GENDER, SUBJECTIVITY, AND THE MATERIAL-DISCURSIVE SCHOOL ENTANGLEMENT

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Dedication

To my husband and child for their unwavering patience and support during this process

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New materialist scholars argue that schools are important material-discursive entanglements for engendering, racializing, and subjectivizing human subjects. Despite this claim, there is a dearth of research that examines the perceptions that students have of the messages they are sent from schools about how to perform their gendered subjectivities in schools, particularly from a material feminist framework. This study used native photography through a post qualitative methodological framework to explore the messages that students' receive from their school related to subjectivity and gender. This study took seriously both the voices and perceptions of the participants and the significance of the material environment of the school.

Within the course of the research study, students both resisted and conformed to messages the school sent them about their subjectivities. Students conformed to many of the dominant ideas about gender, including privileging maleness. Students resisted the school's control of their bodies, as well as the school's attempts at rendering the student population homogenous. The students, though aware that there were differences in the way the school treated them based in gender and other identity markers, struggled to articulate those differences because the school sent a false message of equality. This false message of equality performed an erasure of their experiences of differences and denied them the language they needed to discuss the inequities they experienced.

The results of the analysis contribute to conversations about the ways in which school environments contribute to narratives about identity, particularly as it relates to

gender. Additionally, the way in which this post qualitative study unfolded has implications for research, including the importance of emergent design. Finally, the tensions that exist in using the new materialisms as a framework when studying schools led me to question the benefits of choosing to decenter humans in this type of research.

Gary Pike, Ph.D., Chair

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Dominant narratives, common understandings about the way things are, exist around a variety of identity markers. People use these narratives to understand their own identities and make decisions about how to act, but the narratives also dictate who is seen as the *other*. This othering contributes to oppressions. Sexism is one type of oppression that stems from dominant narratives about gender, sexuality, and identity, and it impacts people both in this country and worldwide (e.g., Cole, 2009; Grosz, 1994; hooks, 1994; Kenway & Willis, 1998; Lorde, 1984). Cole (2009) explains,

> Gender continues to be connected with some of the most exclusionary and discriminatory practices in the world, whether this relates to society, home, school or further and higher education. In almost every culture, 'being' 'male' or 'female,' however that might be interpreted, is used to 'define' people. These definitions inevitably involve inequalities. (p. 564)

The narratives about identity are passed down to children at an early age. As children grow, these dominant beliefs about gender and other aspects of identity come to seem as the natural order of things, and so they are often left unquestioned, which can lead to further oppressions (e.g., Apple, 2004; Kumashiro, 2002).

Dominant narratives about gender specifically, and identity more broadly, are transmitted to children through all of their interactions within our society. One particular part of our culture that is complicit in passing down dominant ideologies is school (e.g., Apple, 2004; hooks, 1994; Kenway & Willis, 1998; Kumashiro, 2002; Tyack, 1974). Apple (2004) argues, "Any analysis of the ways in which unequal power is reproduced and contested in society must deal with education" (p. vii). Ingrey (2012) agrees with this and explains, "Gender expression and performance are a part of everyone's everyday experience and cannot be separated from the curricular, pedagogical, and policy work

that goes on in public schools in North America" (p. 799). This passing down of dominant cultural norms in schools is often covert and unintentional, making it more difficult to study.

In order to understand the ways in which schools help reify dominant narratives about gender, we first must examine the ways in which children think about gender. Numerous studies have been done to understand how children conceptualize gender. Scholars have found that children understand gender in ways that match the dominant narratives about gender in this country. Literature shows that children view gender as binary (e.g., Banse, Gawronski, Rebetez, Gutt, & Bruce Morton, 2010; Davies, 1993, 2003; B. Martin, 2011), fixed (e.g., Pillow, Pearson, & Allen, 2015), and tied to biological sex (e.g., Oakley, 1972). Children also associate each gender with certain appearances and behaviors (e.g., B. Martin, 2011; Pillow *et al.*, 2015; Ryan, Patraw, & Bednar, 2013). This association then comes with the consequence that children expect members of each gender to behave in certain ways, and often *other* children who behave outside of expected societal norms. Additionally, studies have found that children take up ideas about power related to males and masculinity and perpetuate gender oppressions (e.g., Davies, 1993, 2003; B. Martin, 2011).

Previous research has informed theory about the specific ways in which schools are complicit in teaching and reinforcing dominant norms around gender. One way that schools have been found to reinforce gender norms is through aspects of the teaching force, including the mostly female makeup of the teaching force (e.g., Grumet, 1988), the ways in which teachers perform their own genders (e.g., Johnson, 2006; Mayo, 2014), and the preferential treatment that teachers have been found to give male students (e.g.,

Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). The children's books that are read at school have also been found to reinforce dominant narratives about gender (e.g., Nodelman, 2002; Taber & Woloshyn, 2011). Additionally, aspects of both the scripted and null curricula have been shown to influence students' ideas about gender and identity (e.g., Ramsey, Betz, & Sekaquaptewa, 2013; Ryan *et al.*, 2013). Expectations for student attire, whether that includes required uniforms or simply dress codes, also reify gender norms (e.g., Happel, 2013; E.W. Morris, 2005). The same is true for some cultural artifacts of schools, including prom and homecoming court (e.g., Pascoe, 2012; Smith, 2011). Furthermore, gendered spaces in schools, such as bathrooms and locker rooms, contribute to dominant understandings of gender, such as the beliefs that gender is binary, fixed, and tied to biological sex (e.g., Browne, 2004; Ingrey; 2012, Robbins & Helfenbein, 2016).

Although each of these studies about the ways in which specific aspects of schools reinforce gender norms are helpful in increasing our understanding of how children conceptualize gender, more studies are needed that look at school entanglements[1] as a whole and students' perceptions of the messages that those entanglements send. Recently, new materialist scholars have also called for an increase in research that considers the non-human matter within school spaces and the impact that it has on students. Snaza, Sonu, Truman, and Zaliwska (2016) insist, "We have to learn to attune to the world in ways that go far beyond humanist restriction and cease pretending that while humans are engaged in learning and teaching, all other things are mere

[1] Entanglement is a new materialist term Barad (2003, 2007) uses to underscore the interrelatedness of everything.

background" (p. xxii). It is the non-human "all other things" in the school space that this study takes seriously and examines as part of the overall entanglement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore late elementary school students' perceptions of the messages they receive at school about their gender and how to perform it. This study uses a material feminist/new materialist framework that pushed me to attend to all of the matter and bodies within the school environment, rather than just focusing on human discursive practices. This broadens the conversation of both what in a school can send messages to students and the types of messages that can be sent. This study has an emergent design, meaning that I was open to exploring ideas related to identity beyond gender, based on the interests of my participants.

Epistemological and Theoretical Framework

My own beliefs about the nature of gender and subjectivity, as well as my onto-epistemological[2] beliefs, differ from dominant beliefs on those topics, and they influenced the nature of this study. My understandings of gender and subjectivity are informed by a material feminist/new materialist framework. I will touch briefly on some of the important concepts within the new materialisms here, but a more thorough explanation of the framework will be included in my literature review.

Material Feminism/New Materialism

Although there is some variation both between material feminism and the new materialisms and within each framework, I am going to use both terms to encompass my personal onto-epistemological beliefs. Material feminism expands the deconstructive

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[2] A number of new materialist scholars (e.g., Barad, 2007) refer to the new materialisms as an *onto-epistemological* framework, because within a new materialist understanding, the nature of being and the nature of knowledge are inextricably intertwined and cannot be separated into distinct understandings.

nature of poststructuralism and postmodernism by adding a focus on the material. Barad (2003) makes clear that a material focus does not mean that the discursive should be ignored, but instead that the material and discursive are inextricably linked. Rather than privileging one or the other, scholars can gain more from viewing everything as material-discursive practices, in which "neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior" (p. 822).

Another main tenet of the new materialisms is that of entanglement. "Within a new materialist/material feminist framework, everything (both organic and inorganic) is in a continual state of interrelatedness" (Robbins, in press). These entangled relationships are a part of our continual becoming, rather than something that we enter into by choice. Barad (2007) explains, "To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence" (p. 155). In other words, the idea of the autonomous self is a false construction. Therefore, as I explain elsewhere, "to attend to the experience of an *individual*, one must pay attention to everything within the entanglement" (Robbins, in press).

Additionally, everything within an entanglement possesses the potential for agency (e.g., Barad, 2003, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Grosz, 2010; Robbins, 2016). This includes both living and non-living objects (or, as Barad refers to them, *actants*). Rather than agency being possessed by actants, agency emerges through interactions within the entanglement. This moves the focus from the *being* of each actant to a focus on *phenomena*, or the interactive *doing* between actants. This attention to what things do rather than what things are has important consequences for understandings of identity and subjectivity.

The new materialisms, in moving away from a focus on an autonomous self and toward the phenomena within entanglements, undo Cartesian dualisms. Rather than maintaining a "Cartesian dualism that separates minds from bodies and spiritual from material substances" (Coole, 2005, p. 125), the new materialisms posit that the mind and body as well as culture and nature are all one. This leads back to a focus on material-discursive practices.

Furthermore, material feminism, because of its interest in phenomena, believes that everything is in a constant state of emergence (e.g., Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2003, 2007). Therefore, actants, through their interactions, are always *becoming*, rather than *being*. Grosz (2010) explains, "The subject is transformed by and engaged through its acts, becomes through its acts" (p. 146). This has important implications for research that focuses on identity/subjectivity because the participants are always in a constant state of becoming, which means that even as I understand the participants and the school space, they will change and move on to something new. This is not to say that it is not useful to work toward understanding participants at one point in time, only that research done from this framework can never claim to arrive at absolute truth, because the moment you capture something, it has emerged into something else. However, I believe that it is still possible to use research as a way to contribute to conversations around identity and subjectivity in the hopes that those conversations might have a positive impact on practices in schools.

Subjectivity and Gender

A material feminist/new materialist framework that focuses on doing rather than being means that I view both subjectivity/identity and gender as a doing rather than an

essential part of being. This notion of an emergent and sometimes contradictory self fits with Butler's theory of gender as performativity (Butler, 1988, 1999). Additionally, because everything is entangled, context and material-discursive environment are important to understanding subjectivity (e.g., Barad, 2003, 2007; Grosz, 2010; Nentwich & Kelan, 2013). And, because context and interactions are always evolving, gender and subjectivity are always a becoming, rather than an essential characteristic.

Research Design

Methodological Framework

For this study, I used a post qualitative framework. In a material feminist understanding of everything as emergent and entangled, it is necessary to use a framework that allows for a messy and interconnected design. Within this framework, the researcher understands themselves as also participant (e.g., Somerville, 2007; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013); engages in continual reflection, reflexivity, and theorizing (Somerville, 2007; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017); allows the research process to be emergent (e.g., Lather, 2013; Somerville, 2007; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013); and avoids making objective truth claims (e.g., A.Y. Jackson, 2013; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2015).

Method

I chose to use native photography, combined with photo elicitation interviews (viewing photographs with participants and having them talk about the photos; Banks, 2001; Barton, 2015; Collier & Collier, 1967/1996) and focus group discussions. Native photography, which is a subset of visual anthropology (e.g., Collier & Collier, 1967/1996) is not considered a post qualitative methodology. However, I used a post qualitative framework to inform how I proceeded through native photography with my

participants. In native photography, participants are introduced to a topic and then directed to take photographs around that topic within their own environment. In this case, participants were asked to take photos of the messages that their school sends them about who to be and how to act. After photos were taken, I conducted unstructured photo elicitation interviews with participants while they chose a few photographs to represent their views on the topic. Then, participants and I worked together to analyze photos. There were two rounds of photo taking and analysis. Because I utilized a post qualitative framework, data analysis involved not only the data analysis conversations that I had with my participants, but was also comprised of the reflexive journaling and theorizing that I did throughout the course of the study as well as additional analysis that I did after the completion of the sessions with participants.

Research Design

Participants include 10 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students at a charter school in a Midwestern city. Because of the entangled nature of a post qualitative study, I, as the researcher, also considered myself to be a participant in the study. Meetings with the participants took place during an after-school program that ran over the course of three months. Data collection and data analysis are entangled in a post qualitative framework, and therefore both happened concurrently throughout the study. The study took place in ten sessions of the after school program, with each session running for an hour and a half.

Significance of the Study

Snaza and colleagues (2016) argue that “schools . . . are crucial material assemblages for racializing, engendering, and identifying human subjects” (p. xix). Despite this claim, there is a dearth of research that examines the perceptions that

students have of the messages they are sent about how to perform their gender in schools, particularly from a material feminist framework. This study takes seriously both the voices and perceptions of the participants and the significance of the material environment of the school. The results of the analysis will contribute to conversations about the ways in which school environments contribute to narratives about identity, particularly as it relates to gender. These are important conversations to have if we wish to combat dominant narratives about gender and address existing power imbalances.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

I approached this study through a material feminist/new materialist framework (I take aspects from scholars that self-identify in both areas, and because of the overlap and blurry boundaries between the two, I do not differentiate between them within this study). Because of the impact that this theoretical framework has on my understandings of identity and subjectivity as well as my methodological choices, this literature review begins with an explanation of that framework. Next, I will move on to literature related to my own views around gender, identity/subjectivity, performativity (as this is closely related to my beliefs about the nature of subjectivity and gender), and assemblage (because no aspect of subjectivity/identity exists in isolation). This is important because, within my theoretical framework, I am entangled within the research and the data. Therefore, my own views strongly impacted my work and may have influenced the views of my participants.

My specific interest in this study is in the messages that schools send students about how to be and how to act in relation to gender. My participants did not stay focused on only gender and took the research in different directions toward additional areas of identity/subjectivity. However, gender remained my focus, and other areas of identity/subjectivity were considered as part of a gender assemblage, rather than separate from it (assemblage is defined in the following section). Therefore, this literature review will include literature on the ways in which children understand gender and the ways in which schools are complicit in developing and maintaining this understanding.

Epistemological and Theoretical Frameworks

Material Feminist/New Materialist Framework

My own beliefs about the notions of subjectivity, gender, performativity, and assemblage stem from a material feminist/new materialist framework. Before I can talk about what this framework means for me, I feel that I first need to address some common misconceptions by discussing what material feminism and the new materialisms are not. First, new materialist ideas aren't actually "new." Some of the new materialist notions of interconnectedness, embodiment, and the attention to materiality exist in previous work, including that of some indigenous scholars (e.g., Immiboagurramilbun, 2005) and some feminist scholars of color (e.g., Anzaldúa, 1987). The new materialisms have brought some of these ideas together in ways that many scholars find useful for social justice work. The new materialisms/material feminisms have been critiqued for their whiteness. This is a different critique than the whiteness critique levied against poststructural feminism (for examples of the critique of the whiteness of poststructural feminism, see Collins, 2000; Frankenburg, 1993). The whiteness claim against the new materialisms has two main parts. The first is that the field of new materialism seems to be primarily populated by white[3] scholars out of North America and Western Europe (Hinton, Mehrabi, & Barla, 2015). The second is the concern that a theory that decenters humans will decenter and further marginalize populations that are already marginalized by systems of oppression (Snaza *et al*., 2016). Snaza *et al.* (2016) warn that "new materialisms can often problematically eradicate the subject masking its entanglements with settler colonialism and normative whiteness" (p. xviii). The critique of the makeup

[3] Many scholars capitalize the word "white" when referring to race. I choose not to capitalize "white" as a means of redistributing power.

of the field is a valid one, and hopefully more can be done to put work by these scholars into conversation with scholars from outside of white, Western European thought. As for the second concern, some scholars argue that the new materialisms are actually an excellent place from which to critique existing hierarchies. One reason for this is that a theory that decenters humans, decenters white, cisgender, straight, able-bodied (etc.) males, which levels the playing field and makes them easier to critique. Another is that the new materialisms place an increased emphasis on bodies. This means that studies based in the new materialisms have the opportunity to pay closer attention to the raced, gendered, classed bodies of its participants (Snaza *et al.*, 2016). The new materialisms insistence on the unity of mind and body can also change the conversation of how categories like race get defined and how oppressions occur within society (Hames-García, 2008; Hinton, Mehrabi, & Barla, 2015). Increasingly, queer scholars and scholars of color (e.g., Ahuja, 2015; Bost, 2008; Chen, 2012; Hames-García, 2008; Muñoz, 2015) are using the framework of new materialism to explore identity and combat racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Despite this, it is important not to set aside Snaza et al.'s warning about the dangers of falling into "settler colonialism and normative whiteness" (p. xviii). Instead, attention must be paid to structures of power and the impact they are having within entanglements on marginalized bodies.

Additionally, material feminism is not a total dismissal of what came before. In fact, material feminism retains the deconstructive nature of poststructural feminism. Alaimo and Hekman (2008) explain that material feminism works to "revise the paradigms of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and cultural studies in ways that can more productively account for the agency, semiotic force, and dynamics of bodies and

nature[4]" (p. 6). Material feminism is not a rejection of poststructural feminism; instead, it adds materiality to a theoretical base that is focused on discourse and the discursively constructed nature of subjectivity. This does not mean, however, that the material is privileged over the discursive. Instead, the two are considered to be impossible to disentangle from one another. Barad (2003) explains,

> The relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated/articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other. (p. 822)

So, material feminism is an attempt to include the embodied and material that were largely ignored by poststructural feminism, without discounting the importance of the discursive, particularly as it relates to power.

A central aspect of material feminism is the idea of the interconnectedness that exists between all things (living and non-living). New materialist and material feminist scholars have used a variety of terms to describe different notions of interrelatedness, including "entanglement" (Barad, 2007) and "mangle" (Hekman, 2010; Pickering, 1995). For the purposes of clarity, in this paper I will focus on Barad's (2007) new materialist notion of entanglement. According to Barad,

> To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. (p. ix)

This is important to my understanding of subjectivity and gender, because it undoes the notion of an autonomous self. Everything exists in relation, which means that context is

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[4] See later in this section for a more thorough explanation of the ways in which material feminism works to account for the agency and force of all matter.

always a necessary part of the understanding of *self*. This notion of self as collective rather than singular can get messy. Davies (2014a) clarifies that in thinking about the self and subjectivity, “we are neither the singular subjected being nor the collective terms of our subjection, but singular and plural, where singularity can refer to all of humanity, and plurality can refer to each one of us” (p. 35). However, Enlightenment notions of the self as autonomous continue to dominant Western culture, which can make an understanding of an interconnected *self* slippery and difficult to hold onto. Descartes’ notion of the subject has been accepted for so long that it is taken as an ontological given, when, in fact, as St. Pierre (2016) points out, “Descartes’s ontology did not exist before he wrote it” (p. 3). But, we have continued to treat this ontological creation as the natural order of things.

Along with the belief in the autonomous self, Enlightenment era notions of the Cartesian dualisms of the mind/body and culture/nature are also still strongly embedded in Western culture. Material feminism pushes back on these dualisms, insisting instead that the mind and body as well as culture and nature are one, rather than opposing sides of a dualism (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Jagger, 2015; Kirby, 2008). New materialism is a departure from the traditional “Cartesian dualism that separates minds from bodies and spiritual from material substances” (Coole, 2005, p. 125). This is possible because, with everything being interconnected, the focus moves away from individual objects and toward the intra-actions (a term Barad uses to emphasize the entangled nature of things) between actants within entanglements. “The primary ontological units are not ‘things’ but phenomena—dynamic topological reconfigurings/entanglements/ relationalities/(re)articulations. And the primary semantic units are not ‘words’ but

material-discursive practices through which boundaries are constituted" (Barad, 2003, p. 818). This focus on intra-actions leads to an understanding of subjectivity and gender that is always contextual and emergent. Additionally, this focus on phenomena, rather than being, extends the definition of agency. In the new materialisms, all matter, both living and non-living, is believed to possess the potential for agency (e.g., Bennett, 2010). This is because all objects are involved in intra-actions within entanglements, and it is through these intra-actions that agency emerges (e.g., Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Robbins, 2016). Because of this, it becomes important to attend to all actants within a school (organic and inorganic), rather than only the human ones.

The idea of emergence is also important in a material feminist framework. Everything, both living and non-living, is considered to be in a state of emergence. Coole and Frost (2010) explain that in a new materialist framework, "'matter becomes' rather than that 'matter is'" (p. 10). This constant state of becoming occurs because of the focus on phenomena, rather than on "things" (e.g., Barad, 2003; van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2012). Garner (2014) claims that this notion of becoming "provides a destabilization of being and the structures of power associated with it" (p. 30), making it a valuable tool for deconstructing the dominant narrative. This understanding of everything as *becoming*, rather than *being*, complicates attempts at research, because to study anything, it must be bracketed from its emergent state, with the understanding that it will have moved away from that point to further becoming by the time the research is done (Barad, 2003; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012).

An aspect of new materialism that adds to the tensions within research in general and this study in particular is the way in which it insists on a flattening of traditional

humanist hierarchies (e.g., Coole & Frost, 2010; Snaza *et al.*, 2016). The new materialisms treat humans as one part of an assemblage in which all things carry equal importance, rather than as the center of existence on this planet. However, although I embrace much of new materialist thinking, it can be difficult to fully take up this non-humanist notion while still doing research about human subjectivity with human participants. Although I hope that my research highlights the importance of the non-human matter within the material entanglement of schools, my primary concern is with how that matter influences the becomings of the humans within the entanglement, even as those humans influence the becomings of other actants within the entanglement.

Identity/Subjectivity

Before I discuss my own beliefs about the notion of gender, I need to address the notion of subjectivity. I am choosing to focus more heavily on subjectivity rather than identity because I believe (based in my material feminist framework) that subjectivity as it is often defined is more closely related to my beliefs about gender than identity[5] is. Weedon (1987) defines subjectivity as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 32). She goes on to say that subjectivity "is precarious, contradictory and in process" (p. 33). Alecia Jackson (2004) further explains that "poststructural feminist notions of subjectivity point to a notion of the 'self' that is fluid" (p. 673). Subjectivity, then, is not fixed but instead is always evolving. This is seen in Biesta's (2013) assessment that subjectivity is an "event" rather than a permanent state (p. 22). He explains that "subjectivity is . . . not something we can have or possess, but

[5] I do acknowledge that both subjectivity and identity are defined differently by different scholars, and there are some scholars that define identity in ways that more closely align with my personal beliefs (e.g., Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998, 2008).

something that can be realized, from time to time, in always new, open, and unpredictable ways" (p. 12). This fits with the new materialist understanding of the self as always in a state of becoming (e.g., Barad, 2007). In this constant state of becoming, subjectivities can change and even be contradictory. Alecia Jackson (2004) argues,

> A woman's subjectivity is not stabilized or essentialized by identity categories (e.g., race, class, gender)[6] because her ways of existing in the world can shift depending on social relations, historical experiences, and material conditions. Poststructural theories of subjectivity capture the active process of taking up certain subject positions in an ongoing process of becoming—rather than merely being—in the world. (pp. 673-674)

This means that there is not fixed essence of an individual; people are in a continual process of negotiating and renegotiating their subjectivities, sometimes in conflicting ways. In contrast to the emergent and sometimes contradictory nature of subjectivity, I see identity as being more fixed and based in categories established by the dominant narrative (e.g., race and sex). Biesta (2013) explains that he sees identity as having "more to do with the ways in which we identify with existing orders and traditions" (p. 18). Subjectivity, on the other hand, allows space to push back against dominant narratives around ways of being.

There are some notions of identity that push back on dominant understandings. Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, and Cain (1998) argue for a positional notion of identity. In their definition, identity is not fixed, but rather it changes based on context. This fits with Nentwich and Kelan's (2014) assertion that "the fluidity and *flexibility* of identity constructions as well as its *context specificity* have gained importance [emphasis in original]" (p. 123). Similar to a poststructural notion of subjectivity, this allows for the

[6] I disagree with Jackson's (2004) listing of "gender" as an identity category. I think that "sex" should have been part of the identity category list instead. Based on her other work about the notion of gender, I believe that she views gender as Butler (1988) does, which is to say as emergent and not fixed, which is at odds with her listing it as an identity category here.

possibility of multiple identities that can be contradictory. Furthermore, like the new materialisms, the theory of positional identities embraces the idea of identity as a *doing* instead of an essential *being*. Holland *et al.* (1998) explain, “We are interested in identities, the imaginings of self in worlds of action, as social products; indeed, we begin with the premise that *identities are lived in and through activity* [emphasis added]” (p. 5). Although this notion of identity being contextual and based in action does fit with my beliefs about the changing nature of subjectivity, Holland and colleagues’ notion of identity is still reliant on the notion of an autonomous, human centered self rather than a view of everything as part of an entanglement (that includes a focus on the importance of non-human objects), which is an important part of a new materialist understanding.

The material feminist notion of subjectivity departs from notions like the positional theory of identity and the original poststructuralist ideas of Weedon in its attention to the material body and interactions with other actants in its entanglement. Weedon (1987) makes the claim that subjectivity is “constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we *think or speak* [emphasis added]” (p. 33). The focus, for her, is on discursive practices. Material feminism strives to move the center of attention to material-discursive practices. Subjectivity then becomes an embodied becoming, always entangled with both other matter and discourse. Braidotti (2002) reminds us that part of the material-discursive entanglement is power. She claims that subjectivity is “a process, which is co-extensive with both power and the resistance to it” (p. 75). It is important as we take up the material not to let go of the significance of power and the ways in which it intra-acts with bodies. Nentwich and Kelan (2014) reiterate that “societal *structures* and *hierarchies* as well as inequalities are important to explain how identity can be done in a

certain interaction [emphasis in original]" (p. 122). Power, then, becomes a part of any context, any entanglement in which identities are produced.

