexts in original theme 3. Could be read as defining the scope of the study, but could also be read as a more “true” account of isolation, with the account fixing a single possible reading of isolation. Was a great way to include more complexity of students’ views without cutting them out – a great way to arrange pieces on the cutting room floor.
5. When citing authorship was inevitable, trended towards positioning dominant authors and editors as background and ethnographers of color and edited volume chapter authors as knowledge-holding subjects.
6. Show my multiple standpoints and understandings through ways of writing that are performative and not necessarily expressive.
7. Resisted writing in methods, methodology, and contextualizing study design. Remained to study topic. Very difficult for me!
8. Positioning myself in ways other than a contained statement – in the storying of the design, in staking idea of accounting right away, in the youths’ comments, in showing my commitments. Just enough to answer anticipated questions, not enough to become about me.
APPENDIX 2: AUDIO TRACK LYRICS

"Radioactive"
by Imagine Dragons

Whoa, oh, oh
Whoa, oh, oh
Whoa, oh, oh.
Whoa

I'm waking up to ash and dust
I wipe my brow and I sweat my rust
I'm breathing in the chemicals

I'm breaking in, shaping up, then checking out on the prison bus
This is it, the apocalypse
Whoa

I'm waking up, I feel it in my bones
Enough to make my systems blow
Welcome to the new age, to the new age
Welcome to the new age, to the new age
Whoa, oh, oh, oh, whoa, oh, oh, oh, I'm radioactive, radioactive
Whoa, oh, oh, oh, oh, whoa, oh, oh, oh, I'm radioactive, radioactive

I raise my flags, don my clothes
It's a revolution, I suppose
We'll paint it red to fit right in
Whoa

I'm breaking in, shaping up, then checking out on the prison bus
This is it, the apocalypse
Whoa

I'm waking up, I feel it in my bones
Enough to make my systems blow
Welcome to the new age, to the new age
Welcome to the new age, to the new age
Whoa, oh, oh, oh, whoa, oh, oh, oh, I'm radioactive, radioactive
Whoa, oh, oh, oh, oh, whoa, oh, oh, oh, I'm radioactive, radioactive

All systems go, the sun hasn't died
Deep in my bones, straight from inside

I'm waking up, I feel it in my bones
Enough to make my systems blow
Welcome to the new age, to the new age
Welcome to the new age, to the new age
Whoa, oh, oh, oh, oh, whoa, oh, oh, oh, I'm radioactive, radioactive
Whoa, oh, oh, oh, oh, whoa, oh, oh, oh, I'm radioactive, radioactive

**Here's to never growing up**
_by Avril Levine_

Singing Radiohead at the top of our lungs
With the boom box blaring as we're falling in love
Got a bottle of whatever, but it's getting us drunk
Singing here's to never growing up

Call up all our friends, go hard this weekend
For no damn reason, I don't think we'll ever change
Meet you at the spot, half past ten o'clock
We don't ever stop, and we're never gonna change

Say, won't you stay forever stay
If you stay forever hey
We can stay forever young

Singing Radiohead at the top of our lungs
With the boom box blaring as we're falling in love
Got a bottle of whatever, but it's getting us drunk
Singing, here's to never growing up

We'll be running down the street, yelling "Kiss my ass!"
I'm like yeah whatever, we're still living like that
When the sun's going down, we'll be raising our cups
Singing, here's to never growing up

Oh whoa, oh whoa, here's to never growing up
Oh whoa, oh whoa, here's to never growing up

We live like rock stars, dance on every bar
This is who we are, I don't think we'll ever change (hell no!)
They say "just grow up", but they don't know us
We don't give a fuck, and we're never gonna change

Say, won't you say "forever"
Stay, if you stay forever
Hey, we can stay forever young
Singing Radiohead at the top of our lungs
With the boom box blaring as we're falling in love
Got a bottle of whatever, but it's getting us drunk
Singing, here's to never growing up

We'll be running down the street, yelling, "Kiss my ass!"
I'm like yeah, whatever, we're still living like that
When the sun's going down, we'll be raising our cups
Singing, here's to never growing up

Oh whoa, oh whoa, here's to never growing up
Oh whoa, oh whoa, here's to never growing up

Say, won't you say "forever"
Stay, if you stay forever
Hey, we can stay forever young

Singing Radiohead at the top of our lungs
With the boom box blaring as we're falling in love
I got a bottle of whatever, but it's getting us drunk
Singing, here's to never growing up

We'll be running down the street, yelling, "Kiss my ass!"
I'm like yeah, whatever, we're still living like that
When the sun's going down, we'll be raising our cups
Singing, here's to never growing up

Oh whoa, oh whoa, here's to never growing up
Oh whoa, oh whoa, (yeah raise your glass and say) here's to never growing up
Oh whoa, oh whoa, (da de da de da) here's to never growing up (no we're never growing up)
Oh whoa, oh whoa, here's to never growing up

"Clarity"
by Zedd
(feat. Foxes)

High dive into frozen waves where the past comes back to life
Fight fear for the selfish pain, it was worth it every time
Hold still right before we crash 'cause we both know how this ends
A clock ticks 'til it breaks your glass and I drown in you again

'Cause you are the piece of me I wish I didn't need
Chasing relentlessly, still fight and I don't know why

If our love is tragedy, why are you my remedy?
If our love's insanity, why are you my clarity?


If our love is tragedy, why are you my remedy?
If our love's insanity, why are you my clarity?

Walk on through a red parade and refuse to make amends
It cuts deep through our ground and makes us forget all common sense
Don't speak as I try to leave 'cause we both know what we'll choose
If you pull then I'll push too deep and I'll fall right back to you

'Cause you are the piece of me I wish I didn't need
Chasing relentlessly, still fight and I don't know why

If our love is tragedy, why are you my remedy?
If our love's insanity, why are you my clarity?


Why are you my clarity?
Why are you my remedy?
Why are you my clarity?
Why are you my remedy?

If our love is tragedy, why are you my remedy?
If our love's insanity, why are you my clarity?
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