The reliance of identity/subjectivity on interaction with and in the environment means that context is incredibly important. Within this understanding, the material school space helps to construct students' identities. At the same time, students are constructing the identities of the space. Holland *et al.* (2008) explain that "spaces . . . imbue and are imbued by the kinds of persons who frequent them" (p. 150). However, in a new materialist understanding, it is not simply persons who co-construct (and are co-constructed by) spaces, but everything, both living and non-living, in the entanglement (which may not be limited to what is physically within the space). This becomes tied up with both subjectivities and notions of power. Foucault and Rabinow (1984) argue, "Space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power" (p. 252). Ingrey (2013) agrees, "Space and power are linked, behaving in similar ways, in the process of subjectivation" (p. 176). Since identity/subjectivity is a continual process of becoming, everything in an entanglement is also always becoming, including spaces/places. As an actant within an entanglement changes, so too does the rest of the entanglement. Therefore, a study that examines students' identities should attend to their context and their entanglements with material and place.

Gender

The above understanding of subjectivity is an important precursor to an understanding of gender, because a material feminist notion of gender relies on the idea that gender, as a part of subjectivity, is not fixed, but rather is always being renegotiated. Davies (1993) explains, "The concept of subjectivity, subject position and

subjectification and speaking subject are the conceptual tools developed in poststructuralist writing to elaborate a different understanding of the processes through which being a (gendered) person is achieved" (p. 8). In understanding subjectivity as fluid, in relation, and always becoming, we can come to see gender in the same way.

Material feminism draws on Butler's notion of performativity in understanding gender. According to Butler, gender is performative; it is based in what we do, rather than who we are. For Butler, gender is not a fixed quality of an individual. Instead, Butler (1999) explains that "gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (p. 34). Gender, then, does not pre-exist a 'doing' by a subject. Gender, like subjectivity, is a becoming, rather than a being. Butler (1988) claims,

> There is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. (p. 522)

Holland and colleagues (2008) agree "that gender is more appropriately treated as a process or a practice than as a static attribute or an enduring characteristic" (p. 153). Because it is comprised of different acts, gender, like subjectivity, can sometimes be contradictory and is always evolving. This moves away from dominant narratives in this country about gender as being fixed as well as being tied to biological sex. Alecia Jackson (2004) explains, "Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity works to unsettle the stabilizing gender categories that attempt to normalize and regulate people" (p. 675). This feminist notion of gender performativity is still largely limited to academic circles in this country, as dominant narratives about the binary and fixed nature of gender are pervasive and entrenched in our society (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Butler has been critiqued for theorizing a notion of gender that is discursive and ignores the material (for Butler's response to this critique, see Butler, 1993). A material feminist understanding of gender moves to thinking about the performance of gender as a material-discursive practice. To be fair, Butler (1988) does acknowledge the body within the notion of the performance of gender. She describes gender as "instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, [it] must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (p. 519). This recognizes the body's place in the performance of gender, but the critique of Butler has more to do with the material aspects of the entanglement that influence the embodied gender performance. For example, in Butler's theory of gender performativity, it may seem that biology is completely unimportant or that gender can play out in the same way in any individual, which I (and I believe material feminism) would argue is not the case. Grosz (1994) points out that "gender is not an ideological superstructure to be added to a biological base. Masculine or feminine gender cannot be neutrally attributed to bodies of either sex" (p. 58). Butler (1993) does acknowledge this (to an extent) in *Bodies That Matter*, but argues that "sex" in itself still has a cultural history and is a construction. This fits with a material feminist understanding of culture and nature as not being opposing forces (Jagger, 2015; Kirby, 2008). "Sex" is both nature and culture, and it has an impact on the performance of gender in material-discursive ways. Grosz (1995) further explains the material-discursive practice of bodies; "bodies speak, without necessarily talking, because they become coded with and as signs. They speak social codes. They become intextuated, narrativized; simultaneously, social codes, laws, norms, and ideals become incarnated" (p. 35). Bodies,

therefore, cannot be ignored when considering gender any more than the social forces that construct the gendered understanding of those bodies.

This understanding of gender means that the gender of my participants will be emergent and shifting. This has implications for my research process. Nentwich and Kelan (2014) explain,

> If gender is not seen as a fixed category that can be defined prior to the research conducted, the actual practices of constructing or performing that identity have to be analysed. Instead of taking women and men at face value, researchers have to be careful not to reify everyday taken-for-granted assumptions about gender, but to critically investigate how they actually came into being. (p. 123)

To this end, the students and I explored together aspects of their material-discursive environment that influenced their gender performances. I did not automatically assign genders to them in the process of collecting or analyzing data, but instead allowed them to express their emergent, gendered selves using their own words, images, and doings. However, as children tend to see gender as fixed and binary, my participants viewed themselves, each other, and me as having specific and enduring gender assignments.

Performance/Performativity

The notion of performativity that I will be focused on came initially from Butler. For Butler, performativity is a way to talk about gender and subjectivity that prevents thinking about an 'essence' in individuals and instead focuses on the emergent and contradictory nature of being (or in this case, becoming). Often, in poststructural feminism, performativity is used strictly as a way of understanding gender. For example, Nentwich and Kelan (2014) define performativity as "the process through which gendered subjects are constituted by regulatory notions within a heterosexual matrix" (p. 123). However, in the way that Butler speaks about performativity, it could be applied to

many aspects of an individual's subjectivity. Butler (1999) claims, "My argument is that there need not be a 'doer behind the deed,' but that the 'doer' is variably constructed in and through the deed" (p. 195). According to Butler, then, a person *does*, rather than a person *is*. Because of this, an individual is always in the process of becoming. With each intra-action of an individual within an entanglement, subjectivity emerges.

This is useful for deconstructing dominant narratives around a variety of identity categories, including gender (which the dominant narrative lumps in with sex). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) point out, "Subjects' performative acts both reproduce *and* contest the foundations and origins of stable identity categories" (p. 67). They go on to explain that "performativity works to unsettle the stabilizing gender categories that attempt to normalize and regulate people, and accentuates a process of *repetition* that produces gendered subjectivity [emphasis in original]" (p. 67). Although individual's performative acts might at one moment reify gender stereotypes, the fact that in the next moment there is a new production of gendered subjectivity fights dominant narratives about the fixed nature of all identity categories.

Performativity is a useful concept for material feminism because it moves the focus from individual subjects to, as Barad suggests, *phenomena*. The issue with Butler's notion of performativity is its reliance on discursive practices. Barad (2003) offers an alternative understanding of performativity for material feminists. She explains, "Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real" (p. 802). It is Barad's contention that the notion of performativity necessarily moves the focus to material-

discursive practices and away from a focus purely on language. In a new materialist understanding of performativity, discourses can only be performed through specific material contexts and agents (Barad, 2003; Ringrose & Rawlings, 2015). Therefore, the entire entanglement impacts performance.

Intersections/Assemblages

Oppressions exist for every socially constructed binary around identity markers (e.g., male/female, white/non-white), and some people experience multiple oppressions in combination. Segal and Chow (2011) assert, “Individuals occupy intersecting positions in social structures. Those positions represent the socially constructed multiple inequalities of everyday life, an inequality regime in which diverse women and men are privileged or oppressed in many ways, sometimes simultaneously” (p. 3). Therefore, in order to better navigate a space of intersecting oppressions, many feminists began to embrace the concept of intersectionality (e.g., Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Puar, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Intersectionality, Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) point out, was a terminology that was created to “focus attention on the vexed dynamics of difference and the solidarities of sameness in the context of antidiscrimination and social movement politics” (p. 787). This is important, because some individuals experience oppressions that are based on a combination of identity markers, rather than simply the sum of the oppressions for each identity marker. For example, Collins (2000) argues that Black women experience a unique oppression that stems from the combination of being female and Black that is different than simply adding the oppression received for being female to the oppression received for being Black.

Although acknowledging the problems with oppressions based on multiple identity markers is vital, some material feminists believe that intersectionality may not be the way to do so. For example, Puar (2013) points out,

> Many of the cherished categories of the intersectional mantra—originally starting with race, class, gender, now including sexuality, nation, religion, age, and disability—are the products of modernist colonial agendas and regimes of epistemic violence, operative through a Western/Euro-American epistemological formation through which the notion of discrete identity has emerged. (p. 54)

She believes that continuing to privilege these binary categories (even in the act of fighting oppressions) can support dominant Western narratives about identity. She cites Grosz (1994) in arguing that intersectionality is "a gridlock model that fails to account for the mutual constitution and indeterminacy of embodied configurations of gender, sexuality, race, class, and nation" (p. 56). Intersectionality, she believes, supports a notion of identity as fixed and essential, rather than emergent. [7] However, the need to address oppressions based in a combination of identity markers remains. To address this, Puar, as well as some other material feminists, embraces the notion of assemblage.

Assemblage theory, Puar claims, "foreground[s] no constants but rather 'variation to variation' and hence the event-ness of identity" (p. 58). She contends that this is important because "categories—race, gender, sexuality—are considered events, actions, and encounters between bodies, rather than simply entities and attributes of subjects" (p. 58). This returns to an understanding of subjectivity as phenomena, as becoming rather

[7] Some scholars argue against this interpretation of intersectionality (e.g., Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013; Cho *et al.*, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2006), claiming that intersectionality implies an identity that is dynamic and evolving, rather than fixed. Yuval-Davis (2006) acknowledges that usage of intersectionality varies widely and that some scholars do use intersectionality in a way that implies that identity markers are fixed and additive within intersections. However, even more fluid notions of intersectionality do not fit my onto-epistemological beliefs as well as assemblage, as I will explain later in this section.

than being. Puar (2007) is also concerned that intersectionality implies that identity categories exist as separate and distinct entities. She asserts,

> As opposed to an intersectional model of identity, which presumes that components—race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, religion—are separable analytics and can thus be disassembled, an assemblage is more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency. (p. 212)

Puar believes that viewing identity as separate components leads to an obsession with difference. Rather than fighting oppressions, Puar believes that this focus on difference reinforces dominant structures. It is this concern over a preoccupation with difference that leads Puar to champion an exploration of assemblage theory when considering oppressions based in multiple identities. She asserts that "assemblages encompass not only ongoing attempts to destabilize identities and grids, but also the forces that continue to mandate and enforce them" (p. 63). In this way, assemblage theory not only moves away from binaries, but also fights the power structure that created them. Puar believes that this can expand the ways in which oppressions based on a combinations of traits can be understood, while at the same time pushing back on dominant beliefs about the nature of identity.

The notion of assemblage that Puar champions comes from Deleuze and Guattari (1987). In understanding this notion of assemblage, it is important to note that in the original French, the term they use is "agencement," which focuses more on relations of patterns than the English term "assemblage," which is more focused on content. These relations are always moving and evolving, as subjectivities change and evolve. Additionally, within an assemblage, different subjectivities may move to the foreground in different situations and entanglements, such as the context of school. Furthermore, within this notion of assemblage, there are no independent beings. The use of

assemblages acknowledges the interrelatedness of human and non-human matter. This focus on phenomena and interrelatedness is something that is not captured as well by notions of intersectionality. Puar (2007) argues that this focus on interrelated performance can help when considering something like the oppression that non-white men who wear turbans face. She claims that in cases such as this, "we are pressed to rethink race, sexuality, and gender as concatenations, unstable assemblages of revolving and devolving energies, rather than intersectional coordinates" (p. 195). The performance of wearing a turban becomes read as part of the body and changes how the body is viewed and subsequently oppressed.

One risk with assemblage theory is to focus so much on the evolving nature of the entangled subjectivities that an understanding of the oppressions that individuals face based on certain identity markers is lost. It is a double bind that comes up in deconstructive paradigms such as poststructuralism and postmodernism—it is crucial that we deconstruct a binary and dualist understanding of identity, but doing so can obstruct the view of the oppressions that individuals still face. St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) caution that in the face of decentering notions such as assemblage theory, some feminists have been "pointing out that they prefer not to be decentered and, therefore, silenced once again" (p. 7). Although Puar is a scholar of color, it may be a mark of my own white privilege that I so easily embrace theories that decenter humans and therefore human experience. It is something that I need to be mindful of as I move through this process. Attending to the oppressions that are occurring needs to remain a centered concern, even when embracing assemblage theory.

Dominant Views of Gender Taken up by Children

I understand that the beliefs that the children in my study have about identity and gender may be very different from my own. Therefore, in this next section, I will review the literature that discusses the ways in which children have been found to conceptualize gender. The literature indicates that children tend to view gender in ways that it are defined by the dominant narrative in this country. That includes messages about gender as being binary, fixed, and tied to biological sex, as well as messages about how gender should be performed and the unequal power dynamic that comes with certain gender roles.

Gender as Binary

Within the United States context, gender is seen as a binary, with male and female being the distinct (and only) available categories for identification. West and Zimmerman (1987) explain that "in Western societies, the accepted cultural perspective on gender views women and men as naturally and unequivocally defined categories of being" (pp. 127-128). These two options create a binary into which everyone is expected to fit. Budgeon (2013) explains this binary relationship further:

> In western contexts morphological variations apparent in human bodies become meaningful through the imposition of a binary construct which sorts these variations into only two socially and legally recognized gender statuses – 'man' and 'woman'. Despite the diverse talents, sexual preferences, identities, personalities, varied interests and ways of interacting exhibited by individuals, difference collapses into a binary relation of difference. (p. 318)

In the United States, this understanding of gender being divided into two distinct categories was brought over by European explorers. Diaminah (2012) explains that "when the conquistadors came to the Americas, one of the first things they did and documented was killing those whose gender expressions were outside the male/female

binary" (p. 390). What this tells us is that the belief in the binary nature of gender is not shared by all cultures, but instead is tied to the history of European dominance in our country. Despite increasingly visible evidence that dominant views on gender are insufficient in capturing the reality of people's lived experiences, the binary persists. Lorber (2000) argues that "while racial, ethnic, class and sexual divisions have been significantly challenged, the belief that gender divisions are normal and natural is still an underlying frame for modern social life" (p. 80). Challenges to long held beliefs about the binary nature of gender have done little to sway the dominant narrative on the topic. Krylova (2016) even argues that although scholars have pushed back against heteronormativity, little has been done to question the gender binary inside a heterosexual frame. Therefore, belief in the binary persists.

In her research on children and their understanding of gender, Davies (2003) found that even young children hold the dominant belief of gender as a binary. She argues that as children take up the language and discourses of their culture, they also take up the social understandings that are embedded within that culture. Davies goes on to claim that in learning English in the United States, children also learn "part of what is 'obvious and known to everybody' . . . that people are either male or female. In learning the discursive practices of their society children learn that they must be socially identifiable as one or the other" (p. 2). As a part of that understanding, children learn to categorize both themselves and the other people that they see and interact with.

This learning takes place early. "By the age of three years, children readily distinguish between males and females, and associate certain objects (e.g. trucks) more strongly with one gender (boys) than with the other" (Banse *et al.*, 2010, p. 298).

Researchers have seen evidence of this understanding in their work around young children and gender (e.g., Davies, 2003; B. Martin, 2011). Through her observations of preschool children, Barbara Martin (2011) found that children come to school with a sense of themselves as "boy" or "girl" that is then reinforced at school. She argues that "children in early years classes learn rules for gendered behavior from each other" (p. 22). She explains that this happens because children are "observing what established children do and joining in with play" (p. 22). In this way, children reinforce dominant gender beliefs that they bring to school. This is further reinforced by teachers when they do not step in to disrupt the ways in which dominant ideas about gender show up in children's activities and choices for play.

Once children have adopted dominant ideas about gender, they feel invested in maintaining them. Davies (1993) found this in her research with elementary school aged children and their beliefs about gender. She explains,

> The children, having taken up the dominant heterosexist discourse as their own, move rapidly to maintain that discourse as valid, without necessarily seeing how forcefully they close down the possibility of agency for those who step outside the categories legitimated by that discourse. (p. 35)

Markowitz and Puchner (2016) found that even when children were asked to create work that challenge gender stereotypes, they continued to reify the gender binary. This is not a specific weakness of children, but instead is the common response of people who have taken up the dominant discourse. They accept it as their own and defend it as such. This adherence to dominant views can confound educators who try to use books and materials that defy dominant beliefs. In talking about researcher attempts to introduce stories that break gender stereotypes, Abad and Pruden (2013) discuss the fact that "some [scholars have found] that children tend to misremember/distort gender-*atypical* information to

make it consistent with gender stereotypes" (p. 2). Children cling so strongly to gender stereotypes that they rewrite what they have heard to fit the dominant views on gender.

Gender as Fixed

Gender, in addition to being a binary, is also seen as fixed. Once a side of the male/female binary has been assigned to an individual (usually at birth), that category is considered a permanent feature of the individual. While many feminist scholars view gender as fluid and sometimes contradictory (e.g., Butler, 1999; Davies, 1993, 2003), dominant culture in this country continues with the discourse that gender is stable over time. Researchers have found that children believe in the fixed nature of both their own gender and the gender of others. Oakley (1972) explains, "Research has recently indicated that children definitely conceive of their gender identities as fixed and unchangeable in the same way and at the same time as they are able to understand the invariable identity of physical objects" (p. 180). Children understand their gender as being an innate part of themselves, meaning that once their gender has been established (generally at birth), they believe that they are supposed to adhere to it. Davies (2003) found that this idea held true in her work with preschool aged children. She asserts that "children learn to take up their maleness or femaleness as if it were an incorrigible element of their personal and social selves" (p. xii).

This sense that children have of their own gender as fixed translates into understanding the fixedness of gender as a general concept. Stryker (2016) expands on this understanding, stating,

> Gender subjectivizes individuals in such a manner that socially constructed categories of personhood typically come to be experienced as innate and ontologically given. It is a system filled with habits and traditions, underpinned by ideological, religious, and scientific supports

> that all conspire to give bodies the appearance of a natural inevitability. (p. 39)

The idea that gender has a "natural inevitability" also occurs early for children. Pillow, Pearson, and Allen (2015) studied gender stereotyping in 3- to 5-year olds, and they claim that "by age 5 years children understand that gender is stable over time" (p. 443). This means that once a child has identified someone as male, they carry the assumption that the individual will always be male, with all of the behaviors that are thought to accompany that designation.

Gender as Biological Sex

Despite work by many feminist scholars to separate the term "gender" from the term "sex," dominant culture still often lumps the terms together or uses them interchangeably. For a child, this experience of gender and sex as being linked begins at birth. Oakley (1972) points out that "a newborn baby is not only classified immediately by sex: it is also assigned a gender" (p. 173). Differential treatment on that basis begins immediately. When my child was born and declared a girl, the hospital began to outfit her in variety of pink hats. They were immediately ready to help her outward performance of gender match her biological sex, without any thought that there might be another option. Nentwich and Kelan (2014) agree that "when a baby is born, the label 'girl' or 'boy' is assigned to the baby and this calls into being the baby as a gendered being" (p. 123). The child, having been labelled with a sex and gender, begins to receive different treatment, depending on which label they received. According to Butler (1997),

> The doctor who receives the child and pronounces – 'It's a girl' – begins that long string of interpellations by which the girl is transitively girled: gender is ritualistically repeated, whereby the repetition occasions both the risk of failure and the congealed effect of sedimentation. (p. 49)

Butler is saying, then, that pink hats are just the beginning of the "girling" that takes place. And very young children are not in a position to resist this gendering. Generally, it is not until the child is older and can begin to exhibit their own preferences that a divide may be seen between the child's sex and their gender. But those cases are not common. Butler explains that "the presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it" (p. 9). Once society has begun "girling" (or "boying") a child, the child feels obligated to continue the behaviors associated with that gender (which is tied to their biological sex).

Because of this, some scholars argue that sex and gender have been so linked in dominant discourse that there is no way to uncouple them. Kimberley Reynolds (2002) argues that the terms "masculinity" and "femininity" should be dispensed with because they are "so closely bound up with the biological categories of male and female as to make it virtually impossible to free them from associations with sex" (p. 100). Such a powerful dominant discourse is difficult to push back against, especially for young children, who often have choices made for them about what to wear and who and what to play with.

Performing Gender Roles

Part of what makes the assignment of gender to an individual matter is that there is a dominant cultural understanding of how people who are assigned to each gender role should act. Ryan, Patraw, and Bednar (2013) explain, "Children are either boys or girls, and those labels come with a long list of behaviors and ways of being that you have to do 'right,' especially in school" (p. 84). And children who do not perform their gender

"right" often face stigma and teasing. Messages about how to be a boy and how to be a girl begin early (for example, my child receiving pink hats in the hospital). In her book *Sex, Gender and Society*, Oakley (1972) describes research findings in which parents treated their newborn children differently based on the assigned sex and gender of the child. The differences were subtle, but they lay the foundation for differing expectations for behavior that boys and girls experience as they grow. Children pick up on the social cues for what is expected of their gender from an early age. Pillow and colleagues (2015) found that "by 3 years of age, children associate different toys, activities, occupations, and traits with each gender" (p. 454). In school, children use these gender expectations to police each other. During one observed playtime session, Barbara Martin (2011) witnessed a boy telling a girl that she was not allowed to dress up in the football uniform because it was for boys only. Mayeza (2017) found that children policed each other on the playground, not only telling each other what boys and girls should do, but also teasing children who stepped outside of dominant narratives about masculinity and femininity. I observed similar behaviors in my time as a teacher. In one third grade class, a group of girls came to tell me that a boy was reading a *Strawberry Shortcake* book. They then asked me to explain to the boy that the book was for girls. They were horrified when I told them that books were not gendered and that anyone could read any book. Children often cling to dominant discourses around gender, even when adults try to deconstruct them.

Beyond the expectations for behaviors associated with each gender, there is also an expectation for heterosexual behavior – girls will be sexually attracted to boys and boys will be sexually attracted to girls. In her research on the behaviors of elementary

school aged children related to gender, Renold (2000) found that at school there are constant "pressures of compulsory heterosexuality, where to be a 'normal' girl or boy involves the projection of a coherent and abiding heterosexual self" (p. 309). So, an interest in the opposite sex becomes an important part of the "right" way to express one's gender. And, performing gender the "right" way supports the idea of attraction to the opposite sex. To this end, Quinn and Meiners (2009) make the point that "heteronormativity and homophobia are weapons of sexism—the fear of being called queer supports normative gender performances" (p. 7). Children feel compelled to act in the "correct" way for their gender because to do otherwise calls into question not only their gender, but also their sexuality (e.g., Bhana, 2016; Heasley & Crane, 2012; Renold, 2007).

Gender as Power

A more subtle, but no less important message that children receive from the dominant narrative about gender is that gender roles have a relationship to power. Brod and Kaufman (1994) explain that "gender is a system of power and not just a set of stereotypes or observable difference between men and women" (p. 4). This power imbalance creates a system in which women often receive unequal treatment. Not only are people expected to behave differently based on gender, but the treatment that they receive also differs. The difficulty with discussing how children understand the relationship of gender to power is that it is not something that is commonly discussed. The power relationships embedded in gender relations are part of a larger system of oppressions and inequalities that exist in binaries such as white/non-white, rich/poor, U.S. born/foreign. Kimberly Reynolds (2002) points out that "ultimately gender is a

system based on unequal power relations *associated* with the relations between men and women, but not exclusive to them" (p. 100). Many other unequal power relations exist simultaneously, often creating situations in which individuals can both be oppressed and be an oppressor (though sometimes they are aware of neither). Within the male/female binary, it is the males that have greater access to power. Davies (2003) claims that "the essence of the male-female binary, however, is that power resides in the male. The power imbalance will go on being constituted through any discourse which holds the binary intact" (p. 165). More than simply being male, some scholars argue that it is masculine behavior (which is expected of males) that is associated with power. Kimberly Reynolds (2002) argues that "it seems that it is not the fact of being male that provokes masculine behavior, but the condition of power" (p. 100). According to Reynolds, women who behave in masculine ways have access to some, but not all, of the power available to masculine men. Additionally, other identity markers can complicate who has access to power. For example, Pyke (1996) claims that women of a higher socio-economic class can have access to power over lower-SES males.

Children receive messages about who has power and who does not from all parts of society, including school. Davies (2003) claims,

> The knowledge of this [power] is embedded in the narrative structures of books and of play, in the very discursive practices through which each child's identity is formulated and sustained. This knowledge becomes embedded in the bodies of the children, not only through the attitudes they develop towards themselves either as active agents who can and should act powerfully in the public sphere, or as sexualised beings whose agency is profoundly inhibited through the positioning of themselves as the passive recipients of another's gaze. (p. 164)

Children become a part of dominant systems of oppression without conscious knowledge of it. Children start to expect girls to be in subordinate positions and begin to treat each

other accordingly. Davies (1993) found evidence of this in her research with elementary school aged children. In her conversations with students, she discovered that the boys frequently placed themselves in a position of dominance in the conversation. She believes that the boys had an understanding of male dominance and power, and they used the "knowledge of social structure to gain ascendancy over the girls and to dismiss the everyday evidence of their competence" (p. 72). Unfortunately, this continued despite Davies attempts at deconstructing these power structures. Such knowledge is so deeply embedded in children (and our culture) that it is difficult to dismantle.

The Role of Schools in "Teaching" Gender

In understanding how children view gender, it is important to consider the role that school plays in the development of children's understanding. This is both because schooling is mandatory for children and because children spend so much of their lives in schools. Kenway and Willis (1998) explain, "Gender is deeply and often unconsciously ingrained within people's psyches and behavior and deeply inscribed within school cultures and education systems" (p. xiii). Additionally, schools exist within and reflect dominant narratives about gender and power, among other things. Lesko (1988) points out that "the fact that schools are paternalistic organizations makes their overt or covert attempts to shape the construction of female bodies and thereby, female identities, an arena of concern" (p. 124). Schools not only teach children how to participate in oppressive structures (often covertly), but they also oppress and discipline students based on various identity markers, including gender.

Teacher Performance as Role Model

Teachers play a major role in students' lives, particularly in earlier years, when students spend all day with the same teacher. Therefore, it is important to understand the ways in which teacher behaviors reinforce dominant narratives about gender. The first way in which teaching sends messages about gender stems from the makeup of the teaching force. McCormick (2007) explains that there is a "structural and systemic gendering of roles in schools" (p. 2). Numerous scholars have written about the "feminization" of the teaching force that occurred with the advent of the common school (e.g., Falter, 2016; Grumet, 1988; Tyack, 1974). Although the numbers are shifting slightly, the majority of teachers are women, and the majority of administrators are men. Falter (2016) argues that men use their positions of power to discipline and control women teachers in an effort to maintain the patriarchy. This, in and of itself, gives students messages about who has access to power.

Furthermore, the ways in which teachers perform their own genders sends messages to students about the ways in which gender should be performed. In his research on gay, male teachers in the classroom, Mayo (2014) complained that the male teachers, whether or not they were "out," felt that they needed to behave in very traditionally masculine ways. More than one of the teachers reported feeling the need to talk in a "deep voice" (p. 459). Because of his findings, Mayo argued that "hegemonic masculinity is promoted and reproduced in school when gay teachers feel compelled to act more like a stereotypically masculine man" (p. 460). He went on to discuss that this can be especially problematic when these teachers encourage their male students to display the same behaviors. Rofes (2012), in writing about his own teaching experiences

as a gay male, admits that he has "made decisions that affix my position within masculine norms" (p. 108). This is not to say that it is not within the rights of male teachers to do so, especially when keeping their job may be at stake, only that when most male teachers behave in traditionally accepted masculine ways, it sends messages to students about what being male should look like and how it should be performed.

Similarly, female teachers send messages to students about what being female should look like. Atkinson (2012) discusses common ways that female teachers were found to dress, and her research found that most teachers chose to dress in ways that downplayed their sexuality. She argues that female teachers feel that their "gendered features must be hidden or minimized and controlled" (p. 101). She went on to note that some female teachers are overt about their sexuality but that often those teachers are considered to be unprofessional and not serious about teaching. Pinto (2016) claims that female teachers are responding to pressure from schools to wear clothing that will downplay their sexuality so that they will not serve as a distraction to male students. Johnson (2006) agrees that female teachers are expected to downplay their sexuality. She explains that a teacher's expected "bland attire not only masks her body, it speaks an asexual image" (p. 259). Johnson believes that this both plays into the idea of the female teachers as motherly and also keeps females in a subordinate position because it does not allow them to use their sexuality as a form of power. This sends messages to girls about the "right" way to be women, as well as the message it sends to boys about the position of women in society.

In addition to concerns about the ways in which teachers may present gender roles, there are also concerns about the ways in which dominant views on gender roles

cause teachers to interact with students. Some teachers treat their students differently based on gender. Numerous researchers have found that teachers call on and verbally interact with their male students more often than their female students (e.g., Duffy, Warren, & Walsh, 2001; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). A study by Duffy and colleagues (2001) found that both male and female teachers interacted more with male students than female students, despite the fact that male students did not seek interactions any more than female students did. During a long-term research study, Sadker and Sadker (1994) found that "teachers interact with males more frequently, ask them better questions, and give them more precise and helpful feedback" (p. 1). These subtle but persistent patterns of interaction in the classroom reinforce the narrative about the unequal power dynamic that exists between males and females. It strengthens in both boys and girls the idea that boys are more entitled than girls are to have attention and power.

Children's Literature, The Curriculum, and School Rituals

The role of children's literature is important to consider, because children spend a lot of time in school reading or being read to. Research on the content of children's books specifically concerned with gender became common in the 1970's (Steyer, 2014). In a landmark study of Caldecott award winning children's books, Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, and Ross (1972) found that women were underrepresented in stories and that "where women do appear their characterization reinforces traditional sex-role stereotypes" (p. 1125). Although more recent studies have shown that there has been some improvement (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Steyer, 2014), some scholars are still finding issues of underrepresentation and gender stereotypes in children's literature (e.g., Nodelman, 2002; Taber & Woloshyn, 2011). Some scholars have found children's books with non-

traditional messages about gender that they have used in their work with children (e.g., Bartholomaeus, 2015; Davies, 1993, 2003), but other scholars have found many popular children's books that continue to reinforce dominant cultural messages about gender (e.g., Steyer, 2014; Taber & Woloshyn, 2011). Nodelman (2002) has found that "many children's books focus on a solitary male bravely confronting danger and being deemed a hero as a result of it" (p. 11) and include messages that are "unintentionally but implicitly homophobic" (p. 12). Many children's books, then, are both sending messages to females about being inferior to males and sending messages to males about appropriate ways to express masculinity. Kimberly Reynolds (2002) argues that it is difficult for "boy readers of children's literature to avoid the conclusion that the only natural, normal, and acceptable way of inhabiting a male body involves accepting the stereotypical attributes of masculinity" (p. 108). The books that children read reinforce the messages that they receive from teachers and each other about how to perform their genders. In addition to the books that children choose to read to themselves, teachers read some of these books aloud to the children. When a teacher reads a book aloud that carries these messages and doesn't question them, it is further reinforcement that these messages are correct.

These constant messages are a problem because "gender stereotypes in books amplify and perpetuate biased attitudes and behaviors, enhance boys' feelings of entitlement, and lower girls' ambitions and self-worth" (Chick, 2014, p. 176). The books children read and have read to them both reflect and serve to reinforce the dominant narratives about gender that children receive. As children grow, these narratives shape choices that children make about their behavior and the behavior of others. Fox (1993) explains, "Everything we read, from sexist advertisements and women's magazines to

romance novels and children's books, constructs us, makes us who we are, by presenting our image of ourselves as girls and women, as boys and men" (p. 84). When children are surrounded by these messages, it is not surprising that they accept them as being the correct and natural order of the world.

Children's literature is not the only way that students receive messages about gender during instruction. The explicit curriculum in a variety of subjects also includes messages about gender and appropriate related behaviors. For example, numerous studies have shown that science and math are taught in a way that sends the message that those subjects are for boys (e.g., Hughes, 2001; Ramsey, Betz, & Sekaquaptewa, 2013). Ramsey *et al.* (2013) explain that "academic environments can cue who does—and does not—belong, which can lead to segregated patterns of participation in certain fields," such as the sciences (p. 378). Hughes (2001) agrees that "the construction of a privileged, masculine status for scientific knowledge, with its associated practices and pedagogies, reproduces gender segregation" (p. 276). That type of segregation is especially problematic when fields like science, which are dominated by men, pay better and are more highly esteemed than fields like teaching, which are dominated by women. This reinforces, for children and adults alike, the unequal power dynamic that accompanies the gender binary.

A further problem for students is the null curriculum, which is what is taught to students through its exclusion. For example, when girls don't see any examples of women scientists during science instruction, it reinforces the message that science is a domain for men. In the case of the null curriculum in many schools, whole categories of people are often excluded. Ryan *et al.* (2013) point out that "inclusion of the experiences

of transgender and gender-nonconforming people in school curricula is exceedingly rare" (p. 85). When transgender, gender nonconforming, and other students that don't fit binary gender beliefs are not included in any part of the curriculum, the message that students receive is that those people are not an important part of society. It may be that some students would receive the message that people who fit in those categories are wrong or should not exist at all.

Messages about appropriate displays of gender are also sent through other cultural artifacts of schools, including daily interactions and annual events like homecoming dances and proms. During his study of one high school, Pascoe (2012) discovered that "in time-honored high school rituals, masculinity and femininity were produced as opposite and unequal identities primarily through heterosexual practices, metaphors, and jokes" (p. 155). He also found that teachers made heteronormative references and jokes as a way of bonding with students. Prom is a high school practice that very much contributes to dominant discourses about gender roles. Smith (2011) calls prom "the 'professor' that teaches masculine and feminine gender signifiers" (p. 156). She argues that schools can set a heteronormative and sexist agenda by insisting that students wear what they deem "gender appropriate" attire and not allowing same-sex couples. As a result, she states,

> Prom with its attendant elements rooted within unchallenged definitions of masculinity, femininity, and the inherent relations of the two, then, is essential to normalizing heterosexuality and to pathologizing any non-gender conforming identities. In this sense, protecting the heteronormative sanctity of Prom is critical to schools' and other dominant social agencies' attempts to regulate youths' bodies by forcing adherence to sexual expressions which have already been determined by the controllers. (p. 158)

Prom and other, similar rituals are designed to uphold dominant narratives about gender and sexuality. Although there are schools that allow same-sex couples to attend prom

(see, for example, D. Reynolds, 2016), the fact that such incidents make the news are an indication of their exceptionality.

The Regulation of Bodies

Students' bodies are regulated and disciplined in schools in a variety of ways that reinforce dominant views about gender and gender roles. One way in which this happens in schools is when teachers or other school personnel separate children by gender. When I was an elementary school teacher, one school that I worked in insisted that children be separated in the hallways into boys' lines and girls' lines. I have also seen school cafeterias that separated children into boys' tables and girls' tables. Some schools even separate entire classes by gender. Any time this sort of separation is used, it reinforces the idea that gender is binary and that students should easily be able to identify which category they fall into (generally based on their biological sex). It also reinforces the idea that gender is fixed. A child who gets into the girls' line one day is expected to get into the girls' line everyday thereafter.

Another way that bodies are regulated is through the use of gendered bathrooms. Gendered bathrooms are a staple in schools. Just as with any other separation of students by gender, this reinforces binaries. Davies (1993) explains, "The segregated toilets provide a material, architectural sign of male and female as exclusive categories" (p. 21). Everyone is expected to fit in to one category or the other. Ingrey (2012) argues, "The permanent structure of the public washroom represents a very potent and living practice of gender regulation and punishment" (p. 799). Gendered bathrooms not only reinforce gender norms, but also act as way to discipline bodies that defy the norms. Browne (2004) claims, "The moments where boundaries of gender difference are overtly

(en)forced can illustrate how sites and bodies are mutually constituted within sexed power regimes" (p. 336). Gendered bathrooms within schools police student bodies by insisting that all students must fit into the category of male or female. Furthermore, students must fit those categories in a way that is deemed to be correct. Transgender and gender non-conforming students often find their bodies being policed when they want to go to the bathroom because they have trouble gaining access to either bathroom space. For example, Nate Quinn, a transgender teen boy in Florida, has been fighting to earn the right to use the boys' bathroom, which he would prefer to use because he identifies as male (Stein, 2016). However, his high school is insisting that he use the girls' bathroom because that is the gender that matches his biological sex. However, in addition to the fact that Quinn is not comfortable in the girls' bathroom, he has been met with screams from girls when he enters one. In this way, the body of a student that does not conform to dominant beliefs about gender is policed in a personal and very public way.

Rules about clothing are another way in which schools regulate bodies. Although required uniforms are sometimes a part of this regulation, schools also police and discipline bodies based on clothing choices in schools that do not have a required uniform. Graham, Treharne, and Nairn (2017) argue that school clothing expectations often exist along gender lines and reinforce normative (if unspoken) gender ideals. According to Edward Morris (2005), "schools use this discipline to rework the behavior and appearance of students so their bodies display acceptable, normative comportment" (p. 4). This "normative comportment" includes adherence to dominant understandings of appropriate attire for the student's perceived gender. Girls in schools without uniforms are still often policed in the same manner as female teachers described earlier. They are

disciplined for displays of their bodies that are considered to be sexual, which is often cited as being distracting to the boys. Happel (2013) argues, “dress code policies emphasizing modesty and restraint perpetuate the belief that girls’ bodies and sexualities are in particular need of control and are dangerous when not restricted by the powerful Other in the Equation” (p. 94). This sends the message that girls’ bodies need to be kept closely controlled for the good of everyone in the society. It also forwards the message that girls are “the cause of any loss of male control” (Graham *et al.*, 2017, p. 3).

Uniforms are also a way in which bodies are disciplined, and this can be especially problematic when distinctions in uniform requirements are made along gender lines. For example, in some cases, girls are required as part of the school uniform to wear skirts. Happel (2013) explains that this is especially problematic because “a uniform which demands skirt-wearing solely in those defined as female then persists the processes of ritualized girling, through which gendered performance is perpetuated and molded and, finally, ‘naturalized’” (p. 94). In other words, the wearing of skirts both demarcates who is “girl” and continues to insist on what gender performance is appropriate for girls, until that message becomes so ingrained that it seems part of the natural and expected way of life.

The Hidden Curriculum

Many of these ways that schools reinforce gender norms are part of what curriculum theorists call the “hidden curriculum” (P.W. Jackson, 1968). Apple (2004) defines the hidden curriculum as “the teaching of norms, values, and dispositions that goes on simply by [students] living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines of schools day in and day out for a number of years” (p. 13). In other words,

many of the assumptions of the school about identity based in the dominant narrative are passed on to the students through the regular daily interactions in the school. In a New Materialist framework, I would argue that this includes interactions with the non-human matter of the school, including the building itself. All of the interactions together are part of an entanglement that reinforces the messages of the hidden curriculum. The lessons within the hidden curriculum are often learned more effectively and completely than the ones learned through the official curriculum. Biesta (2013) argues that this is because the hidden curriculum is "located in the very practices in which children and students take part during their time in school," while the official curriculum is "a much more artificial add-on" (p. 32). The hidden curriculum, then, is not something that is applied to the entanglement, but instead is a part of every interaction within the entanglement.

The hidden curriculum of schools generally includes aspects of social control (e.g., Apple, 2004; Giroux & Purpel, 1983; Margolis & Fram, 2007; E.W. Morris, 2005). This social control includes the messages about gender and sexuality norms listed previously. Part of this social control occurs through discourse, but some occurs through the control and regulation of bodies. This includes control of movement (e.g., García & De Lissovoy, 2013; K.A. Martin, 1998), control of touching (e.g., Leafgren, 2011; Springgay, 2008), and control of dress (e.g., Happel, 2013; E.W. Morris, 2005), among others. These controls are often gendered and applied differently based on gender as well as other identity markers (e.g., García & De Lissovoy, 2013; Happel, 2013). García and De Lissovoy (2013) posit that within the hidden curriculum, students must submit to "a more or less constant ordering of movement and interaction" (p. 60). In other words, students' bodies are continuously controlled. Foucault (1977) argues that this controlling

of bodies is designed to create “subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile’ bodies” (p. 138). In this way, the students’ bodies, which are seen as dangerous and unruly, can be made docile and orderly.

In a new materialist understanding of subjectivity, which includes performances of the body, this control takes on additional meaning. When the body and mind are seen as one, creating docile bodies, in fact, becomes creating docile mind/bodies. The control of bodies impacts student subjectivities and their ability to perform them. Edward Morris (2005) argues that this hidden curriculum of control fosters “embodiments of compliance” (p. 27). Within the school entanglement, students’ performances of compliance become a part of their subjectivities and understandings of themselves. This includes their understandings of their gender and the ways in which to perform it.

Foucault (1977) argues that just as a hidden curriculum of social control is inevitable in a system, so is resistance to that control. Some scholars believe that the stricter the control and discipline, the more likely it is to bring about resistance (Ferguson, 2000; Foucault, 1977; E.W. Morris, 2005). However, it is important to note that there is no resistance that gets students out of the system entirely. Messages about the unruly nature of student bodies cannot be avoided or resisted completely (Foucault, 1977).

The Need for Further Research

As shown above, there are numerous studies that look at specific aspects of schools and the ways in which they reify dominant notions of gender. However, there are fewer studies that look at the school assemblage as a whole to assess how it influences students’ views about gender. The little literature that does exist that examines the impact

of the school experience as a whole on gender identity tends to focus on high schools (e.g., Kenway & Willis, 1998). Furthermore, there is a dearth of literature that uses a new materialist framework to examine the way in which the material spaces in a school assemblage impact students' understandings of their gender or their identity more broadly. If we are to take the claims of the new materialisms seriously, then we must create studies that take into account the matter and material spaces of schools, rather than maintaining a focus solely on human discursive practices.

Chapter 3

Methods

I have chosen a post qualitative framework for this study. Because that is an uncommon framework to use, I will take some time at the beginning of this methods section to explain what that means. I will then go into more detail about native photography, which is the method that I employed. Following this, I will give specifics about the research design. Because of the emergent nature of post qualitative studies, my research design may appear somewhat less structured than is typical for traditional qualitative research. In this section, I will lay out what I planned to do in terms of methodology; some of what emerged varied, and some of the ways in which students did not follow the research plan will be included in the chapters that follow this one. Having a research plan that is emergent meant releasing some control of my work and trusting the outcomes of the intra-actions within the entanglements with participants.

Methodological Framework

Because I cannot force thinking through new materialisms into the conventional structure of a humanist qualitative methodology (e.g., Lather, 2013; Somerville, 2007; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2017), I decided to use a post qualitative framework for my research. It is important to note that post qualitative methodology does not offer an alternate method; it does not have a specific set of steps to follow, but instead, it is a different way of thinking about terminology like *data* and *analysis* (e.g., Lather, 2013; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013). I chose to use native photography, which by itself, in its original form, is not post qualitative. However, the ways in which I viewed my relationship with the participants, my understanding of *data*, and the ways in which I analyzed and reported the data all

followed a post qualitative framework (e.g., Somerville, 2007; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013). It is important to note that, although I am claiming a post qualitative methodological framework, I do not see qualitative work and post qualitative work as mutually exclusive. Instead, I believe that there is messy, in-between space that exists between the two, and it is within this in-between space that my work in this study resides. That said, I will still discuss the ways in which my research differed from traditional qualitative methodology.

An important distinction between traditional qualitative research and post qualitative research occurs in the data analysis process. Post qualitative research does not rely on more established methods, such as coding (A.Y. Jackson, 2013; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2015). Alecia Jackson (2013) explains that "traditional data analysis in qualitative research tends toward humanistic, essentialist practices of sorting and grouping data that appear to be similar and building themes from similar data based on coherence and patterns" (p. 742). The problem with this is that it can become "an attempt to produce order and regularity in the guise of categories that erase difference and privilege identity among seemingly similar things" (A.Y. Jackson, 2013, p. 742). Post qualitative research works against practices that might essentialize the gendered, sexed, raced, classed bodies of the participants. Additionally, practices such as coding imply that the researcher is separate from the data and can step back and look at it with some distance, when, in fact, researcher, participants, and data are all entangled and mutually constitutive. Because of this, reflection, writing, theorizing, and conversations are used in the meaning making process (Somerville, 2007; St. Pierre, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017). Scholars have suggested other ways of interacting with research data in lieu of coding, including thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Mazzei, 2014), diffractive analysis (Davies, 2014b;

Mazzei, 2014), and movement (Daza & Huckaby, 2014; Springgay & Truman, 2018). Furthermore, the roles of researcher and participant are not static and separate. Instead, all of the members of the study are both researchers and participants, including myself. Therefore, this type of research has a focus on the becoming (rather than being) of both researchers and participants, and it "focuses on the irrational, the unfolding, the embodied and the messiness of research engagement" (Somerville, 2007, p. 240).

Post qualitative research includes a focus on continual reflection and emergence, and "writing [is seen] as a key strategy throughout the research process" (Somerville, 2007, p. 226). Writing and reflection are important for a number of reasons. The first is that Western, dominant, and Enlightenment-era narratives are always pressing against ways of thinking that deviate from prescribed norms. Muñoz (2015) warns that without continual reflection "one loses traction and falls back onto the predictable coordinates of a relationality that announces itself as universal but is, in fact, only a substrata of the various potential interlays of life within which one is always inculcated" (p. 209). This same "falling back" can occur with deficit thinking around gender, sexuality, class, and race. This thinking can impact both the interpretation of the data as well as the intra-actions that occur throughout the "data collection" process. This is not to say that the writing and reflection process completely stopped this slippage, only that it made me more aware of the ways in which my own subjectivities and meaning makings are impacted by dominant thought.

Furthermore, in a post qualitative methodology, the researcher does not make claims to finding *truth*. I believe this relationship to the notion of *truth* is a complicated one. Often the truth that post qualitative scholars are avoiding is a claim of *objective*

truth. There are also, however, concerns about the limits of representation. Scholars argue, for example, that it is not possible to accurately represent people, particularly given the limitations of language (MacLure, 2013a; Mazzei & Jackson, 2009; St. Pierre, 2013, 2017). They believe that this inability extends even to representations of the self, both because of the limits of language and because in a view of the world in which everything is understood as always in a state of becoming, the "self" is not static enough to represent. Additionally, because everything is seen as entangled, it is impossible to separate people/things out for description. Some scholars argue that this renders research meaningless (e.g., St. Pierre, 2015). Why do research if there is no way to represent what occurs? However, although all representations are imperfect, I believe that it is still possible to write an intersubjective understanding of what occurred during the research. I cannot perfectly represent the subjectivities of each of my participants, but I can write (if without perfect accuracy) about the understandings that emerged for me in and as a result of our intra-actions within our entanglement. Writing about our shared research entanglement in this way can still contribute to conversations about schools and research in a way that may impact practice and the field more broadly. In a material feminist understanding, subjectivity is entangled, multiple, contradictory, and shifting. The *truth* of new materialist informed post qualitative research, then, is entangled, slippery, and multiple, constantly escaping capture, but still worth pursuing.

Because of this, rather than a section on "findings," which I believe implies having discovered *answers* or *objective truth*, my study will include several chapters of points for discussion. I am not, therefore, concerned about the transferability of my research. Instead, I am looking to contribute to a conversation about the messages that the

material-discursive entanglements of schools give to students about identity/subjectivity as it relates to gender.

Research Design

Research Method

In this study, I engaged in native photography accompanied by photo elicitation interviews and focus groups with my participants. Native photography is a method whereby participants are given cameras and asked to take photographs of their environment (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Collier & Collier, 1967/1996). Native photography is one type of visual anthropology (for more on visual anthropology, see, for example, Collier & Collier, 1967/1996; Stanczak, 2007). The native photography that I employed bares some similarity to photovoice; what separates my work from photovoice is that photovoice was created to be used as participatory action research, with the goal of changing policy around an area of concern (Wang & Burris, 1997), and I did not use photographic methods for that purpose. In native photography, participants take photographs in their environment around a given topic as a way of sharing their perceptions of that topic and the way it touches their lives (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Collier & Collier, 1967/1996). Although much visual anthropology focuses on adults, a number of researchers have successfully used photovoice and other forms of native photography with younger students (e.g., Burke, 2005; Chio & Fandt, 2007; Einarsdottir, 2005; Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Wilson *et al.*, 2007). Native photography has been used to give "an active voice to those who are often the subjects of knowledge (e.g., rural women, homeless, students), rather than the agents of knowledge (e.g., social workers, development officials, planners, researchers, teachers)" (Chio & Fandt, 2007, p. 486).

This aspect of helping give “active voice” to students is why I have chosen native photography as my method. This desire to give my participants “active voice” by having them take the photographs and analyze them separates my work from that of some scholars (e.g., Margolis, 1999, 2004) who use pre-existing photographs to analyze life in schools.

This idea that a method can “give voice” to participants creates some tensions within a post qualitative framework informed by material feminism/new materialism. As previously mentioned, this is because, in an understanding of an individual as both always entangled and always becoming, what you are “giving voice” to is always temporary and never actually an autonomous individual. St. Pierre (2009) argues that “voice is especially troublesome for those who are wary of the supposed conscious, stable, unified, rational, coherent, knowing, autonomous, and ahistoric humanist individual” (p. 221). Mazzei and Jackson (2009) agree that “voices [are] necessarily distorted and fictionalized in the process of reinscription” (p. 2). As a result, St. Pierre (2015) has pushed to do away with this type of qualitative research altogether. However, some researchers believe that research in a new materialist frame is still possible (e.g., Lenz Taguchi, 2013). MacLure (2009) acknowledges that in trying to “give voice” to individuals “something is *always* lost in translation” (p. 98), but she believes that the limits of “voice” can be useful because “they allow people to mean more than one thing at a time; to fashion mobile and nuanced readings of situations; to connect with others despite not knowing exactly ‘who’ they themselves are” (p. 98). It is necessary within a post qualitative framework to understand that as a researcher you cannot stand apart from your participants and “give voice” to them and their ideas. Cousin (2010) claims, “We are

always re-presenting experiences through text or other media. In this sense all research is fiction . . . the challenge for researchers is to write plausible, useful 'fiction'" (p. 10). And so it is that I cannot accurately represent the becoming of my participants (because it is not possible to represent anything accurately), but I will do the best I can to honor their becoming and contribute to conversations about gender and schools in a way that is useful. The term "giving voice" also becomes problematic when it implies that the participants do not have voices and need to acquire them through the researcher. This is made even more problematic when the researcher is white and the participants are from minoritized populations. My participants do not need me to have voice, nor do I mean to imply that they do; my study is simply a different opportunity for them to use their voices.

Native photography, despite its limitations, is also useful in helping the participants (and myself) focus on the material (Edwards, 1997; El Guindi, 2004). Photographs, which are themselves material, are also representations of material-discursive practices within the school. Shankar (2016), in a critique of photovoice, claims that it is important that we attend to the material of photographs and argues that focusing only on discussions and "voice" may lead a researcher to miss important information and further marginalize their participants. Attention to the visual also prompted students to think differently about the ways in which the school curriculum influences their gender performances (or their subjectivities more broadly). Additionally, it was my hope that there would be material-discursive practices that students could represent visually that they would be unable to vocalize. Furthermore, photographs can help to capture the non-verbal communication that comes from the material school space (El Guindi, 2004). This

focus on the material space of the school can also help students think about the context of the school and the relationship that the specific context has to their identity and its formation. This may be useful in furthering discussions about the contextual nature of identity/subjectivity, especially as it relates to the school context.

Furthermore, photo elicitation (viewing photographs with participants and having them talk about the photos; Banks, 2001; Barton, 2015; Collier & Collier, 1967/1996) can prompt deep discussions and has been found to lead participants to talk about topics they might not otherwise feel comfortable discussing (Banks, 2001; Barton, 2015; Chio & Fandt, 2007; Collier & Collier, 1967/1996). Chio and Fandt (2007) explain,

> The process of taking, sharing, and 'talking' photographs simultaneously acknowledges the presence of the self while reducing the potentially emotional and threatening act of having to share this self with others as the medium of photography allows them to self-reveal in an indirect manner. (p. 488)

In addition to providing students with more opportunities to share their views, using photos in this way can help create a buffer for students that allows them some emotional distance from difficult ideas they are wrestling with (Barton, 2015; Chio & Fandt, 2007; Collier & Collier, 1967/1996). Additionally, Clark-Ibáñez (2007) makes the claim that by allowing children to lead discussion through the use of photographs, the researcher gives students room to share ideas with less concern about whether or not they are meeting the researcher's expectations. She argues that in traditional interview formants, "children may believe that if someone poses a question (especially an adult), there is a 'correct' answer" (p. 173). When students are the ones taking the photographs, the students may have more room to set their own agendas (though I understand that my presence will still influence what the children talk about).

Sample

My participants include 10 students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade at a charter school in a Midwestern city. Convenience sampling was used; the location for the study was chosen because of connections that I have to the school (though I did not know any of the students). The charter school in which the study is located is part of a national charter organization. I never worked for the study school, but I did teach for two years in another school under the same charter umbrella within the same city. My teaching within that charter organization ended eight years ago when I left to teach at a different school. I contacted the local head of the charter organization and asked whether it would be possible for me to perform my study in one of the charter schools in the city. I won the Teacher of the Year award for the charter organization during my time teaching for them, and so I was known and liked within the charter organization. I was put in touch with the principal of the charter school in which I conducted the study, he agreed to allow me to conduct the study there, and he signed the necessary IRB paperwork.

A flyer was sent home with all fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in the school advertising an after school program in which students would take photographs and participate in a research project. A brief description of the methods was included. There was no cost for students to participate in the after school program, and students were told that snacks and access to cameras would be included for participants. Once students indicated an initial interest in the program, a longer description of the study was sent home, as well as a consent form for parents to sign. The majority of the student population at the school is African American and receives free and reduced lunch, and that demographic is represented by my sample.

My participants include 3 fourth graders, 4 fifth graders, and 3 sixth graders, though all ten participants were never in a session together, as one of the sixth grade participants was expelled (and therefore unable to attend the after school meetings) prior to some of the other participants joining the study. Four of the ten participants were at every session, with two more missing only one session each. One participant was expelled just prior to the fifth session. One participant signed up early but then only attended one session near the end of the study. Seven of the ten participants identify as Black, two identify as Mexican, and one identifies as white.[8] Half of the participants presented as (and claimed to be) girls, while the other half presented as (and claimed to be) boys.[9]

Timeframe

The afterschool program ran for three months in spring 2017, starting in March and running through the end of the school year. Data collection took place throughout the afterschool program. The three month period included 10 meetings of the after school program. There was a one week break after the fourth session because the school was on Spring Break. The final session took place during the last full week of school. Each meeting lasted for one and a half hours and started immediately following the regular school day.

[8] I chose to use the words that the participants used to describe themselves

[9] Because I was interested in the participants' gender, rather than their biological sex, and it is my belief that the two are separate, I use "boy" and "girl" when referring to participants, rather than "male" and "female." Those terms can be problematic and have been used to and about men and women of color as a method of demeaning them. However, the participants in my study are children, and so "boy" and "girl" seem to be the most accurate terms to use to indicate gender.

Data Collection

During the first meeting of the after school program, I gave a brief introduction to my study and the process. Then, we spent time discussing the ethics and responsibilities of being a photographer in a research project. They created a poster with a list of rules for taking photographs. These included such items as seeking consent from subjects before photographing them and not photographing students' bodies in states of undress, such as in a locker room or bathroom. They also created a list of group norms for discussions. These included understandings about not talking over one another and not putting hands on each other. I understand that it may seem counterintuitive to begin a study in which I was trying not to be an authority figure with a discussion about rules. However, I felt that it was important for participants to have some discussion of ethical practices when taking photos so that they did not violate other peoples' privacy. I was also concerned about participants coming up with rules for photographing others so that they did not violate the rules I had received from IRB. I did not suggest any rules in either the discussion on norms for photographing or norms for discussions. Instead, participants brainstormed all the ideas and discussed and approved them for use. I did begin the discussion by suggesting that establishing norms can be a good way of creating expectations for how to treat each other. I recognize that, despite my attempts at letting the participants lead discussions, there is a tension in suggesting that creating rules or norms is a good starting point when trying not to be an authority figure. Next, I introduced the concept of identity and suggested that identities may be context specific and that spaces may send messages about what those identities should look like. Participants talked about how they see that happen in their own lives. I brought an instant camera to the first session so that I could

take photographs of the participants, which I planned to give to them and have them create posters about themselves with the photos. They chose not to create posters, but instead, they took turns taking photos of each other, of me, and of the whole group. They named the meetings “photography club,” and everyone asked to take home at least one photo of me and one of the group in addition to the ones of themselves.

I had planned for the next meeting to include time for answering questions and discussing the mechanics and aesthetics of photography as well as discussing of the concept of identity. However, students were eager to begin taking photographs. So, instead, we began with a brief brainstorming session of what sorts of things at school they might photograph, which I audio recorded. I reminded the participants of the rules for photo taking that we had created, and then I allowed them to choose cameras (none of the digital cameras that I had for participants to use were the same). The participants (including myself) spent the rest of the session taking pictures around the school. I was interrupted from photo taking by participants who needed help with working their cameras.

During the third meeting, we began with taking more photographs. The participants were interested in taking some photographs outside, including photographs of the playground. They could not go outside by themselves, so we all went out as a group. In the second half of the session, I took them into the computer lab and put their photos on the computers so that they could select some to print and share with the group. I had planned to do photo elicitation interviews with all of them at this time, but there were issues with many of the computers, so I was unable to talk to all of them and they were not all able to select photos for printing.

In the fourth meeting, I gave the participants different time slots to meet me in the computer lab so that they could select photos to print and I could interview them about why they selected those photos. These conversations were recorded. While I talked to participants individually and in pairs, the remainder of the participants were taking photos throughout the building. I met with all of the participants, and they each selected four photos to be printed.

Between the fourth and fifth sessions, I had the photos that the participants selected printed (these included four photos that I had taken and then selected for sharing). I printed several copies of each photo in case the participants wanted to manipulate the photos. The fifth session consisted of group discussion that lasted for the entire session. The whole session was audio recorded. Participants then selected photos that they wanted to take home.

The sixth and seventh meetings consisted of another round of taking photographs around the school. In the eighth session, we met in the computer lab, and participants were given the opportunity to manipulate the photos digitally. They also selected more photos for printing. The ninth session was another whole group discussion, which again was recorded. As with the previous discussion, I brought multiple copies of the printed photographs, and participants were allowed to take them when the session ended. The tenth and final session began with whole group discussion, which I audio recorded. For the remainder of the session, participants moved around the school with their cameras.

Data Analysis

After the participants selected four photos that represented (to some degree) their perceptions of the messages that the school sends them about who to be and how to act,

the photos were printed. In the analysis sessions, all the photos were spread out on a set of desks that had been pushed together so that they were all visible at the same time. Photos were spread out at random so that the photographer could not be immediately identified by their photos and so that the participants' photos were intermingled (this led to some argument in the analysis sessions between participants who were claiming authorship of the same photos). Before the participants looked at the photos, I gave them suggestions about the initial analysis of the photos. Collier and Collier (1967/1996) suggest that within the first stage of analysis of photographs, researchers (or in this case, the participants) should

- Look at all the pictures together as a whole, looking for "overtones and subtleties" (p. 178).
- Pay attention to initial feelings and impressions and what they are in response to.
- Make note of any questions that arise.
- Think about the ways in which the pictures explain the particular context.

Collier and Collier call this initial stage "unstructured analysis." Because of the focus of entanglement and the material in my theoretical framework, I felt that it was important for the participants to generate a shared analysis of their visual representations of the space. It is possible that participants came to conclusions based on seeing all the work together that they would not have arrived at when thinking about their work alone. Strack *et al.* (2004), who have done work using photovoice methodology with children, argue that the use of group discussion with methods using native photography is important. They claim that "group discussions are a critical aspect of the … process because they create opportunities in which participants can inspire each other to take better, more

informative pictures [and] develop a collective voice" (p. 52). Because of events that were happening between sessions, such as the expulsion of one of the participants from the school, time was also given for discussion and analysis of these events. It was not possible to discuss the photos without discussing other aspects of their lives within the school, and so the photo discussions tended to stray away from discussions of the photos themselves.

All of the whole group data analysis sessions were audio recorded. I listened to the recordings from a meeting prior to the next meeting. This allowed me to ask participants about specific ideas, quotes, or pieces of the analysis at the start of the following session.

Throughout the afterschool program, I took detailed notes and kept a reflexive journal. I regularly reflected on my notes, journal, and audio recordings, and I used Jackson and Mazzei's (2012) approach of thinking through the data using theory I have read. I thought about the ways in which my data connected to and was dissonant with existing theory. Within a new materialist framework, I am not actually separate from my data, but instead, my entanglement (including any theory that I have read) is all a part of my data. Therefore, it was important as a part of the process of wrestling with ideas within the entanglement that I engaged in reflexive discussion and writing (e.g., St. Pierre, 2011, 2015, 2016). Writing is an important component of data analysis in post qualitative research more generally, and in postmodern emergence specifically. Writing about theory, experiences, and personal reflections and subjectivities are all integrated throughout the research process. This writing is considered a way to "think through" the

“data” and the related theories (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; St. Pierre, 2011, 2015, 2016, 2017). As such, writing was a continual part of my data analysis process.

I made an intentional choice not to transcribe any of the audio recordings or do any coding. To code would not be in keeping with a post qualitative framework. I believe that transcription and coding would act to further separate the discourse from the participants and the events. In a new materialist frame, discourse is not viewed as separate from the rest of the performance of the entanglement. Barad (2007) argues that discourse is not “a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility” (p. 149). Transcription and coding would act as a cut, separating the words from the performance as a whole. It would also act to separate me from the performance of the entanglement. The implication of coding would be that I was a separate observer who could look at the data from a distance. Numerous post qualitative scholars recommend alternatives to coding, such as theorizing, writing, and movement (e.g., Augustine, 2014; Childers, 2014; Davies, 2014b; Daza & Huckaby, 2014; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Levy, Halse, & Wright, 2016; MacLure, 2013a; Mazzei, 2014; Springgay & Truman, 2018). Childers (2014) argues that “coding, or any other systematic, *a priori* structural process of analysis, is a failed attempt to discipline a world that is uncontainable” (p. 819). I wished to embrace the messiness of the entanglement in my analysis, rather than seek to discipline it and give it order.

I did listen to the audio recordings of the sessions numerous times in addition to reading back over my notes and looking through the photos. Although it could be argued that listening to the recordings still separates the discourse from the events, listening back

over the recordings was helpful in thinking through the data. Post qualitative research does not have specific rules related to when and how to listen to recorded data (or rules against it). My process was emergent, and although it was not originally my intention to do as much listening as I did after the end of the after school sessions, I felt that it was necessary for a fuller discussion of the events of the study. I did not want to transcribe the audio recordings because I felt that I could better remember being in the moments of the study with participants when I listened to the discussions. Listening to the data highlighted both the ways in which participants often talked over each other and the silences in a way that transcription would not. It also allowed me to hear dissention that I did not always hear at the time because some of the participants were louder than others. Comparisons of volume and pitch can be more difficult to do with transcription, and hearing those helped with my understanding of how power was operating in the group. I was able to compare what I heard in subsequent listenings with the initial impression that I got from the session, and that allowed me to better reflect on my own role and how I was interacting with participants. My whiteness and woman-ness (among other things) impacted how I heard and interacted with participants in the moment, and listening to the data later helped me better reflect on my own beliefs, biases, and performances.

In addition to listening to the recordings after each session, once the data collection was done I listened to the recordings in their entirety five more times. Moments from the study nagged at me, clamoring for my attention. It was clear to me that the analysis that I had done with the participants during the sessions was insufficient. Further exploration of the data had to be done. The first time I returned to the recordings, I listened and took notes. During this listening, I attended to the ways in which the

recordings resonated or were discordant with theory I had read. MacLure (2013b) urges researchers to attend to data that "glows" or creates a sense of wonder. I listened for pieces that tugged at me and created affective response. The second time, I listened while performing what are traditionally considered "feminine" household tasks, such as folding laundry, and I paid attention to gender and gender roles within the recordings. The third time, I listened again for these themes and reflected and took notes. The fourth and fifth times, I listened while walking around campus, paying attention to ideas of freedom and body control. I listened to smaller portions additional times, generally while looking back though my notes and/or the photographs. After listening, I looked back through reflections and wrote about contradictions between what I was hearing and what I had felt at the time.

Just as I did not code, I did not perform traditional qualitative analysis on the photographs. In general, analysis of the photographs occurred with the participants, though I did look back through the photos many times as I was considering other parts of the data. Additionally, I attended a workshop in which I was paired up with other scholars, and we were assigned the task of reading our data through one another's data. The data that I had brought with me were the photographs, and so some analysis of the photos occurred in that way as well.

Researcher Positionality

Although I believe that researcher positionality is always important to explore, it is even more necessary within a theoretical framework that positions the researcher as participant in the entanglement. It is important to be aware of my own positionality not only as it relates to the notion of gender, but also as it relates to other identity markers,

including ones that are less a part of my awareness because of my privilege, such as my whiteness. I also needed to attend to power and the ways in which my position as researcher and adult created power dynamics within the research.

I am a white, middle class, cisgender female. Although I view gender as fluid, I present primarily as female, and that matches my biological sex. It has not always been the case that I have generally presented in a way that is mostly associated with femaleness. As a child in elementary school, I was frequently asked if I was a boy or a girl. I had very short hair and wore an unusual mixture of "boy clothes" and "girl clothes." I tried not to use the bathroom at school when I could avoid it, because I would get harassed for being in the girls' bathroom when I looked like I might be a boy. Additionally, I remember being upset in elementary school that despite my fluid gender expression, I was not allowed to participate in a number of activities, such as on the school basketball team, because I was a girl. As I got older, I began to express my gender in more traditionally feminine ways, though my short hair, taller frame, and clothing choices are sometimes read as masculine.

In addition to my personal history as it relates to gender norms, I have been made more aware of the ways in which dominant views on gender are established because of the birth of my daughter. Despite (imperfect) efforts that my partner and I make at raising our child in a gender neutral way, she frequently comes home from school (at age 4) with new rules that she shares with us about how to be a girl. This has increased my desire to understand the ways in which school reinforces dominant narratives about gender and identity.

My whiteness played a significant role in this study. I always knew that my whiteness would matter in my research, and it became even more significant in a research environment in which most of participants are students of color. Furthermore, it might have taken me longer to recognize the significance of my whiteness to students of color because in every school that I taught in, the majority of my students were African American. My entire teaching career had been as a white teacher of students of color, and in my first four years as a teacher, all of my students were African American. Because of this, I was not as quick to recognize the ways in which I would appear to my participants to be the embodiment of the establishment.

Throughout this study, I endeavored do the difficult work of trying to strike a balance of engaging in enough self-reflection without the work becoming too much about myself. Scholars warn against tipping the balance too far toward the researcher and away from the researched. Cousin (2010) warns, “We also have to guard against writing a research report that is more about us than the research we have conducted” (p. 14). Similarly, Patai (1994) argues that feminist researchers “are spending much too much time wading in the morass of our own positionings” (p. 64). However, warnings against too much writing about self should not keep a researcher from being reflexive at all. It is important, instead, to be mindful of the attention I give to my own subjectivities so that I do not reach a point when my research becomes only about myself. Although it might seem that extensive reflexive contemplation before I begin my research would be sufficient, because my own gender and subjectivity is in a constant state of becoming, it was important that I returned continually to the reflexive process. Throughout the process, I engaged in reflexive journaling, reading, reflecting, and having conversations

with others about my own positionality as it relates to both gender and my subjectivity more broadly.

Despite my own beliefs about the fluidity and emergent nature of subjectivity and gender, I know that I possess identity markers that cause me to be part of an oppressed group as well as to receive privilege. I tried to keep my privileged positions in mind as I consider the ways in which dominant narratives around gender have oppressed me. I also tried to maintain awareness of the ways in which I was in a privileged position as researcher and adult. I spent time reflecting about the ways in which I was read by participants and how that impacted the entanglement of this research project.

I worked toward what Pillow (2003) refers to as "reflexivities of discomfort" (p. 188). This type of reflexivity fits with a post qualitative research framework, because this framework understands the subject "as multiple, as unknowable, as shifting" (Pillow, 2003, p. 180). Instead, I worked, as Pillow suggests, to achieve "a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous" (p. 188). This required journaling, thinking, reading and rereading theory, and discussing my research with members of my committee, as well as the participants. It was, as Pillow suggests, an uncomfortable process.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is often a concern for researchers. Trustworthiness in qualitative research was developed based on measures that were used in order to lend legitimacy to the research (e.g., Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) explains that "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, substitutes for internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity have become widely adopted in qualitative research"

(p. 211). I reject the idea of establishing trustworthiness because it implies that the research needs to be declared *legitimate* and somehow closer to finding *truth*. Additionally, establishing trustworthiness implies that the researcher can assess the data in a way that suggests that the researcher is removed from the data. In a material feminist understanding, everything is entangled, and therefore the data is not a separate entity from the researcher, and instead the two are in a permanent state of interrelatedness. This limits the researcher's ability to look at the data as an exterior thing to be assessed.

That said, I feel an ethical responsibility to the other members of the entanglements in which I operated during this research. For that reason, I still used methods that are often used to establish trustworthiness, though without the implication that I need these measures to legitimize the research, or that using them brought me to truth. First, I used my notes and journals to reflect continually on the research. This is in keeping with what Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) refer to as using a "reflexive journal" (p. 143). I also shared my thoughts with the participants during the study to get their feedback. Sometimes I brought ideas back to them more than once in an effort to clarify what the group believed. In qualitative research, the soliciting of feedback from participants during the analysis process (which I was be continually engaged in with the students) is often referred to as "member checking" (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993, p. 142). In this way, I allowed participants to "test categories, interpretations, and conclusions" (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993, p. 142). Furthermore, I discussed my work at length with colleagues that have a shared interest in material feminism, gender, subjectivity/identity, and/or post qualitative research throughout the process. Erlandson and colleagues refer to this process of checking in with professional peers as "peer

debriefing" (p. 140). St. Pierre (1997) eschews notions of trustworthiness, but argues in favor of member checks and peer debriefing because "our members and peers do provide us with data that are often critical and that may even prompt us to significantly reconstruct our interpretation as we proceed" (p. 184). Checking in with participants and critical academic peers did lead me to rethink my interpretations on more than one occasion and helped me see past some of my own unchecked biases.

Minimizing Harm to Participants

It is essential, especially when working with vulnerable populations (in this case, children) to try to minimize harm to research participants. I began by selecting a methodology that was created to give voice to vulnerable populations. However, as I mentioned earlier, there are some limitations to the ability of a researcher to "give voice." In fact,

> qualitative researchers have for some time begun to question the ethics of representing the voices of others, interpreting narrative accounts, and the privileging that occurs in the decisions that we make in the questions that we ask (or fail to ask), interpretations that we map onto (or miss), and the ways in which participant voices are portrayed and presented. (Mazzei & Jackson, 2009, p. 2)

Because of this, I worked to be reflexive throughout the research process. In this way, I hoped to better understand my own positionality, in the hopes that I have not taken my own ideas as the ideas of the students.

Gender can be a controversial topic, making it important to consider the ways in which to protect participants' privacy. This can become more complicated when working with students because, in addition to the power dynamic that comes with researcher and researched, there is an adult child power dynamic that may make students feel less like they have control over their level of participation (Morrow, 2008). Additionally, because

the research took place in a school setting, additional adults were involved as gate-keepers (Morrow, 2008). I reminded students every week that they would not be forced to participate in any part of the research process, and that they could choose to leave the study at any time. I regularly reminded participants when I was taping and asked permission to record conversations. Morrow (2008) points out that consent should not be a one-time event with children. Instead, "consent should be also seen as ongoing" (p. 54). In order to maintain privacy and the trust of the participants, I did not share information about student conversations with any of the adults in the child's school or life. When listening to the audio recordings, I discovered that in addition to the main conversations, the audio recorder picked up side conversations that were taking place between students. I did not include any of the side conversations as part of the analysis as I do not see those conversations as being covered by consent that students gave me to use the audio recordings.

I use pseudonyms for all of the names of participants as well as names of other students that were brought up in discussion with participants. I gave participants the opportunity to select their own pseudonyms. All but two of the participants created pseudonyms for themselves, and so, whenever possible, I use the pseudonyms that participants selected for themselves.

Summary

This study employed native photography through a post qualitative framework in order to explore the perceptions that the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade participants had about the messages that the school sends them about who to be and how to act. Although I was specifically interested in what these messages say about gender, I was also open to

exploring other areas of identity based on my participants' interests. The study ran over a period of three months, with 10 sessions with participants occurring in that time period. Because I was working through a post qualitative framework, I do not offer "findings" at the end, as uncovering truth is not possible within this framework. Instead, it is my hope that this research will contribute to discussions about the messages that the material-discursive entanglements of schools send to students about gender and identity.

Interlude

In a more traditional dissertation, the sections that follow might have labels such as "Results" or "Findings" and then "Discussion" or "Conclusions." Rather than these more traditional sections, I will be engaging in an extended discussion that I will attempt to divide into chapters. The chapter headings I am using are "The Material," "Bodies," "Gender Assemblages," and "Furthering the Conversation." I want to make it clear that these dividers are artificial. There is no way to really disentangle what would be referred to as *nonhuman matter* from *bodies* or *assemblages*. This is not because each one is like a link in a chain that cannot be pried apart, but because they are all part of the same link. They are not simply inseparable, but one.

The result of that unity is that it is difficult to discuss aspects of my study in these sections. However, to not make some sort of divisions, however artificial, would make this work harder to read. Therefore, I have done my best to create separate segments of discussion. Each section is complicated by the others in ways that I will try to address, even as I write them as separate. Creating these artificial separations was a tension in my work, but I believe that such a tension may be difficult to avoid because of the limits of using language within a written dissertation to discuss a post qualitative study.

For some topics, I gave up on trying to choose one chapter to place the discussion in and instead spread the discussion out over more than one chapter. For example, there is a subsection titled Cameras/Movement/Resistance in both the chapter on The Material and the chapter on Bodies. This is to help illustrate that the material use of the cameras (The Material) and the movement of student bodies (Bodies) are interrelated and complicate each other in important ways.

Furthermore, the following sections should be seen as a conversation, rather than as findings. Therefore, what I offer should not been seen as offering *proof* of anything, but instead as providing examples from the study that led me to my discussion points. Additionally, the discussions of this study contain fewer direct quotes from participants than would be the case with a traditional qualitative study. I do include some quotes, but I tried not to focus on exclusively discursive data points.

I have also included photographs that were taken by me and the other participants. These are not listed separately as figures but are embedded in the text so as to not make them seem secondary to the discursive. I have not listed the photographer of each picture. There are a couple of reasons for this. The first is that I want the photographs to be viewed as arising out of the entanglement, rather than as the product of just one individual. Next, I am not certain of the authorship of each of the photos. Participants sometimes exchanged cameras and later argued over who had taken which photo, making it impossible for me to be certain of the photographer in all cases. Additionally, for some of the photos that I shared, many of the participants took photos of the same object. Rather than share all of them, I selected one to represent the photos of that object for the whole group. In those cases, listing a single photographer might take away from the idea that most of the group took the same picture.

Chapter 4

The Material

I choose to begin with the material because I think that the importance of the material is often overlooked. I want to ensure that when we arrive at the section on gender assemblages, the impact of the material on assemblages, both in terms of human and non-human bodies, objects, and spaces, is not lost. All the actants in an entanglement matter; beginning with the non-human actants helps highlight this point. Furthermore, in a Material Feminist framework, non-human material should not be seen as an accessory to human happenings, but as inseparable from the rest of the entanglement. New Materialist scholars argue that the *self* does not exist separate from the body or the

material objects in the entanglement. Malafouris (2008) suggests that understanding this becomes easier when we think in terms of an "extended self." He argues for a "self that is located neither inside nor outside the brain/body, but is instead constantly enacted in-between brains, bodies and things and thus irreducible to any of these three elements taken in isolation" (p. 1997). The material matters in this study because the space and the non-human objects in it are a part of the performed subjectivities of myself and my participants within the entanglement.

The Smell

The school has a smell. It is not a disgusting or off-putting smell. It is subtle, but distinct. It is a smell that is perhaps left-over from construction on the building—a paint smell or something given off by the flooring. It is, as all smells are, difficult to describe. I am not sure whether or not other people who walk into the building notice the smell, at least not consciously. The smell is a part of the material entanglement of the school. I begin with the smell because it is the first thing I noticed when I entered the building, and it had an impact on my intra-actions there.

I worked as an elementary school teacher for 10 years. Although I never taught in this particular school, I worked in another K-12 charter school in the city run by the same charter school management company. Both of the schools were housed in buildings that were not originally schools, but were repurposed. I suspect that they used the same construction company and materials in both buildings. I do not remember noticing the smell in the building that I taught in, but when I entered this building for my research, I recognized the smell immediately. This school has the exact same smell as the school I taught in. The layout and appearance were not the same, but the smell was identical.

Scholars in sensory studies argue that smells can cause emotional reactions as well as types of knowing (e.g., Drobnick, 2014; Howes, 2014; Law, 2014; Porcherot *et al.*, 2010). Smells, they argue, become linked with specific memories, feelings, and ways of being (Drobnick, 2014). The feelings and emotions associated with a smell return when the smell is repeated, even at a later time and in a different context (Porcherot *et al.*, 2010). The memory I had of the scent of the school caused an immediate, affective reaction. I felt ready—ready to teach, ready to take charge, ready to be an authority figure and run a classroom. The affective feelings that I had every morning when I entered the other school building as a teacher returned to me the moment I caught the same scent in this new environment. The feelings I had related to my subjectivity as teacher returned, along with a readiness to perform *teacher*. When the feelings reached a level of consciousness, when I recognized what was happening to me, I tried to tamp down the feelings. But my body's reaction to the smell was not something that I could separate myself from or control.

This inability to stop the affective reaction is due to the nature both of sensory input and of affect. I could not stop myself from my intra-action with the smell of the school, and the return of the associated affective memories was my body's innate reaction to a familiar smell. Scholars argue that affective reactions occur pre-cognitively. Gregg and Seigworth (2010) define affect as a type of knowing that is "*other than* conscious [emphasis in original]" (p. 1). Some affect scholars argue that affect spreads, and the affect felt by one person can spread through a group of people in a space (e.g., Ahmed, 2010). In a new materialist frame, that argument needs to be taken further. Within the entanglement that includes me, the participants, and the material environment of the

school, the effects of the affect cannot possibly be limited to one person or piece of matter. All of the human and nonhuman objects within the entanglement are impacted by the smell and the resulting affect. The affect impacts not only my performance, but the performance of all the actants, not as a matter of cause and effect, but as the impact on an entangled whole.

The smell of the school, the first thing I noticed upon entering, therefore played an important role in everything that occurred as part of the study. It influenced my performance, which in turn influenced the ways in which my participants interacted with me. I had wanted to be seen as less of an authority figure and more of a partner in my interactions with participants. However, my response to the smell, along with other aspects of my embodied performance, impacted the ways in which the participants read me. Although I tried to resist being placed in the role of "teacher" by the school and the participants, my response to the smell reinforced that role. Because of the affective response of feeling ready to be "teacher," my walk, my posture, and my tone of voice were different than they would have been otherwise. These things continued to be a performance of authority figure, even as I used discourse to try to encourage my participants to interact with me in other ways.

The smell is also important to talk about because if it impacted me, it surely impacted the participants, not only in their interactions with me, but also in the ways that the smell might cause affective responses in them as well. Messages that have been received by the school can be reinforced through the daily repetition of the smell. Just as the smell pushed me to perform *teacher*, it pushes the participants to perform what it is to be a student at that school. That makes the messages that the school sends about identities

and subjectivities harder to push back against. This is also true because awareness of smells tends to fade over time. I often stopped thinking about the smell and its impact after I had been in the school building for a little while. I was only reminded of it as I entered the building each week. This made it more difficult for me to track or respond to its influence on my performance. Teachers, administrators, and students who enter the building daily may not even register the smell, making it less likely that they would consider its impact.

The ISS room

When I arrived at the school for the first meeting with my participants, I was told we would be meeting in the In-School-Suspension (ISS) room. None of the teachers, it seems, wanted to allow meetings in their classrooms, therefore, the ISS room was what was left. It was a small room with three rows of student desks, one large teacher desk, and little else. This is a room where students serve in-school suspensions, as well as being a place where misbehaving students are sent to await further punishment. Most of the building looked clean and well maintained, but the ISS room looked much abused.

Throughout the rest of the building, including the bathrooms, the paint was unmarred and the window treatments were undamaged. In the ISS room, however, the blinds were broken and the paint scratched. There were no decorations or posters other than a display of the discipline policy. I asked if there was some other alternative for our meetings and was told that there was none.

In addition to the look of the space as a place[10] no one might choose to be, the space was understood by the students as a place of punishment. During the school day, the room was a place to be avoided; it was a place that students were threatened with if they misbehaved. Between the fourth and fifth meetings with my participants, two of my

[10] Space and place have two separate and distinct meanings for critical geographers (e.g., Hubbard & Kitchin, 2010; Soja, 1989; Thrift, 2003). I stick loosely to the designations, but it is not the project of this piece to adhere strictly to the definitions of scholars in that field.

students were sent to the ISS room during the school day. The result was that they both missed the fifth meeting; one of the participants was suspended, the other expelled. So, being sent to the ISS room during the day could result in a participant receiving a punishment that prevented them from being able to attend the meetings there after school.

Thinking through the place of the ISS room is particularly important in a new materialist understanding of the entanglement. This is because, just as a body is not simply a container for the mind in understanding an individual, a room is more than just a neutral container for the events of the meetings I had with participants. Thrift (2003) explains,

> As with terms like 'society' and 'nature', space is not a commonsense external background to human and social action. Rather, it is the outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements that divide and connect things up into different kinds of collectives. (p. 95)

In addition to being a space in which things happen, the room itself is an actant as part of the entanglement, and the students' previous entanglements with that space impact their performance, and therefore, their subjectivities. As a part of the entanglement with students during the day, the room is abused. As I mentioned, the paint is chipped and the blinds are broken. As part of the entanglement with the school, the room is not cared for. For the duration of the study, no maintenance was done on the room to repair the damage. The room, within the entanglement, is a space that is treated poorly and neglected, and that sends messages to people in the space about the worthiness of the people who occupy the space. After seeing the room, I inquired about moving somewhere else, because the state of the room bothered me. It is not reasonable to expect that at 3pm, when the space changed from the place for ISS to the place for our meetings, all the participants' previous associations and affective responses to the room would disappear.

The first time we closed the door to the ISS room for our meeting, one participant commented, "*It feels so creepy now that I'm in here*." Any space in the building would have impacted the performances within the entanglement, but this space influenced performance in ways that were unique because of the nature of the entanglements the room participated in during the school day and the ways in which those entanglements marked the room.

In the time we were there, it felt like it became more and more our place. The students demonstrated a sense of ownership over the space. They worked to control who came in and out of it during the after school meetings. When we were all in there, they liked to keep the door closed so that other students in the building couldn't wander in. When non-participants knocked on the door or tried to enter, the participants were aggressive in telling them to go away. But at the same time, I don't think the sense of it as a place of punishment ever left entirely either, especially after two of our participants were suspended and expelled after spending time there. Even when the students wanted to be in the room for the meetings, the room continued to have the look of a place that is abused and neglected. I am uncertain, however, of exactly what role the room played in the participants' desire to move around the building rather than spending more time in the ISS room. During the last session, I was trying to ask the participants questions about why they wanted to stay after school and move around the building instead of going home and running around there. I asked the question, "*Is there a reason that you'd rather stay here…*" Before I could finish with "*than have freedom at home*," several participants, thinking I was talking about staying in the ISS room rather than staying at school, shouted, "*No!*" and "*Never!*" One participant clarified, "*I don't want to be in ISS*

the whole time!" They then tried to hurry me through the discussion so that they could leave the room again. During sessions five and nine, in which we stayed in the room for whole group discussions, participants provided reasons that they had to leave the room at various points. No one stayed gone for long, but everyone left at some point during the discussion. I thought initially that the excuses that participants gave for leaving the room were valid. However, during the last session, participants informed me that other participants were just using excuses to go roam the building (the participants all approached me individually or in small groups to report on other participants). Because the room is part of the entanglement, it is impossible to separate out its role in the participants' desire to get out of room.

Despite the fact that I found the room unappealing, I felt tied to the room, as though there was an invisible rope that held me there, one that stretched, but pulled a little harder the further I moved away from the room. All the equipment that I brought that was not in use was in the room, sitting on desks and the floor. Before the start of the study, I envisioned myself roaming the halls of the school, observing my participants, mapping where they went, and taking pictures of my own. However, I found myself reluctant to stray too far from the base of operations of the ISS room. The material objects weighed me down. I had concerns that my items in the room would be stolen or messed with in some way. I also felt responsible for the distribution and management of the objects. I worried that participants might need different cameras or other items and that I needed to be available to give them those things. Additionally, participants occasionally returned with questions that I felt I needed to be available to attend to. I felt resentful of the room and the stuff and the ways in which I felt they trapped me there.

The Stuff

As I mentioned, part of my feeling tethered to the room was my sense of responsibility for all of the materials that I brought each week to the meetings. Every week I brought two large bags filled with the boxes I kept the cameras in.

I also came each week with a large bag of snacks and juices. There was also a bag with markers, paper, and glue sticks for manipulating photos. And then there was a folder with an attendance sheet and assent forms. I kept a small case with memory sticks and a device for reading camera memory cars with me for each meeting as well. Because there was not a space in the school dedicated only to the after school program, all the bags and equipment had to come and go with me each week. Every week I loaded and unloaded it all from my car.

The nonhuman objects were a constant reminder of the study. Bags of cameras crowded the office in my house. In the days after the meetings, I would charge all the cameras and download the photos to my computer. I had twelve total cameras, all with different chargers and memory cards. The snacks were a similar weight on my mind. What snacks to buy? How many? In addition to eating snacks, the participants sometimes asked to take extras home to siblings. I struggled with figuring out how much to bring, and I never arrived at what I felt was the correct amount of food. Additionally, the students complained when the juices I brought were warm, so every week they crowded my refrigerator the night before the meetings.

I explain these things not as a way to complain about the administrative minutiae, but because the nonhuman objects had an impact on my study and my performance in it. If we want to take seriously the importance of nonhuman objects in assemblages and the idea of subjectivity as performance, then we must look at the ways in which nonhuman objects are a part of our performed subjectivities. I did not show up each week empty-handed. I was also all the materials I brought. The stuff was a part of my performance and my intra-action with the participants as much as my white skin or the words I spoke. I was the provider of material goods—goods that the participants lacked. During the first meeting, one of the participants asked if I was going to provide all of the necessary materials, explaining, "*Most of us don't have the resources for all that*." My performance as researcher was tied up with all the bags and boxes I arrived with each week. Therefore, the student interactions with the materials were also interactions with my performed subjectivities. And the participant need and/or desire for the materials that I brought colored their performance in their interactions with me and each other.

The participants seemed eager each week to get the snacks and then the cameras and head out into other parts of the school. When they first arrived, they would gather close in around me and talk to me and ask what snacks I had brought. After taking snacks, they spread out around the room to eat and interact more with each other. When it was time to pass out cameras, they gathered around me again. Often, they would hush each other when I was trying to speak prior to handing out cameras. Participants called out various remonstrances, including "*Shush*," "*Stop! She's trying to speak*," "*Guys, she has to teach*," and "*Be quiet*." I am not saying that this is because of the cameras and *not* me, because that implies that the two are separate. The cameras and other materials were entangled as part of my performance as researcher, and the ways that the students interacted with me was related to me as a whole.

The ways in which the distribution of the material goods, such as snacks and cameras, happened also contributed to my understanding of the power dynamics of the group. I was very careful to ensure that everyone got the same amount of snacks, drinks, and photographs. However, I did not dictate the order in which participants took snacks and supplies. The boys in the group generally took snacks, drinks, and printed photographs before the girls. During the first group photo analysis discussion, two of the boys argued over who would take home some of the photos (despite my reassurance that there were multiple copies so that they could each have a copy of the photos they wanted). The girls in the group did not argue over photos and waited to select photos until after the boys were done, even when I tried to give them opportunities to take photos sooner. One of the girl participants did not eat pizza, and so when I brought pizza for the group, I also brought bread sticks, which she said that she would eat. I struggled to

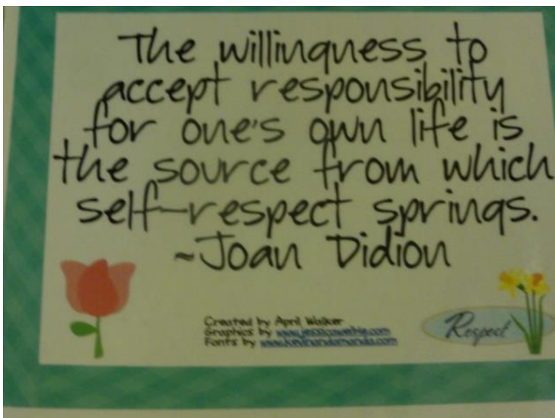
get the boy participants to let her take bread sticks first, since she would not eat any of the pizza. I had acquired a variety of used digital cameras for the study. In order to make the selection of cameras more equitable, I had the participants draw numbers for the order in which they would pick their camera. One of the girl participants drew the paper with the number “1” on it, but she agreed to trade it with one of the boy participants who complained about the order.

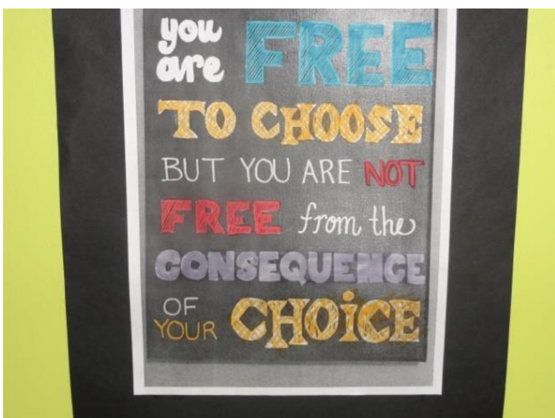
These instances combined to create a clear picture of the power dynamic between the boys and girls in the group. This re-enacts larger societal power dynamics between men and women (e.g., Brod & Kaufman, 1994; K. Reynolds, 2002). I believe that this power dynamic was invisible to the participants both because of its acceptance in larger society and because of some of the messages of equality sent by the school that are discussed further below.

Messages on the Walls

The photos initially taken by the students were comprised largely of art and posters on the walls of the school. Much of it seemed to be the literal messages that were being sent to them by the school. Interestingly, there were a few things in the school that *all* of the participants took pictures of. All of the walls in the hallways of the school had motivational posters on them, but there was one pair of posters about responsibility that every student took a photo of.

There were numerous other posters that students took pictures of, many of them related to either responsibility or respect. Every poster that was photographed was done so by at least two different participants.





The students did not have to look hard to find these various motivational posters. Every wall that I saw during my time in the school had several posters on them. Even the walls of the staff bathroom had posters on them.

Students also all took pictures of the college banners that were around the school. College banners and pendants could be seen in a variety of places throughout the school.

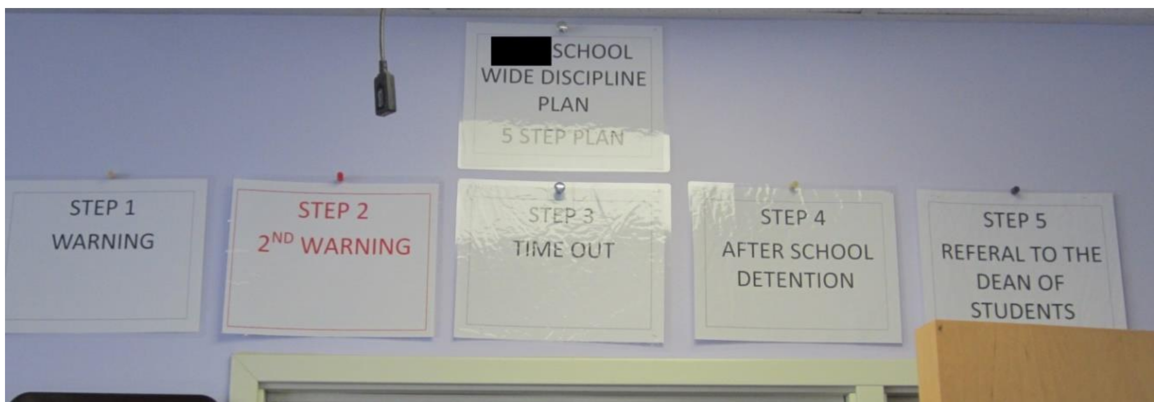
There were banners and pendants for a wide range of colleges and universities hanging in both hallways and classrooms.

The motivational posters and college banners were a message that the school was sending that was recognized and documented by all of the students. For them, then, the messages that the school sent about success and how to achieve it were universal: all students should go to college, and all students can achieve that through being motivated in the same way. Some of the students expressed appreciation for the posters. One of the participants claimed, "*They help me to be inspired*." When asked whether they would still be motivated without the posters, some of them said that they would not. I would argue that this view of themselves as lacking motivation is a message the school sends by covering the walls of the school with messages about a specific type of success and motivation. In using so many motivation posters, I would argue that the school sends the

message that the students need motivating – that without the intervention of the school, they would lack the proper motivation.

The motivational posters of the school indicate one message about success and how to achieve it for everyone. There are no other options given in the literal message of the school walls. There is also no indication given that members of minoritized groups might experience different obstacles. The message, then, is neutral in regards to gender, race, and class. The school was sending a message that they treated everyone equally. This carries the implication that any differences that occurred between students were a part of the natural order of things. The school message was that since any differences are a given, the only response to is treat everyone equally anyway. This does not leave space for questioning existing power structures or societal inequities.

The same is true of the other things that participants photographed that grace the walls of the school. Many rooms also contain the discipline plan, which again, carries the appearance of being applied equally to all (though I would argue that it is not). It was interesting that the discipline plan does not say anything about the ISS room, but it was clearly regularly used as both a threat and a punishment.



Some classrooms, in addition to having motivational posters, have posters of characters from popular culture.

I believe that these are also meant to appeal to all students. When I asked the students why they thought some teachers hung posters of popular characters in their classrooms, one boy participant claimed, "*Cause we like them*." Another boy agreed, "*Yeah, they're cool*." Two of the girl participants rolled their eyes during this exchange. This is not to imply that the posters only appealed to boys, only that the appeal of such posters was not universal.

Combined, the walls of the school seem meant to apply to a student body that is seen as homogenous. However, the students are not all the same, and the school, in reality, does not treat them as such. But the outward appearance of the school is one of a place of equality, and so the students struggled to identify ways in which the school treated them differently. These struggles will be explored more fully in the chapter on gender assemblages.

Cameras/Movement/Resistance

I expected to have more photographs to analyze at the end of the study. However, as the study progressed, students took fewer and fewer photographs. The majority of the photos that were taken by participants were taken within the first four weeks of the study.

The students still referred to their time after that as “taking pictures,” but when I checked the memory cards each week, there were very few new photos.

The cameras, which first served as a way for the students to take pictures, became something else to the participants. They still crowded around me each week, trying to be the first to get their cameras, and they carried the cameras around for the whole session each time. They carried the cameras in visible ways. They did not put the cameras in pockets or backpacks or purses; they carried them held in their hands in a way that conveyed an intention to take photos. However, they were no longer taking pictures. The cameras, instead, became access keys—keys that allowed them to enter spaces that they were not allowed to occupy during the school day.

The first signs that the participants’ agenda was changing came in conversations that I was having with participants at the start of the sessions. We would meet briefly to check in and talk about things they might photograph that afternoon. But I was confused by many of the conversations we were having about what to photograph. As an example, the following conversation occurred:

> Me: What do you want to take pictures of today that you haven’t had a chance to photograph yet?
>
> 5th grader: The music room.
>
> Me: Do you like music class?
>
> 5th grader: We don’t have music class in fifth grade.
>
> Me: Did it used to be one of your favorite classes?
>
> 5th grader: No.

I did not follow up initially, because I unsure of what to say in response. Soon, I noticed that it was part of a pattern that was developing. The sixth graders, who did not have art, wanted to get in to the art room; the fifth and sixth graders wanted pictures of the playground, where they no longer had recess; the fourth graders talked about taking pictures of the blacktop, where the older kids had recess; all the participants wanted to get over to the high school side of the building, where they were never allowed to go. They also expressed a desire to go to the Starbucks that could be seen from the front of the school; the participants all said that they had never been inside.

At the end of sessions they would report back that they were getting into the spaces where they desired to go (with the exception of the Starbucks – they were not allowed to leave school grounds). So, I expected that I would start seeing photos of these spaces when I looked at the memory cards after the sessions. But there were no photos in the art room, no photos on the blacktop, and only a couple photos from the playground

(where I was with them because it was the only way for them to gain access to that space).

The participants wanted to be in the spaces, but not to take pictures there. The cameras became simply hall passes or access keys. When they were asked for their reason to be in spaces, they could hold up the cameras, explain that they were taking pictures for what they called "photography club." Without the cameras, they would have been asked to leave the spaces; they would have had their movements controlled. With the cameras, they had an explanation for their presence, a permission slip to occupy the space. In this way, the cameras were important actants. The cameras acted on the entanglement; as the students moved around the building with the cameras, they were able to intra-act within the space differently. The cameras became a part of the participants' enacted subjectivities. The students could perform "photography club member," which allowed them freedom of movement that they didn't have when simply performing "student."

The students told me that they were limited in their movements during the school day, and I believe this desire to move throughout the building was because of the ways in which their bodies in the school space were tightly controlled. The interactions of the students with the material of the school building were limited by the teachers and administrators. Lot of school spaces were off limits to students. However, the spaces that the students were not allowed in were not less important to them than the spaces they were allowed in.

Hauntings

In this section, I use the term “haunted” not as a reference to ghosts, but to Derrida’s (1994) notion of *hauntology*. Derrida argues that we are always haunted by the *no longer* and the *not yet* (including the not yet of possibilities that may never come to pass). Derrida is not a new materialist, however, this notion of haunting fits with a New Materialist understanding of time as not being linear (e.g., Barad, 2007; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Past, present, and future exist simultaneously as actants within intra-actions. Barad (2007) offers,

> The past matters and so does the future, but the past is never left behind, never finished once and for all, and the future is not what will come to be in an unfolding of the present moment; rather the past and future are enfolded participants in matter’s iterative becoming. (p. 181)

This means that while we may think of the past and future as being separate from, and therefore less important than, the now, the past and future are always entangled with the present and a constant influence on the becoming of everyone (and everything). Although Derrida does not argue for a non-linear vision of time, his idea of *hauntology* does help in thinking about how an understanding of the agency of the past and future in the present might work (see also Gordon, 1997).

The participants seemed haunted by the spaces that they were unable to occupy in the school building. Because I am not using the term “haunting” in a traditional sense, I am not implying that the participants had some specific affect related to the spaces (e.g., longing). I am saying instead that the spaces that were restricted to them were still with them in some way, even though they were not a part of their present school day. Some of those spaces were part of the participants’ pasts (e.g., the music and art rooms), some of those spaces were part of the participants’ future (e.g., the high school side of the

building), and some of those spaces were simply part of not-yet possibilities (e.g., Starbucks). Those spaces of past and future possibilities existed as absent presences[11] for the participants. The participants expressed frustration about their inability to occupy those spaces during the school day, and those spaces were part of the entanglement of the students and the school, even when the participants were not in them at any given moment. I believe these hauntings influenced the participants' use of occupying spaces as resistance to the school's social control. The hauntings made them more aware of not being allowed in those school spaces, and this increased awareness may have increased their resistance to the school's control.

I experienced my own haunting during this study. When I first created the plan for this study, I had a specific school in mind for conducting the study. I contacted the school, and we discussed possibilities. In my head, I thought through running the study there. I envisioned how the study might go. Then, two months prior to the start of the study, the school backed out of the arrangement, and I had to find a new location for the study.

The school where I had originally planned to have the study was very different from the school where I ultimately conducted the study. The school from the original plan was a private school that had cameras and photo printers and snacks and all the other supplies I might need for conducting my study. It also had a student population that was more racially and ethnically diverse and also middle class. The resulting study would have been entirely different.

[11] The terms "absent presence" and "present absence" are sometimes used in literature about *hauntings* (e.g., Degen & Hetherington, 2001; Tonkin, 2012) as well as other areas, including discussions of gender (e.g., Apple, 1983; Lather, 1987).

I am not sorry that I conducted my study were I did. I became attached to my participants, and I feel like I provided an opportunity for my participants to resist the social control of their school. But that did not stop me from comparisons that occurred in my mind between the study I had and the study that I might have had. With every obstacle I encountered, from having to find enough cameras to being stuck in the ISS room, I imagined how it might have been otherwise. I was haunted by the possibility of what might have been. And so, the space of the other school, and the material objects that would have come with it, existed as part of my research entanglement. They impacted my own performance within the study, as there was a running thought in my head of what would have been otherwise. I believe that this haunting increased my feelings of resentment and made it more difficult for me to move around the school and feel comfortable in the space.

Conclusion

The school building and the spaces in it, the cameras, and all the other non-human actants in this entanglement were important to the "extended self" of all of the participants. The material actants that existed within this study cannot be abstracted or treated as neutral. Additionally, non-human objects such as the cameras and the posters each impacted the entanglement in unique ways; therefore, material actants cannot be viewed as a homogenous force. Attending to the ways in which the material objects in this study were part of the selves of the participants can help us to understand the intra-relational character of studenthood and school materiality.

Chapter 5

Bodies

Cameras/Movement/Resistance[12]

As I discussed in the previous chapter, after a few weeks, the primary agenda for the participants seemed to move from taking photographs to moving around the building. The students, carrying their cameras, would move in flexible groups around the building. As they indicated in conversations with me, they placed a priority on occupying spaces that they were not allowed access to during the school day.

My participants complained that their movements were closely monitored throughout the day. Their bodies were tightly disciplined and regulated. During the school day, they were always told where to go and when and punished if they were found in places they had not been told to go. One participant shared

> I got caught by the principal today walking through that back hallway. He said that I'm not supposed to be doing that and that the next time he sees me do that I'm gonna get in really bad trouble… I was just going to class. Me and my friend was just trying to see what was the fastest way back from the nurses office, so she walked one way and I walked the other way.

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[12] Because of variation in the way the term "resistance" is used in education literature, I want to take the time here to define what I mean when I use the term. Some scholars have argued that the term "resistance" when applied to marginalized youth in the context of school can take on negative connotations (e.g., Bottrell, 2007; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001). Solorzano and Bernal (2001) claim that some studies of youth resistance focus on "self-defeating resistance," which "helps to recreate the oppressive conditions from which it originated" (p. 310). Bottrell (2007) furthers this critique by arguing that the idea of youth resistance sometimes become conflated with that of at-risk youth, which again reinforces dominant structures. However, Solorzano and Bernal and Bottrell explain that youth resistance can be given a positive frame. Solorzano and Bernal point to Yosso's (2001) model of *resilient resistance*. In this type of resistance, students' actions "leave the structures of domination intact, yet help the students survive and/or succeed" (Yosso, 2001, as cited in Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 320). Bottrell defines this type of resistance as "practices which express opposition to rules and norms in specific contexts, and which contain critiques of social relations, from the lived experience of marginalization" (p. 599). She calls this type of resistance "identity work" (p. 599) because it is about students pushing back on school's attempts at defining them. She, like Yosso, associates this type of resistance with resilience. When I use the term "resistance" in the context of this study, I am specifically referring to this type of *resilient resistance*. The participants in this study are pushing back on messages from the school (and me) about their identities and showing resilience through their actions.

This meant that the school not only tried to control where students went but also how they moved from one part of the building to another. This student was considered to be violating school rules even though she was walking to class. They further informed me that control over their bodies was so tight that even their movements to the restrooms were restricted. One participant explained that when he first came to the school "*they told me that we couldn't go to the bathroom individually, and I was like, 'What?'*" Instead of being allowed to go to the restrooms individually as needed, students are brought to the bathroom as a class. Additionally, a student from the class is assigned to be the bathroom monitor and expected to supervise their peers while they wash and dry their hands.

I initially felt frustrated when I discovered that the participants were not taking photos. I believed that it was a failing on my part. I worried that I had not given them the right prompt to encourage more photo taking. I tried to give them a different prompt after the first round of photo analysis discussion, but I saw no resulting increase in photo taking. When I gave the new prompt, the participants agreed that they would take more photos and gave examples of what they might photograph. However, they did not take those pictures.

Despite my claims to a method that was emergent, I tried to push the participants into taking photos. I also tried to get them interested in manipulating the photos that they had already taken. After we discussed the printed photos, I offered materials and time to create other pieces of art with the photographs. I hoped that maybe some other form of visual art would take shape in the place of photography. What I did not see at first was that the students were using their bodies as a form of resistance. Rather than using the

photographs as a way of responding the messages the school sends them, they were using the ways they operated their bodies in the building.

The participants told me on several occasions that they did not like the ways in which the school controlled their bodies, from uniforms to their movements during the day. They used the opportunities afforded to them by the study to resist this control by occupying spaces that were normally denied to them. They used the cameras as passes to move freely around the building in ways they otherwise could not. They ran in the halls (or so they reported to me – the layout of the school was such that I could not actually observe them running); they wandered through the forbidden high school side of the building; they took a tour of the kitchen; they hid from each other around corners and doorways. They even took the opportunity to spend time in the bathrooms unmonitored.

During the later discussion sessions, they asked for permission to leave the ISS room to talk to teachers, visit their lockers, or go to the bathroom. They later reported that they were just giving excuses so that they could go and wander the building.

Scholars argue that schools, in tightly controlling the movements of students' bodies, send the message that the student bodies are dangerous, unruly, and in need of external control (Apple, 2004; Foucault, 1977; Giroux & Purpel, 1983; E.W. Morris, 2005). In moving freely throughout the building, participants resisted not only the control of their bodies, but also the message from the school that their bodies were unruly and in need of control. Furthermore, because the mind and body are one, rather than separate, control of the body is actually control of the mind/body. The school, then, is not just implying that student bodies are dangerous, but that their whole selves are dangerous. Foucault (1977) claims that these measures of control create "docile" bodies, but I would push further to claim that the control creates "docile" mind/bodies. This makes resistance to control a form of *identity work* (Bottrell, 2007) that is both more difficult and more necessary. This resistance is a form of resilience as participants claim their own identities in the face of oppression. This meets Yosso's (2001) definition of *resilient resistance*, as it is "a strategic response to microagressions" (Yosso, 2001, as cited in Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 320) that allows participants to survive in environments that seek to label and oppress them.

In no longer taking photos, the participants were also resisting my research agenda. Despite my best efforts, I was still an adult in the school giving them directions and trying to control what they did, thereby sending a message that they were in need of my help and guidance. They initially followed my plan, but as the sessions went on, they

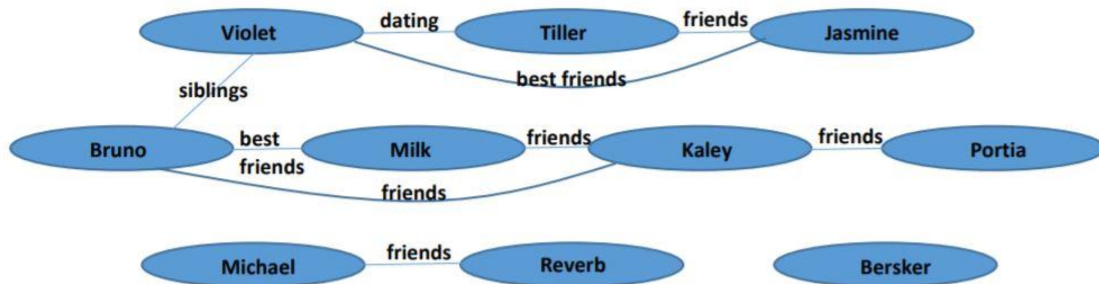
took fewer and fewer photos, and they eventually stopped taking photos entirely. They rejected my idea of manipulating the photos. During the last two sessions, they asked to leave the ISS room for a variety of reasons during group discussions. They resisted my control of the study and of them. I had the belief that I knew the best way for the study to proceed and that my knowledge of how to resist the school was more complete than theirs. The participants resisted not only my plan, but also the idea that I knew better than they did how to proceed. Once again, they resisted both the control and the messages that came with the control of who they were and what their abilities were. This again shows their resilience in the face of forces that they perceived as oppressive.

If I had been focused primarily on the students' discourse and had not analyzed the interactions between their bodies and the space, I would have missed this important piece of resilient resistance on their part. In discussions, although they said that they did not like the ways the school controlled their movements, they also reported that they felt that this control was necessary. When I asked them how it would be if they were allowed to move around freely during the school day, they shouted, "*Chaos!*" They made various suggestions of what might occur, including students "*wrecking everything*" and "*skipping class*." Had I attended only to that, I might have missed the ways in which their movements contradicted those statements and claimed a different identity than the one placed on them by the oppressive forces of the school. I also might have seen my study as more of a failure, since the participants stopped taking photos despite reassurances they gave me that they were going to continue photographing the school.

Mapping of their Relationships to Each Other

Many of the participants came in to the after school program with pre-existing relationships, while others did not really know each other prior to the study. With only two classrooms per grade level, it might seem like all the students should know each other. However, student movements were very limited. Therefore, students had limited contact with students who were outside of their grade level. The sibling relationship between two of my participants caused some additional knowledge of participants to each other between grade levels.

In order to show the pre-existing relationships between participants, I have created a map of their friendships. This map does not include a notation of the knowledge Bruno and Violet each had of their sibling's friends.[13]



As you can see from the map, only Bersker did not have a relationship with any of the other participants prior to the start of the study. The fourth graders seemed to have less prior knowledge of the fifth or sixth graders than those two groups had of each other. Because of the sibling relationship between Violet and Bruno, the fifth and sixth graders in the study seemed to know more about each other than was often the case between

[13] All of the names used are pseudonyms. Whenever possible, the pseudonyms used were chosen by the participants themselves.

grade levels. I believe that these pre-existing relationships increased the speed with which the participants became comfortable with each other. This made a difference in their comfort in moving around the building together and in their willingness to address difficult topics during discussions. I think it also increased the amount of arguing and play fighting that occurred.

My Dreams about Teaching

I periodically have nightmares about teaching elementary school, despite the fact that I haven't taught in five years, and when I was teaching, I enjoyed it. In these bad dreams, I have a class of students that I cannot control. I try and try to get the students to stop misbehaving, but nothing works. In the dream, I feel completely helpless and frustrated. Sometimes the feelings linger after I awake. I believe that it is not a coincidence that I had one of these dreams after the second session of the study. My intra-actions with the participants left me feeling frustrated. For all of my commitment to being researcher/participant and not acting so strongly as a teacher/authority figure, I was not comfortable in that position.

I taught in elementary schools for 10 years. I was comfortable in the role of teacher, but I had no idea how to be part of a school entanglement in any other role. The participants wanted to cast me in the role of teacher, and that was the role I understood how to play. Constantly fighting that in an attempt to create something different left me feeling like I had no control over anything that was happening, and that was harder for me than I anticipated. Not only did I now know how to not behave as "teacher," I didn't know how to make the participants see my white, middle class, 40-something year old body as anything other than "teacher." I also had to figure out how to balance the

responsibility that I did have for the participants and their safety with respecting their decision making abilities and giving them space to change the design of the study.

Calling me Mrs. Robinson

At the beginning of the study, I introduced myself to my participants and told them to call me Kirsten. I repeated the directive several times in the course of the study. It was a part of my (failed) attempt at not being seen as an authority figure. The participants did not call me Kirsten. Instead, the majority of them called me Ms. Robinson, which is not my name. It is not, interestingly, the first time that I have been referred to as Ms. Robinson. I have previously had some students who referred to me that way. I believe that Robinson is a more common surname than Robbins, and so some students take that up. I am, I believe, partly to blame for their continuing to call my by the wrong name. When they would ask me in the first few weeks to repeat my name for them, I would say "Kirsten," which was not what they wanted. Had I said, "Mrs. Robbins," I think they may have switched.

I include this description of their naming of me in the section on "Bodies" because I would argue that it was my performance, especially the appearance of my body, that led to their insistence on calling me *Ms. Robinson* rather than *Kirsten*. My white, 40-something year old, middle class body had a lot in common with the bodies of the other adults in the school building, all of whom the students called by their surnames. Added to that were the material objects that were a part of my performance. I came every week with snacks and cameras and administrative forms. I was an adult who had the financial means to provide them with things that had value to them. In exchange for access to those things, I asked for their participation. They saw this exchange as putting me in the same

category as the other adults in the building. My attempts at getting them to call me Kirsten were a resistance to being placed in the category of teacher, but the attempts failed. As I mentioned previously, some of my own performances may have worked against my resistance.

This is not to say that I was not partially responsible for this through other aspects of my performance. As I noted in the Materials chapter, the smell of the school encouraged my performance of "teacher" as I had performed it in the past, instead of the performance of fellow researcher/participant that I had wanted to achieve. I also found that the performances of the students caused me to respond to them from a position of authority. This may have contributed to their desire to resist not only the school but also my research plan. I was another adult trying to control them, and resisting my plan for the study was one more way for them to take ownership of control of their own bodies and performances.

Teacher/Researcher Body

My white, female, middle class body influenced the way my participants seemed to read my performance as teacher. But other, hidden aspects of my body also caused me to perform in ways consistent with expectations of *teacher*. I did not know where the bathroom was until the seventh meeting of the study. My history as a teacher made me feel uncomfortable with the idea of asking a participant where the bathroom was. I eventually stumbled onto it during a time when I ventured away from the ISS room to take pictures. The bathroom was in a small hallway that led to the nurse's office.

Except for the week when I found the bathroom, I did not use the restroom at all during my time in the school. I often made sure that I did not drink extra fluids in the morning on the days that I was conducting the study so that I would not have a need for the restroom. This hesitancy harkens back to my times as a teacher, both because time was often not allotted for bathroom breaks and because female teachers are often expected to be separate from their bodies. In addition to the fact that some scholars argue that bathroom use by women is seen as a site of disgust (e.g., Plaskow, 2016), woman teachers are supposed to separate themselves from their female bodies (e.g., Atkinson, 2008; hooks, 1994). Atkinson (2008) argues that schools have the expectation that "the

teacher's physical body, especially if it is female, must be 'erased'" (p. 112). In trying to maintain an erasure of my female body, I continued to perform as *teacher* and to separate myself from my participants.

In trying to separate my performance from my female body, I was also unintentionally reinforcing a narrative of gender neutrality. It was pretending that my woman-ness and my embodied performance of it were not impacting my interactions and the study as a whole. My separation from my own body may have contributed to the difficulty that the students had in discussions about gender and other embodied identity markers.

Touching as Sexual Marking

During the first meeting, I encouraged the participants to come up with a list of rules for taking photographs as well as a list of group norms for discussions. Included in the list of group norms were "Be respectful," "Don't talk when other people are talking," and "Don't put your hands on people." I suspected at the time that they were including norms that they were expected to include. I don't think that I was the first adult to ask them to create norms for group interactions, and I suspect that they gave me the list they thought I expected. Even still, I thought that they would adhere to the list they created. However, they did not.

They frequently put their hands on each other. The touching began with the boy participants. They would pretend that their hand was an electric razor and buzz the top of each other's heads. They would chase each other around the ISS room, buzzing each other's heads. They also talked about doing that to each other on the rare occasions that they encountered each other during the school day. For the majority of the sessions, it

was only the boys that participated in this physical play. However, during the last two sessions, the boys in the group started involving the girls in the play. Rather than buzzing the girls' heads, they would run up to the girls and pretend to cut their hair. The girls then retaliated by buzzing the boys' heads.

I believe this physical play was a form of bonding and expression of affection between participants. Some scholars argue that the pressure of heteronormativity in schools limits the ways in which boys can show affection (e.g., Heasley & Crane, 2012; Renold, 2007). Therefore, boys use "slaps and punches" rather than other displays of affection, so as not to be seen as homosexual (e.g., Heasley & Crane, 2012). The boys felt a group membership and affiliation that they wanted to display without risking their own heterosexual status. When they included the girls, they still used this physical play; in this way, they could avoid being seen as having romantic interest in the girls in the group.

Outside of this physical play within the last two sessions, the girls did not engage in much touching. During the first three sessions (prior to Jasmine being expelled), Jasmine and Violet would grab each other by the arm occasionally, either to drag the other one along or as emphasis in conversation. However, none of the other girl participants touched each other at any time. Even when the play began with the boy participants, the girls engaged in physical play with the boys but not with each other. I believe that the girls saw a similar taboo in touching each other as the boys did. Jasmine and Violet may have exempted themselves from this because of the nature of their friendship. Jasmine frequently referred to Violet as "*Mommy*," which I thought was because Violet was viewed as the more responsible of the two of them, but also served to

set up their relationship as familial, thereby making touching between them not a marker of sexual desire.

Some of the boy participants expressed concern about more traditional displays of affection that occurred between other boys in the school. During one session when the topic of dating came up, Bruno said, "*I'm concerned about the kindergarteners because I saw two boys walking down the hall and they were holding hands. They had their hands all looped up.*" Bruno began the sentence several times while other people were talking, but he waited until it was quiet to say the whole thing. It seemed as though he wanted to make sure that everyone heard him (it is important to note that only the boys were in the room for this discussion). The fourth grade boys agreed that boys holding hands was a problem. One said, "*That's just a wrong image*," and another said, "*Ew*." These boys were expressing distaste for an activity that they felt was representative of homosexual feelings. Their discourse distances them from the possibility of being other than heterosexual. The sixth grade boy, Tiller, on the other hand, told the other participants that they were coming to the wrong conclusion about the kindergarteners. He said, "*That's just children. They're just kids. It doesn't mean anything*." The absence of a need on his part to similarly distance himself from non-heterosexual behavior may come, in part, from the fact that he was dating one of the girl participants, which cemented his heterosexual status. Additionally, his words separate the participants from "children." By saying that the kindergartener's behavior is OK because they are children, he is painting them as innocent and implying that he and the other participants are other than innocent. When I asked the participants about dating at their school, they told me that dating started

around third grade, which placed them all above the starting age for dating. This may be the line that separates them from the "children."

Tiller and Violet, the sixth graders who claimed to be dating, were the only ones who touched each other in any way other than play fighting. The amount of their touching increased throughout the course of the study. For the first several meetings, they did not touch at all in my viewing. After the fifth meeting, when Violet was suspended, they would hug goodbye at the end of the meetings. During the last two meetings, Tiller would occasionally put his hand on Violet's arm or shoulder. They often walked around together during picture taking time, and they were out of my view for long periods of time, so it is possible that there was additional touching that went on then as well. However, they were never alone (there were always other participants with them), and the school had cameras in every classroom and hallway, so I doubt there was much additional touching. The dean of students told me that Violet and Tiller had previously been caught kissing the hallway during the school day, and so it is possible that they took advantage of the time outside of being supervised to touch each other a little more. "Dating" as sixth graders seemed to be comprised entirely of the time they could spend together in school. Tiller told me that they never saw each other outside of school and that Violet's step-father did not like them to talk on the phone. But this practice of both heterosexuality and more "adult" behavior seemed important to them.

The students' words and the interactions of their bodies seemed to support literature that claims that students in school feel pressured to perform heterosexuality (e.g., Heasley & Crane, 2012; S. Jackson, 2006; Renold, 2000, 2005). This practice of heterosexuality is not only related to their performance of their sexuality, but also to the

practice of their gender. Renold (2000) explains that in this "compulsory heterosexuality… to be a 'normal' girl or boy involves the projection of a coherent and abiding heterosexual self" (p. 309). Therefore, the touching the occurred between students was part of their performance of their sexuality and their gender. This included the 'dating' related touching that occurred between Tiller and Violet. Renold (2007) claims that it is common for some boys to engage in "hyperheterosexualities" by creating a status for themselves of "professional boyfriend" (p. 279). Tiller seemed to fall into this category. He told me that he had a long series of girlfriends, starting when he was very young. In his own words, "*I'm always dating somebody. I always have a girlfriend*." Because of this, Tiller did not need to be involved in the physical play or the disparaging of the kindergarten boys holding hands in order to solidify his heterosexual and therefore 'normal' boy status. Even while "going out" with Violet, Tiller talked about his desirability as a "boyfriend." At the beginning of one session, Tiller told Violet (but loudly enough for the group to hear) that he was tired because a "*really ugly girl*" was texting him the previous night. He then offered to show everyone the texts, but no one indicated a desire to see them. During the session that Violet missed due to her suspension, Tiller talked about how much he missed her and that other girls were taking advantage of Violets absence to flirt with him. He claimed, "*Girls flirt with me all the time, but I don't cheat on my girlfriends. I'm not that kind of guy*." For Tiller, the performance of heterosexuality seemed to be important to his sense of himself.

I had a hard time with seeing any touching between the participants. As a former teacher, I was trained to not allow students to touch at school. "Keep your hands to yourself," is a common phrase that teachers use in schools to keep students from putting

their hands on each other for any reason, and it is a phrase that I had used many times in my years as a teacher. Leafgren (2011) explains, “Keeping children apart—apart from nature, apart from the material world—*and especially apart from one another*—is an overt mechanism of school [emphasis added]” (p. 36). This mechanism of school had been ingrained in me during my years as a teacher. As a result, I tried on occasion to stop the participants from play fighting. During one session, I reminded them about the agreement they had made not to put their hands on each other. One of the boys said, “*But we are just playing*.” This was echoed by several other participants, who said, “*Yeah, it’s just playing around*.” The idea that this was just “playing around” was supported by the fact that none of the participants ever asked me to stop another participant from touching them in this way. They might not have seen this type of touching as violating the agreements that they had made because it was “playing around” and did not come with the intention to hurt others. After this, I stopped trying to keep the participants from their physical play, but when the playing escalated to include some bumping and shoving, I told them that they needed to tone it down and be careful not to hurt one another.

I was also troubled by the physical affection between Tiller and Violet; I felt like it was my responsibility to see that the touching didn’t go too far (though I’m not sure that I had a specific line in my mind about what *too far* was). After the dean of students told me that they had been caught kissing, I was worried about what might be happening when they were off by themselves, even though they were never alone together (other participants were always with them). I felt responsible for maintaining their innocence, while at the same time I felt like I couldn’t monitor them too closely. I did know that there are cameras throughout the building, which the students knew about, and I believed

that that knowledge would impact their behavior. I also talked to the group about expectations that I had for their behavior when they were not with me because we did not want the study to be ended by the school because of bad behavior, and they all agreed to follow the rules. Still, I was also worried about how I would be implicated if they were caught touching in inappropriate ways. I was afraid that I would be told that I could no longer perform the study if they were caught kissing in the building during picture taking time. I was also concerned about putting Violet in a difficult position in which she might be pressured by Tiller to be more physical with him than she wanted to be. However, I was never worried about the possibility that Violet might pressure Tiller. As is the case with many adults, I saw the students as innocent, particularly as it relates to sexuality (for more on the historically Western belief of children as sexually innocent, see Kehily & Montgomery, 2004), but I saw the female participants as being even more innocent than the males. Renold (2007) argues that this feeling of needing to protect female children is common and a byproduct of the Western notion of child innocence and the eroticization of "innocent" female children (p. 278). I struggled with the decision to let them wander unsupervised. However, I ultimately decided that it was important to let them engage in their resistance to the control of their bodies that they felt from the school; because they saw me as one more adult in the school, if I supervised their movements, it would undermine their resistance. I never got any reports of inappropriate behavior from any of the other participants or from the school, so I believe that they did not violate school rules.

The feelings of discomfort that I had related to participants touching forced me to think about the ways in which I was complicit in the schools attempts at controlling

student bodies. I realized that I was buying in to schools' messages about the dangerous unruliness of the bodies of children. I did not trust participants to know where the line was between playing and fighting or to adhere to it. My entanglements within school spaces had created a resistance in my body to seeing touching between student bodies. I had an affective response to any touching that I saw; I felt an embodied discomfort that led me to want to control the participants' bodies. I resisted the urge after the participants told me it was just playing, because I recognized my complicity in the school goal of body control. However, the affective response remained. Admittedly, there was also the tension that existed between my desire to give them some latitude and my responsibility as the adult in charge. Finding balance between not seeing the student bodies as unruly and in need of control and still enforcing rules to keep students safe is difficult.

Dress Code

The school has a dress code. Students are required to wear a polo shirt with the school's logo on it and slacks in one of three colors. They must wear a belt and tuck in their shirt. When it is cold out, they have the option of wearing a sweatshirt with the school logo on it.

They are not allowed to wear sweaters or jackets or other additional layers. Students who are in violation of the dress code are held in the office until someone can bring them the appropriate clothing, or they are sent home. Several of my girl participants complained of having jackets or sweaters taken from them when they put them on in class (the boys did not make similar complaints, but I think that is because they did not try to wear jackets in class; I base this on the observation that my girl participants wore jackets during meetings, and the boys generally did not).

Unlike some other schools, this school did not have different uniforms for boys and girls. The uniform requirements for each were almost identical; the only exception was that girls were allowed to wear skirts. This was another area in which the school put forth the idea that the treatment of boys and girls in the school was identical. The dean

told me that in the following year they are not going to allow skirts anymore; instead they are going to have an official school pant that all students will have to wear. Like the posters on the walls, this policy sends the message that all students are the same and will be treated in the same way.

Dress code policies are also another way for a school to control the bodies of its students. Dussel (2005) claims that dress codes are a method of "rigorously training unruly bodies" (p. 180). In this school, it is one more way in which the students were kept under control and made 'safe.' It also reassures adults in the building that the students are able to be managed and controlled. Students who wear uniforms can be read as 'docile' bodies (or, as I have previously argued, mind/bodies). However, Dussel argues that this body control serves multiple purposes. In the United States, schools that have uniforms are often either elite private schools or poorer urban (with mostly minoritized student populations) schools. According to Dussel, students with black or brown bodies who are wearing uniforms are therefore often read as low-SES. In this way, the uniform makes the students homogenous within the school, but it causes them to be read as *other* within larger society.

The girl participants resisted the control of their bodies by wearing jackets during the after school meetings. They wore jackets, zipped up, through every meeting until the weather warmed up and they no longer had jackets with them.

As far as I know, none of the adults in the building told them that they couldn't wear jackets in the building during after school time. Although the boy participants complained about the uniforms as much as the girls, none of them wore jackets during any of the meetings. More than once, girl participants referred to the uniforms as "*not cute*." It may be that girls felt more pressure than males to look "cute," and they wore jackets to hide the "not cute" uniform shirts. Renold (2000) claims that girls of this age are invested in making their bodies into "heterosexually desirable commodities" (p. 310) because to be a proper 'girl' means to be both heterosexual and the recipient of the male gaze. Additionally, on top of being "not cute," the uniform shirts were identical for boys and girls, which also contributed to them not being seen as the best way to display femininity.

For the third meeting, one of the boy participants came in with red suspenders on. He was not wearing them over his shoulders, but instead, they were hanging down from his waist. He said that because he didn't cause trouble, he got away with wearing them. The girls expressed annoyance that he was allowed to wear them because they were always called out by teachers for any dress code violations. One of the girl participants claimed that "*boys get away with that stuff, but girls don't*." The other participants agreed

that that was true, though they did not give other examples of violations of the dress code. Although the participants regularly complained about the dress code, the comments were always kept brief. They never stayed on the topic for long and seemed eager to move on to other subjects. I suspect that there were two reasons for this. The first is that, like with control of their movements, the students believed that the dress code was necessary. Secondly, the students were all low-SES; it may be that the idea of wearing other clothes was more appealing in the abstract that specific thoughts about what clothes they might be able to wear instead. The dean of students told me that one reason that they had a dress code was to prevent students from teasing each other about clothes, given the struggle that some families might have in providing clothes for their children. The school had a policy of giving uniform shirts and pants to families that needed them. However, as seen in the next section, uniforms did not stop students from using markers on the body to classify students' financial statuses.

Shoes

As I mentioned previously, when the students stopped taking photos, I tried initially to give different prompts in the hopes that they would be inspired to take more pictures. At the beginning of one session, I tried a suggestion that I had received and directed the students, "*Imagine that someone is thinking about coming to school here from somewhere else. Take pictures for them of what it means to be a student at this school*." Most of the participants continued to not take any pictures. One participant, however, returned with a bunch of photographs of students' shoes.

When he returned to show me the pictures I was initially frustrated.

> Me: I asked you to take pictures of what it means to be a student at this school. Why did you just take pictures of shoes?
>
> Bruno: Because, shoes matter at this school.
>
> Me: Why do shoes matter?
>
> Bruno: Because everybody always be looking at everybody else's shoes, and if your shoes are bad, then you are exposed.

The next week, I asked the group about their thoughts about shoes. They all agreed that shoes were important and that everyone was always checking out everyone else's shoes. I asked them what they were looking for when they looked at people's shoes. They

explained that people often looked to see what brands of shoes other students were wearing. The conversation then got steered away from shoes.

As I reflected on the conversation over the next few days, I was certain that shoes were a marker for class. Students all had to wear the same clothes, so shoes were a way for them to gauge one another's socio-economic status and to express themselves inside the confines of the uniform structure. I decided that I would ask my participants about the socioeconomic aspect of shoes the following week. I asked, "*You guys talked about quality of the shoes, but I'm wondering… does it really have to do with the cost? Does looking at the shoes tell you something about how much money someone has?*" There was a chorus of "*No*"s from my participants. All of them said no. Then they all began to talk over one another in an effort to explain. Several people said, "*It's not the money*." This was followed by attempts at clarification: "*It's the name brand*;" "*It's the type of shoes*;" "*People usually make fun of shoes cause how your shoes look, like if it's dirty, if it's old*;" "*It's not the cost, cause like, what if you got tight shoes, but they were, like, on sal*e;" "*Or like, if your shoes is dusty*;" "*It's good if you have Jordans or Converse*." They then started asking me about what else I wanted to talk about, signaling their desire to close the topic of shoes.

I am unconvinced that shoes are not a marker of social class. Although they claimed that shoes are not an indicator of how much money someone has, their responses about the importance of brand names, cleanliness, and newness of shoes indicates to me that shoes are a marker of financial status. I could not initially figure out why they were all adamant about shoes not being an indication of money. It took a while for me to think about the shoes of the participants themselves and what they might mean. None of my

participants wore either Jordans or Converse (the brand names they claimed were the best). One girl participant, who only attended one session, claimed to have a pair of Jordans, but she was the exception (her markers of socio-economic status and what they meant in terms of group dynamics will be included in the chapter on gender assemblages). Additionally, for the most part, the participants' shoes did not look new. I believe that their reluctance to admit that shoes marked social class came from the fact that their own shoes would then have marked them as being lower socio-economic status themselves.

It was only on reflection that I realized that, in asking them if shoes were a class marker, I was asking them to mark themselves. I knew that the demographics of the school included a majority of students on free and reduced lunch, and I knew from earlier conversations that my participants were most likely from lower-SES families. But I believe that my own middle class status got in the way of my recognizing their shoes as markers of their status.

But also, they talked about shoes in a way that *othered* people who wore less desirable shoes. They spoke about shoes in a way that made it sound like they had shoes in the favorable category, and it was different students who had shoes that were not as desirable. It didn't occur to me until later that, with the exception of one participant, they did not have expensive or new looking, brand name shoes.

Hair

Hair, I believe, was another marker of financial status for students. However, other than two brief mentions of hair, the participants would not talk to me about it. When Bruno first told me about shoes, at the end of the conversation, he said "*shoes and*

hairlines matter." After he said that, several other participants came into the room. I asked him what he meant by "hairlines," but he refused to elaborate. When we had the conversation as a whole group, I brought up hairlines after shoes, but no one would talk about it. All of the participants continued to talk about shoes and seemed to pretend that they did not hear the question. At one point in the conversation, Bruno said "*hairlines and weave*," but when I asked him about it, he pretended that he had not said it. I tried on one subsequent occasion to bring up the topic again, but it was apparent that the participants did not want to have that conversation with me, so I did not push it further.

I did ask an African American colleague about what my participants might have meant. She told me that hairlines (for men) and weave (for women) are sometimes used as markers of socioeconomic status in the Black community. It is another way that students could use the appearance of their peers' bodies to make judgements about their class. I can only guess that my participants did not feel comfortable talking to me about it because I am white. Thompson (2009) argues that for African Americans, hair is both personal and political. My participants may have felt that I would not understand their hair and their feelings about it. Although some schools have tried to control the hair of their (Black) students (e.g., Byrd & Tharps, 2014), this school did not have strict rules governing hair included in the dress code.

Why do Bodies Matter?

Paying attention to my participants' bodies and the ways in which they interacted with each other and the space helped me understand the ways in which they performed their subjectivities and resisted the school. The participants struggled to discuss gender, and often tried to move on to other topics when I tried to ask questions about it. During

our first analysis of photographs when I asked participants whether the school treated boys and girls differently, one participant said, "*Can we talk about the question next week?*" However, their embodied performances were gendered. The play fighting, the dating, and the dress code violations were all participant attempts at performing their (heterosexual) genders.

It is important to note here that when I say "embodied," I mean mind/body as one unit. De Freitas and Sinclair (2014) argue that some people use words like embodied while "continuing to treat the human body and the material world as interrelated but distinct elements of a system." My argument is that they cannot be taken apart; rather than being distinct elements, mind/body cannot be separated. Certainly in the performances of my participants, as well as in the ways they read each other, body and mind are indistinguishable. This becomes more apparent when we take seriously performance (or as the New Materialists would argue, phenomena) as the base of subjectivity. This was highlighted for me in the difficulty that I had in separating out ideas into the chapter headings of "The Material," "Bodies," and "Gender Assemblages."

How are Bodies Complicated by the Material?

The interactions between bodies, cameras, and school spaces were a central part of this study. The students used the cameras as a way to change the ways in which their bodies could move in and interact with the space. Without the cameras, the ways that participant bodies could interact with the school building would have been more restricted. The cameras became a part of the "extended self" of the participants, and those selves had different access than their student selves. The building itself played a role in

student resistance as well. Without restricted spaces in the building, the students would not have been able to use occupying those spaces as a form of resistance.

Although I had subheadings for both “dress code” and “shoes” in this chapter on bodies, both are examples of the complex interplay between the material and bodies. Shoes and clothes are non-human matter, but they are seen as part of the students’ bodies, as they are never seen without those articles at school. Those items become an important part of the students’ embodied performance of their subjectivities. They were part of entanglements in which the participants performed both resistance and conformity to expectations, rules, and norms.

Conclusion

Because the mind/body dualism is a false construction, thinking about bodies is important to understand the performance of subjectivities, including the performance of gender. Participants used their bodies in ways that took up some of the school’s messages while resisting others. The participants’ performances indicated that would leave unchallenged traditional messages about the ways of being a ‘normal’ boy or girl, including the fixed nature of gender and the importance of the performance of heterosexuality. Their embodied performances (such as touching) conformed to the school’s (and larger society’s) expectations of how to express gender and sexuality. Their discourse around shoes also conformed to ideas of classism, while simultaneously resisting negative self-interpretations by denying concerns with socioeconomic status. At the same time, participants used their movements and interactions with the material to resist the social control of the school and my control of the study. Participants used jackets, suspenders, shoes, and hair to resist the ways in which the uniform requirements

rendered them homogenous and unrecognizable. However, they did this in ways that conformed to gender expectations. They also used cameras and movements throughout the building to resist the school's control of their movements. They used these same movements to resist my control of the study. They agreed to my directive to use the cameras, but they did it in a way that resisted my plan for the study.

Chapter 6

Gender Assemblages

In creating this study, I was interested in looking at the ways that students received messages from the school about their gender and how to perform it. I knew that it would be difficult to disentangle gender from other aspects of the participants performance (e.g., around other identity markers). In this chapter, I discuss some of the interactions that occurred in the study related to gender and its interplay with other identity markers. I use the term "assemblages" to discuss the entangled nature of performed subjectivities. These assemblages complicated my attempts to understand how messages about the performance of gender as a discreet variable impacted my participants. Of course, my purpose was not to try to distill gender out as though it could be pulled apart from the assemblage, but rather to describe my witness of and complicity with genderedness within this entanglement.

Trying to Discuss Gender

Because of my interest in discussions about gender, I asked the students specifically about differences in the ways in which boys and girls are treated in the school. I was not seeing differences in the types of photos they were taking, and so I decided to raise the question during our first full group photo analysis session. On that occasion, I got a variety of noncommittal responses. One participant said, "*Well, equal rights, but…*" Another responded, "*Um…uh… Can we talk about the question next week?*" Another said, "*Well, your body parts are different…*" There were a lot of long pauses and "*um*" noises. They ultimately said that there were "*not really*" any differences in how it was to be a boy or a girl at their school. During that discussion, there was only

one girl participant present, and she did not say much. The majority of the discussion took place between the boy participants (all of whom were present). I wondered then if the absence of seeing a difference in the way the genders were treated came from their position of privilege.

I brought the gender question up on two other occasions in the hopes of getting further responses. The second time I brought it up, there were an equal number of boys and girls present. This time, the participants insisted that there was a difference between being a boy and being a girl at their school, but they struggled with articulating what the differences were. When I asked the question, I suggested that during the last discussion, the conclusion had been that the school treated boys and girls the same. There was an immediate outcry from several participants of "*No!*" Other participants repeated, "*Not the same. Not the same.*" However, then there were pauses and "*um*" noises for a few minutes before they started to argue about differences. The boys insisted that the girls had "*more drama*," while the girls insisted that it was the boys who had more drama. But ultimately, both groups agreed that the school did not treat them any differently based on gender. When I raised the question again in the final session, the participants again struggled to articulate any differences, and then they switched gears to talk about race (the conversation about race is detailed later in this chapter). When I asked again about gender after the race discussion, one boy said, "*Well, the girls have better bathrooms*," but then he admitted that he had never actually seen the girls' restrooms, he just had heard that they were better. The girls insisted that the girls' bathrooms were not that nice, and then the participants asked if they could be done with the discussion.

The students seemed unwilling to say that there were not differences between boys and girls at the school, but they struggled to come up with any specific ways in which the school treated them differently. They occasionally came up with incidents regarding specific students in their classes; for example, the fifth graders told a story about a girl in their grade who they said "*gets away with more stuff because she cries all the time. She always be crying and the teachers feel bad*." However, they could not give any examples of overarching differences in the ways in which students were treated based on gender. They seemed frustrated by this; they argued loudly that there were differences between girls and boys, but they could not provide evidence of those differences. I believe that their performances as boy and girl were important to them, and they did not want to think of the distinction between the two as unimportant. I also think that they felt that boys and girls were being treated differently, but messages from the school were conflicting with those feelings.

As I discussed in the chapter on the material, many of the messages on the walls of the school were gender neutral. These gender (and race, class, sexuality, etc.) neutral messages were part of the hidden curriculum of the school. The school, through posters, dress code, and discipline codes, sent the message to the students that they were all going to be treated equally by the school. The participants seemed certain that there had to be differences between boys and girls at the school, but because of the school's message of equality, the participants struggled to articulate differences.

The school's message of equality performs a sort of erasure of the actual experiences of the students. They are not given the language or opportunity to express the differences that they are experiencing. This message of equality also forecloses on

opportunities to question the dominant narratives about gender. The idea that gender is binary and fixed is reinforced in the use of gendered bathrooms and having the students walk in boys' and girls' lines. By then insisting that students are homogenous, the school sends the message that the gender differences that exist are part of the natural (and unquestionable) order of things. The message the school sends, therefore, is that the dominant understandings about gender cannot be changed and that the only response can be to ignore any differences and treat everyone equally.

The Oreo Game – Practicing Heterosexuality and Gender

The students talked during the latter half of the sessions about a game they called "Oreo.[14]" The game, as they described it, consisted of playing "Rock, paper, scissors[15]" until one person had won twice. The winner then would get to tell the other player the name of another student that they then have to go and "ask out." I asked the students whether or not they always ask out the person that they are told to ask out. One participant replied, "*You have to. Everyone knows it is only a game, so when you ask, they say 'no.'*"

I witnessed the playing of "Oreo" during our ninth meeting. Two of the fourth grade boys were playing with each other, and the fifth grade boy was playing with one of the fifth grade girls. One of the participants asked me if I wanted to play, but I declined. I explained that I was married and therefore could not ask anyone out. The participant replied, "*But everyone knows that it doesn't mean anything. You could just ask someone*

[14] I did not get the opportunity to interrogate the use of the name "Oreo," though I am not certain that my participants would have known the origin of the name. It would be interesting to research it further, particularly given the ways in which that name is sometimes used with racial connotations.

[15] According to WikiHow (2006), "Rock, Paper, Scissors is a simple hand game that is played around the world, with many different names and variations. It is commonly used as a way of coming to decisions, and in some cases is even played for sport. The rules require that competing players use one hand to form one of three shapes at an agreed-upon time. The person that plays the strongest 'object' is the winner of the game."

out but not mean it." I declined again, and the participants went back to playing with each other.

I wondered whether there were ever situations in which one player refused to follow through on asking someone out. The fifth graders insisted that it was never the case, but I actually got to witness one time when a player refused to ask someone out. When two fifth graders were playing:

> Bruno: I won!
>
> Milk: Who?
>
> Bruno: *giggling* [shouts] Julia!
>
> Milk: Ew! No! No, seriously. You have to give me someone else.
>
> Bruno: Ok, ok. Mark.
>
> Milk: Ugh. Oh, Ok.

Despite the insistence on the "not serious" nature of the game, the girl participant refused to consider asking out another girl. Even though Milk doesn't like Mark, he falls within the realm of acceptable outcomes for the game. In this way, students use the game as a way to perform heterosexuality. They do not plan on pursuing romantic relationships, but they perform the "asking out" of members of the opposite sex.

This reinforces the both the norms of heterosexuality and of gender as binary and fixed. Each student engages in a performance of a single, fixed gender in asking out a member of the opposite gender. The fact that this is more about the performance of heteronormative gender than it is about dating can be seen in the way that the students asked me to participate. The participants knew that I am married. Their interest was probably not in arranging romance for me (as the game itself is not about people actually

dating), but instead they were offering me the opportunity to perform both woman-ness and heterosexuality.

As I indicated in the chapter on bodies, there was a lot of pressure to perform heterosexual behavior as a part of being a "normal" boy or girl. The participants explained that "going out with someone" at school didn't usually include seeing them outside of school (at least at their grade levels) but did include "*hanging out*," "*texting*," and sometimes "*they, like, hold hands and stuff.*" Despite the pressure the participants said existed around dating, Tiller and Violet were the only participants who were "dating" anyone. However, all of the other participants were able to use the Oreo game as a chance to perform part of the heterosexual dating ritual. I observed all of the participants playing the game except Tiller and Violet. Bruno asked Tiller if he wanted to play, and Tiller said, "*That's stupid. I'm going out with your sister*" and walked away.

I was initially embarrassed about being asked to participate. I think that this came from both being horrified by the idea of asking someone out and feeling awkward about being seen as a sexual being. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, it has been found that woman teachers often downplay their sexuality and separate their performance of teacher from the needs of their own bodies (Atkinson, 2008; hooks, 1994). I thought of the heterosexual performance of asking someone out as being about sexuality, whereas for the participants, I believe it was more about gender performance than it was about sexuality. To them, asking someone out was not a big deal because it wasn't actually an indication of sexual desire.

Class, Gender, and Power

The power dynamics that I observed in the group changed with the makeup of the

group. For the most part, it seemed that the boys held a place of dominance over the girls in the group, in keeping with general societal norms. I observed that the boys in the group were generally the first ones to speak when I asked questions and the first ones to pick snacks and pictures. The boys were the first ones to take pizza when I brought pizza (the one exception to that is described later in this section). They were the loudest responders when I asked questions and multiple participants answered at the same time. I did not notice this at the time, but when I listened to the recordings, I discovered that the boys spoke and answered questions more often than the girls. When we needed to clean up at the end of sessions, the girls always began helping out first, and the boys had to be asked to join in clean up. Given the inherent nature of male dominance in society, I doubt that either the boys or girls were aware of this power dynamic. Even I did not notice how much the boys dominated discussions until I listened to the recordings of the discussions. I did notice that they were the first to take resources, but I believe that was because I was intentionally attending to gender differences in physical interactions. However, there was a girl participant who only attended one session, and her joining the group changed the way the group operated.

I did not ask my participants about their families' financial situations, so my understanding of their class status is based on a variety of largely visual clues. Thorne (2013) argues that it is possible to tell students' class statuses based on appearance. It was based on a combination of appearance, things my participants said, and knowledge of the makeup of the student population that led me to read my participants as low-SES. I knew that the majority of the students at this school receive free or reduced lunch. My participants (with the exception of the one girl discussed below) wore clothes and shoes

that looked well-worn and not new. One participant wore broken glasses for several weeks; she eventually came in with a new pair of glasses and explained that her mom had finally gotten a job and now had insurance. The students talked about not being able to afford things like iPhones, digital cameras, and even brand name snacks. When the school held a book fair, the students lamented not having the money to purchase anything there. The students were also picked up at the end of meetings each week in vehicles that looked old and in various states of disrepair. In addition to asking for more snacks for themselves, participants often asked for extra food to take home to siblings. Participants also wanted additional snacks to take home before Spring Break. Several complained about a lack of access to enough food at home.

In a sharp contrast, the girl participant that attended for just one session read as solidly middle class. Her clothes and shoes looked new. She also wore more expensive looking jewelry. She was wearing ankle boots, but she talked about the fact that she had also brought her “*Jordans*” to school in case she was not allowed to wear the boots (the school had a general rule against wearing boots, but it apparently did not extend to the short boots that she was wearing). The car that she was picked up in was clean and new looking. Her hair was straightened and looked well maintained.

Whereas in other sessions the boys generally spoke first and took resources first, in the session she joined, she often spoke first and took resources first. She was the first participant to take the pizza and the chocolate that I brought to the session. In the conversations in which she took part, she spoke with a level of authority that was not challenged by the other participants. However, this did not change the power dynamic

between boys and girls in the rest of the group. The boys still took resources and spoke before the other girls in the group.

So why did this girl carry a level of power that the other girls did not? I believe that it is because of the ways in which the other participants read her class status. Class is read in specific ways in that school, largely through body interactions with non-human matter. This girl participant's intra-actions with her clothes, shoes, hair, bag, accessories, and family car read as middle class to the other members of the group, and that reading of middle class status came with a level of power in the group intra-actions that was not afforded to the other girls in the group. Many scholars recognize the ways in which class complicates gendered power relations (Acker, 2006; Pyke, 1996; Thorne, 2013). Pyke (1996) even argues that males from lower socioeconomic groups experience "subordinated masculinities," which change their place within power structures. The intra-actions of subjectivities and non-human matter create shifting power relations.

Based on the discussion that I had with participants about shoes (a discussion that the middle class girl participant was not present for), I know that the participants used visual cues to read social class status on their peers. They had an awareness of class markers, and so I believe that they read the class status of this girl in the same way that I did. What is interesting is that the actual financial status of the participants does not matter. Whether or not this participant was actually middle class based on her family's finances makes no difference to the way she is read by others. It is the interaction of the students to the materials of clothes, shoes, jewelry, cars, and hair that impacted how they were able to situate themselves inside power structures. This girl read as middle class, and so she was able to act with a higher level of power than the other participants.

This shows that power structures grounded in identity markers are fluid, based on complex interactions within entanglements, and allow for people to occupy both dominant and subordinate positions simultaneously. The boys in the group behaved as though they were in a dominant position relative to the girls in the group, with the exception of this girl, who gained dominance based on class status. As with other power structures they participated in, the participants seemed unaware of the difference in the power dynamics during that meeting.

Race and Gender

Race was not explicitly brought up by the participants until our final meeting. I was asking participants again about differences in their treatment based in gender. I was continuing to push at that topic because in previous sessions they had given me conflicting and incomplete opinions about differences in the way the school treated them based on gender. After I asked, "*Is there a difference between how boys and girls are treated at this school?*" one participant responded, "*It's race*." Several other participants said, "*Uh-huh*" in agreement. One chimed in with, "*Our teacher likes white people better*." I asked if there were many white people at the school. Bruno (a fifth grader) said, "*Just one in our grade*." Tiller said, "*Oh yeah, and you*" (speaking to me). Bersker, the only white participant, said "*And me. I'm almost the only white person in the fourth grade*." This declaration was followed by surprise on the part of the other participants. One shouted, "*You're white*?" while another said, "*I thought you were Dominican*." I found this especially surprising given that Bersker has light colored hair and eyes.

I followed up by asking, "*So, you think that people at this school get treated differently by race?*" One fourth grader said, "*Not by race*," but all the other participants

agreed that race was a factor in how they were treated. One fifth grade participant said, "*Our teacher, she treats the white kid like he's family; she treats the Black kids like they a piece of dirt sitting on the grass*." I then asked if most of their teachers were white. They told me that most of them were, but that "*even the Black teachers like the white kids better*." The fifth graders then spent time talking about how their teachers like Cole, who they said was the white fifth grader, better than all the other students. When I went back and listened to previous sessions, I discovered that the participants had mentioned Cole and the teacher's preference for him in previous sessions. I did not pay much attention to it at the time because I did not know anything about who Cole was. I did not realize that the students were talking about what they perceived as their teachers' race-based preferences.

A further complication of this conversation is the role that gender plays in the participants' view of whiteness. The participants told me that Cole was the only white student in the fifth grade. I discovered later that there are actually three white students in fifth grade, but the other two are girls. The fifth graders mentioned Cole and the teachers' preference for him on several occasions, but they never made reference to the white girls. This relationship between whiteness and gender is further complicated by class. Many of the participants were surprised to hear Bersker call himself white, despite his maleness. I would argue that this is because Bersker reads as low-SES, and the participants conflate whiteness, maleness, and middle class status. They struggle to see whiteness in the absence of maleness and middle class status. Therefore, they didn't read Bersker as white. Some scholars argue that notions of whiteness are complicated by class and gender (e.g., Ferber, 1998; Harrison, 1995; Hartigan, 1997; Preston, 2007). Hartigan argues that

it is important to understand the "conflation of racial and class identities" (p. 500) because of their relationship to power. I would argue that gender identities cannot be left out of this understanding. This is, in part, because whiteness is about dominance in power relations. Because of this, it can become tied up with other positions of dominance (maleness, relative wealth, heterosexuality, etc.). In the eyes of the participants, the femaleness of some of their white grade level peers and the lower class status of their fellow participant excluded them from the possibility of occupying whiteness.

I am not trying to argue here that women and people of lower socioeconomic status cannot experience white privilege or take part in whiteness. It is possible for people to occupy the position of the oppressor and the oppressed simultaneously. What I am arguing is that race, class, and gender are complicated categories that are entangled and impossible to separate. The fact that my participants conflated whiteness with maleness and middle class status is evidence of that entanglement. This entanglement means that I cannot discuss the ways that gender functioned in this study without also touching on race and class.

Discipline and Gender

The school had a discipline policy that was displayed in all the classrooms. They also had a discipline handbook that was given to all students. The school clearly sent the message that they had one way to handle discipline and that way was the same for all students. However, the discipline experience that touched this study made me question whether the discipline really was applied equally to all students.

Two of my participants had major disciplinary episodes during the course of the study. Both of them were girl participants. Between the fourth and fifth sessions of the

study, the two sixth grade girls got into trouble during the school day. Both participants had incidents in which they argued with male teachers and were subsequently sent to the ISS room. As a result, one of the participants (Jasmine) was expelled from school and the other (Violet) was suspended on the day of our fifth meeting.

The dean of students told me about the incidents; I asked because it was difficult for me to believe the other participants when they told me that one of the participants had been expelled for arguing. The dean explained that Jasmine had been on a discipline plan and any incident would have resulted in expulsion. All of her discipline violations were related to arguing and talking back to adults. During the session immediately following Jasmine's expulsion, the participants expressed disbelief about her expulsion. When Tiller talked about Jasmine getting expelled for arguing with a teacher, one participant said, "*That's so weird. Why would you get in so much trouble for that?*" Another participant echoed, "*That is weird*." A third said, "*That doesn't even make sense*." They were less upset by Violet's suspension. It did not seem surprising to them that a student would be suspended for arguing with a teacher, which led me to believe that it was something that they had seen previously.

I was surprised that a sixth grader would be expelled, especially for arguing with adults. In my time teaching in a public school in Chicago, I observed the school being barred by the court from expelling a student who had physically attacked teachers on more than one occasion. I thought at first that because this school was a charter school, they did not have the same legal hurdles as a public school when they want to expel a student. I have since learned that this state has a different set of laws governing expulsions for all schools. Therefore, when Jasmine got in trouble for arguing with a

teacher, the school was able to tell her that she could not return without triggering an automatic hearing and appeals process.

Some scholars argue that the fact that Jasmine is Black and a girl increases the chances that she will be disciplined harshly. The African American Policy Forum (n.d.) reports, "Black girls are suspended at 6 times the rate of white girls, while Black boys are suspended at three times the rate of white boys." This suggests that being Black and a girl may present increased risk of suspension and expulsion over being Black and a boy. Monique Morris (2016) argues that this is because schools have ideas about what it means to be a "good girl" that is often at odds with the ways in which Black girls act, particularly those that come from low income areas. She claims that Black girls who stand up for themselves are seen by teachers as being defiant and having bad attitudes. Jasmine appeared to me to be self-confident; she had less trouble than the other girl participants talking back to the boys. This way of being may have been seen as threatening and defiant by male teachers who expected Jasmine to be more "ladylike" in traditional, white ways. I believe that the teachers were less bothered by boys that argued with them. I think that Jasmine defied their gendered expectations for behavior, and so she was expelled for behavior that would not get a boy student expelled. I believe that this expectation for a certain type of behavior from girls is also what led to Violet's suspension. Like Jasmine, she was disciplined for arguing with an adult male in the building.

It had been my hope to follow up with Jasmine after her expulsion, but the phone number that I had for her did not work. The other participants said her phone was shut off. One participant went to church with Jasmine, and so she was the only person who

maintained contact with Jasmine. During the last session, I asked her what school Jasmine was attending, and she said that Jasmine just stayed home for the rest of the school year and was planning to start somewhere new in the fall. Jasmine was expelled during the first week of April, which meant that she missed two months of school and would likely have to repeat sixth grade.

As with other messages that were part of the school's hidden curriculum, the participants began to take up the school's narrative related to Jasmine's expulsion. The participants initially expressed dismay and confusion about the fact that Jasmine had been expelled for arguing. However, their discussion of Jasmine's actions and the subsequent expulsion changed. During the last session, when the participants were discussing whether or not boys or girls got in trouble more (as they tried to talk about how the school treated boys and girls differently), I asked about Jasmine's expulsion. One participant said, "*That's her fault*," and more than half of the participants echoed the phrase while others nodded. One participant went on to say, "*After you get in trouble for so much, you should just learn by yourself to act right cause you already know you going to get expelled*." This change in attitude surprised me. It seemed that students were willing to take up the school's messages that the discipline and control that they exerted on the students was necessary. The school sent the message through its actions that the students' bodies were unruly and dangerous and in need of discipline and control, and the students took up that narrative, even as they resisted it. Jasmine's expulsion was then seen as being Jasmine's fault for not meeting the expectations of the school, even if those were biased or unreasonable.

Teacher/Researcher Subjectivity

I entered this study determined to perform as participant and to not act strictly as an authority figure. However, a variety of aspects of my body and the material environment complicated this. As I mentioned in the chapter on the material, the smell of the school brought on an affective response that triggered feelings of performing teacher. This impacted my performance. I was haunted by my years as a classroom teacher. Not only the smell, but the sight of students touching triggered affective responses that made me feel a need to perform teacher. The dreams I had of teaching were a reminder to me of that haunting. I realized that I didn't know how to interact within a school in a role other than teacher. I didn't give up on attempts to be other than teacher, but I believe that it was easy for me to slip into performing teacher without even always being aware of it.

My body also impacted my performance. In a school where most of the teachers were white, middle class females and most of the students were non-white and low-SES, I looked like I fit into the teacher population. My whiteness and middle class status separated me from the majority of my participants. It caused my participants to treat me as a teacher, as evidenced by their insistence on calling me "Mrs. Robinson" and lying to me in order to get to wander the building on discussion days. So, my body and the participant response to it continued to get in the way of my attempts to perform as not teacher.

Even though half of my participants were girls, my embodied performance still separated me from other girls. As I mentioned in the chapter on bodies, I tried to separate myself from my body's performance of woman. I avoided using the bathroom and I avoided being involved in displays of heterosexuality. Although I did mention the fact

that I was married, I did not share pictures of my family or talk about them much. I also was careful in my clothing choices. I intentionally selected clothes that were not overly close fitting. As is the case with many teachers (Atkinson, 2008), I felt the need to ensure that my clothes were "desexualized." Atkinson (2008) argues, "A woman teacher's gendered features must be hidden or minimized and controlled" (p. 116). Because of my time as a classroom teacher, I had internalized this message about the dangerousness of my own female body, and so I tried to minimize it. This lumped me in with other teachers and also reinforced the school's message of gender neutrality.

How are these Assemblages Complicated by the Material and Bodies?

This section on gender assemblages was the most difficult to write, because I continually questioned my decision not to include some of these sections in the chapter on the body or the chapter on the material. For example, the discussion of class is impossible to separate from the embodied performances of class. The actual financial status of participants did not matter as much as the ways in which their bodies and their related non-human matter were read by the other students and myself. Class status, gender, and race were all about performance, which could not be separated from bodies and non-human matter. The fact that my one white participant considered himself to be white and looked white (to me) did not change the fact that his embodied performance caused him to be read by the other participants as something other than white. The ways in which the participants performed their gender were reliant in part on bodies (play fighting) and non-human matter (girls wearing jackets). To take the idea of subjectivity as performance seriously means to acknowledge the necessity of considering the body and non-human matter, as no performance can occur separate from those pieces.

The tangled intersections of race, class, gender, and heterosexuality all relied on embodied, non-human matter clad performances and the ways in which they were read by others. The shifts in power between participants were based on the ways they read each other and responded. And these shifts might have been different in a different space. The material of the school building itself was not simply a container for the action, but made its own contributions to the ways in which power was distributed. My own power in the study stemmed from the space itself. A white, woman adult operates differently within a school entanglement than within an entanglement in a different space.

There is no way to separate assemblages from bodies and non-human matter. I did it in writing this dissertation as a way to organize ideas, and the exercise of doing so has made me more certain that the distinctions are a false illusion. Every actant in the entanglement matters, both to the performance of individual actants and to the ways they interact with each other.

Conclusion

The performed genders of my participants impacted their interactions with me, each other, the materials, and the space. However, these interactions were complicated by the performances of other identity markers and the ways that these performances were read by others. It is, I now believe, not possible to think through the ways in which gender is effecting interactions without taking into account the assemblages of gender with other performed subjectivities. Gender created some power dynamics within the group, but these dynamics were not fixed, and other factors had to be taken into consideration. Gender performances also impacted the ways in which race and class were read, and together they created assemblages that could not be teased apart.

Chapter 7

Furthering the Conversation

Any research involves agential cuts, intentional and otherwise, and this study is no exception. I made decisions throughout about what to explore, focus on, and write about. This final discussion, therefore, reflects my own orientation toward thinking about messages related to gender performance. This also reflects the impact that the tensions within the study had on my understanding of the research process.

Gender and the School

The purpose of this study was to explore the messages that the material-discursive school environment sent to students about their genders and how to perform them. The literature claims that children generally believe the dominant narratives that gender is fixed, binary, and dependent on biological sex (e.g., Budgeon, 2013; Davies, 2003; B. Martin, 2011; Oakley, 1972; Pillow *et al.*, 2015; K. Reynolds, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 1987). When thinking about gender, children generally believe that male and female are the distinct and only categories. Furthermore, the scholars claim that schools, as a part of their hidden and sometimes explicit curriculum, reinforce these dominant beliefs about gender. My experience in this study seems to support this.

The students seemed to share these dominant gender beliefs. They always talked about boys and girls as separate categories, generally in opposition to one another. They also did not say anything to push back on the gendering that occurred at the school, such as the gendered bathroom choices. Additionally, they talked at different points about how boys were versus how girls were. For example, the boys argued that the girls had "*more*

drama" and "*talk more*;" the girls disagreed that they had more drama, and they also said that the boys "*get in trouble more*."

There were several ways in which the school seemed to reinforce these gender norms. The school's bathrooms were all gendered. This particular school does not offer any gender neutral bathroom spaces. I observed teachers leading students in what appeared to be a boys' line and a girls' line. They also had a rule in the dress code that only girl students were allowed to wear skirts. Clearly, it was their expectation that students would fit into one of the separate and distinct categories of boy and girl. Splitting students by gender also assumes that students will make the same gender choice (based on their biological sex) every time they are divided.

The literature also points to the ways in which gender becomes conflated with heterosexuality (e.g., Quinn & Meiners, 2009; Renold, 2000, 2007). Scholars argue that the dominant narrative pushes the belief that to perform gender correctly requires the performance of heterosexuality as well. Renold (2007) claims, "heterosexuality is embedded in the ways in which boys and girls define, negotiate, and consolidate their gendered selves" (p. 275). Children understand the appearance of heterosexuality as being central to being seen as a "normal" boy or girl.

The participants in my study clearly felt the importance of displaying heterosexuality. Two of my participants were in a heterosexual "dating" relationship. While the other participants claimed not to be "dating" anyone, when they talked about the dating that was occurring among their peers, they were talking about heterosexual relationships. I also observed that in their playing the game "Oreo," which allowed them to play at "asking someone out," there were rules about "asking out" members of the

opposite sex as the only acceptable outcome. When one participant told another to ask out a member of the same sex during the game, they were told that that was outside the bounds of the rules of the game. Some of the boy participants also expressed discomfort at seeing two kindergarten boys holding hands. One of them insisted, "*That's just a wrong image*," indicating that they rejected interactions that they saw as existing outside of heterosexuality.

The literature also speaks to the fact that children experience gender as being tied up with power relationships, with males being understood as dominant over females (e.g., Brod & Kaufman, 1994; Davies, 1993, 2003; Markowitz & Puchner, 2016; K. Reynolds, 2002; Weedon, 1987). Davies (1993) found that children played out this dominance in their interactions and discussions, even though they did not name it as occurring. This power dynamic in children is reflected in the greater societal power dynamic between males and females.

These power relations could be seen in the ways my participants interacted, but they were complicated by other factors. For the most part, the boys in the study displayed dominant behaviors. They generally took resources and spoke before the girls in the group, and the girls allowed it. The girls did not complain about any unfairness, which leads me to believe that this pattern of interactions was common. However, the power dynamics were complicated by class status. One participant, who was read as being more affluent than any of the other participants, acted from a position of dominance over all the other participants, despite being a girl. Her class status allowed her a position of power over the boys. It would have been interesting to see if this was further complicated by issues of race. However, almost all of my participants were non-white, which limited my

ability to view how race worked relative to power. I did have one white participant, but I learned during the final session that the other participants did not view him as white, which would impact his ability to access power based on whiteness.

I did not have the opportunity to view how power relations worked during the day at school. However, the fact that the students took the power dynamics within the group as the normal order of things leads me to believe that power dynamics during the school day were similar. Previous studies have found that schools reinforce traditional power dynamics between boys and girls, with boys generally getting to speak more often and receiving more adult attention than girls (e.g., Davies, 1993; Duffy *et al.*, 2001; Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

However, at the same time that the school reinforced dominant narratives about gender, the school sent the students a message of gender neutrality. As I discussed previously, the posters on the walls, the uniformity of the dress code, and the discipline policy all sent a message that the students were a homogenous group that would receive equal treatment. All students were and would be treated as the same, regardless of race, class, gender, or other identity markers. The school seemed to take a "one size fits all" approach to creating rules and policies.

Anecdotal evidence from this study indicates that the message of neutrality was a false one and that students were treated differently based on various identity markers. This was seen in the ways that the dress code was enforced, for example. On the day that one of my boy participants was wearing red suspenders, the girls in the group complained that the boy students got away with dress code violations and they did not. The boys did not disagree with that assessment. I also suspect that the discipline policy is not

implemented equally. The participant that was expelled during the course of the study was both a girl and Black, and I believe that those factors influenced how her arguing was perceived and subsequently punished by the male adults (the teacher involved, the dean, and the principal were all men).

Despite these differences, participants struggled to vocalize the ways in which the school treated them differently because they took in the message of neutrality that was part of the school's hidden curriculum. They bought into the message that the school treated them the same, even as they struggled with feelings that the school did not treat them equally. The school, therefore, did not give the students any language to express their sense of inequality. The fact that participants continued to insist that boys and girls were not treated the same, despite not being able to articulate how, indicates that the students knew that inequalities existed in the school, even as the school insisted that they did not.

Furthermore, the school's insistence that they treated all students equally acted to minimize the importance of societal inequities. Rather than giving students the language to discuss and potentially fight back against societal inequities, the school entanglement sent a message of equality that implied that the societal differences were natural and unavoidable. Through performances within the entanglement, such as the hidden curriculum of social control (e.g., strict rules governing movement and dress) and the posters on the walls, the school is sending the message (and the students, as part of the entanglement, are taking it up) 1) that dominant narratives about identity markers such as gender, race, and class are correct, and 2) that differences between groups are an unavoidable given. Therefore, not only do students not have the language to push back on

dominant narratives, they may come to believe that there is no point in questioning dominant narratives because they represent the natural order.

The Hidden Curriculum of Social Control

Scholars claim that schools have an agenda of social control that comes through in the hidden curriculum (e.g., Apple, 2004; Giroux & Purpel, 1983; E.W. Morris, 2005). This social control often takes place as control of the students' bodies. This body control can take many forms, including dress codes (e.g., Happel, 2013; E.W. Morris, 2005), rules against touching (e.g., Leafgren, 2011; Springgay, 2008), and tight control of student movement during the school day (e.g., García & De Lissovoy, 2013; Martin, 1998).

In addition to seeing the students as homogenous, the school sent the message that the students needed to be controlled. The school had many rules and policies that controlled the students' bodies. The school had a uniform and a dress code that was strictly enforced. The school also tightly controlled students' movements throughout the day. There were rules about where students could be when, with the result that much of the building was off limits to different students. Students were also generally not allowed to be walking around by themselves, even to the bathroom. These policies taken together send the message that the students' bodies need to be controlled. This implies that all student bodies (which the school implies it treats the same) are dangerous and unruly.

When the mind is understood as being one with the body, the control of bodies takes on a different meaning. Rather than simply creating docile bodies, the control by the school creates docile mind/bodies. Students took up the school's belief that they were unruly and in need of control. They came to see themselves as needing the school's strict

intervention in order to be successful. In addition to being problematic within the school setting, students can come to see their mind/bodies in the same way within greater society. This can then serve to reinforce dominant positions within society based on markers such as race, class, and gender.

The students complained about the control of their bodies that was occurring, but they also insisted that this control was necessary. They did, however, use the study as a way to resist the school's control. Rather than taking photographs, the students used the time allotted to them for picture taking to move around the school building unsupervised. They took advantage of the opportunity to occupy spaces in the building that were off limits to them during the school day. They also did this without engaging in any behaviors that they insisted would occur if the school did not control student bodies during the day (e.g., damaging property). In this way, they resisted not only the control of their bodies but also the message that their bodies were unruly and needing control.

The Material-Discursive Entanglement

The understandings that I gained through this study would not have come about had I not paid specific attention to the material and bodies in addition to discourse and subjectivities. The participant discourse around the dangers of giving student bodies freedom to move around the building conflicted with their interactions with the school spaces. Had I only been focused on their photographs and their discourse, I might have missed their resistance to the school's control of their bodies. This resistance was seen in their movements and also in their clothing choices (e.g., wearing jackets in the building and wearing suspenders) and the ways those sometimes resisted school mandates, particularly for the female participants.

The participants resisted conversations about gender and class (and race until the final session). I believe that some of this resistance was related to feelings of awkwardness in talking to me, who they saw as teacher despite my best efforts to be otherwise. There were many material factors that contributed to the participants viewing me as teacher, including my body, the resources that I brought, and even our relationship to the building itself. Additionally, the message of equality that the school sent acted as an erasure of difference that kept participants from having the language necessary to have conversations about gender, class, and race. It would, therefore, not have been possible for me to come to the understandings that I did of our interactions without attending to the material-discursive phenomenon of the entanglement. Attending to the interactions between the cameras, the school building, the participants' bodies, their clothes and shoes, and myself helped me better understand my participants and their relationship to the school. Paying attention to either just the discursive or just the material would not have yielded a complete analysis.

Implications

Implications for Research Practices

Emergent design. I set out to create a study that was emergent. I wanted my participants to be able to make decisions about the direction that the study took. I found that the practice of that was much more difficult than I anticipated. I wanted my participants to take photos. I was invested in my plan to analyze photographs and display them. Part of this investment came from my belief that I would be providing my participants with a way to resist the school. As it turned out, my participants had their own ideas about how to enact resistance. They had their own ideas about ways that the

study could work for them. And I had trouble accepting that they might know better than I did what they wanted/needed. This stemmed both from my position as researcher and as adult working with children. However, had I not been willing to let them take the study in the direction they chose, I would not have learned some important things about their relationship to the school, and they would not have gotten the same experience of resistance.

I realized that as researchers, we need to be willing to accept and value the knowledge of our participants. My participants knew what they wanted from the study, and I worked hard for a while trying to convince them to follow the path I thought would be best. My study is better for having gone in the direction my participants wanted it to go in. It is easy, as an academic and an adult, to go into a school setting and believe that we know what is best, especially when working with children. It is important as researchers that we listen to our participants and believe in the expertise they have about themselves and their situation.

Handling recorded data. I recorded some, but not all, of my interactions with participants. I did record all of the whole group discussion sessions, and I recorded some of my individual conversations with participants as they selected photos for printing. I did not have any of the recordings transcribed. Instead, I listened to the recordings many times. I feel that the practice of listening to the recordings, rather than transcribing them, assisted me in thinking through my entanglement with participants. Participants spoke over each other much of the time during group discussions. Listening to the recordings allowed me to hear the subtleties in who spoke when and loudest. It would have been difficult to convey that accurately in transcription. It also allowed me to hear the emotion

in their voices, which sometimes conveyed the conviction they felt about a topic. This was especially helpful in thinking through the participants' feelings about gender differences. It allowed me to understand how strongly they felt about the differences that existed, even though they had trouble finding the words to express those differences.

The recordings also gave me the opportunity to recognize the silences that occurred. The participants spoke over one another so much that the silences seemed more significant. Even detailed transcription would not have captured the silence in the same way. Such a silence was present when I initially asked participants about differences in the way boys and girls were treated at school.

Transcribing and coding the conversations would have caused me to lose some of the feelings of what it was to be in the conversation with the participants. It would have removed me in a way from the interactions. Listening to the data served as a reminder that I was not an objective observer, but instead, I was an important part of all the interactions that took place.

Ethical practices. Within a material feminist, post qualitative framework, ethics becomes of central importance. This is because the researcher is seen as being entangled with participants within the research process rather than being viewed as an outside observer or presence. Barad argues that ethics is an unavoidable part of entanglement. She claims, "Ethics is therefore not about right responses to a radically exteriorized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming, of which we are a part" (Barad, interview by van der Tuin & Dolphijn, 2012, p. 69). Therefore, as a part of this research, I had an ethical obligation to my participants that went beyond traditional considerations of research ethics.

Dennis (in press) makes the claim that part of this ethical obligation to participants entails *being with* them, rather than keeping removed from them in some way. She talks about sharing her own stories with participants as a way to do research *with* them, rather than simply *about* them. What I came to recognize within this study was that I had to understand when *being with* them actually entailed separation. My middle-class, white, adultness meant that I could not move around the school with my participants when they were using movement as resistance. They were resisting the school *and also my research agenda*, and it was important for me to let them do it. I had to acknowledge that I could give the participants opportunities and support, but I could not give them the resistance or participate directly in it. So, participating in the research looked different for me than I had initially envisioned. But ethically *being with* my participants meant recognizing the ways in which my research plan was fallible and the ways in which I was complicit in attempts to control children's bodies.

I would not have been able to arrive at this recognition without continual reflexive journaling and conversations with critical friends. Our ethical behavior as researchers requires constant re-assessment. *Being with* participants is a continual process of becoming. As such, it requires sustained attention. What works in one research situation may not work in another, and for a researcher to determine the best path forward requires an openness to changing the research plan.

I struggled to move away both from my research plan and from the role of authority figure, which was based in both my position as researcher and as adult. I had to accept that my participants, who were also children, knew the best way to engage in resistance. I also had to acknowledge how the differences between me and my

participants made it possible to be with them in certain ways and not in others. And accepting these things as being part of the becoming of the entanglement was often uncomfortable. But sometimes living with the discomfort is the most ethical way forward.

Implications for Future Research

Within this study, I had a particular orientation and theoretical framework that impacted the way I conducted the research and the discussions that arose from it. I am not trying to imply through this that my orientation is the only way to do research. Human centered studies that call out institutional actors are helpful in understanding the ways schools work, the oppressions students face, and the ways that dominant messages are passed to children. It is my hope that this study can be put into conversation with more human centered studies so as to expand the discussions that can be had about the messages that schools send to students. My contribution is not meant to supplant other types of studies but to broaden understandings.

This study uncovered an entangled curriculum that in both explicit and hidden ways made a false show of equality and that pursued an agenda of social control. These curricula were big parts of the way the school operated, and they had a strong impact on the participants of the study. The school where this study took place had a majority of students that were non-white and low-SES. It would be interesting to do a similar study in schools with different demographics to see how much these hidden curricula vary based on context. I think it would also be useful to try similar studies with different age levels. I am particularly curious about how the messages are impacting younger students and the ways that they view themselves and operate in the world.

I am interested in trying similar studies with children of different ages and demographics. However, I think that in future studies, I will be more prepared to set aside my own research plans and pursue the agenda of my participants. Native photography is a potentially fruitful starting point, but it is not essential to learning from participants. However, using native photography did give my participants a unique opportunity to move around the building; had I chosen a method that kept the participants in the classroom, I would have ended up with an entirely different study, which might not have been as fruitful for participants. Therefore, I am likely to use that starting point again in the future. That said, I believe that I learned more from being with, observing, and talking to my participants while they followed their own agenda than I might have if I had insisted that they follow mine. Dennis and Huf (2017) suggest that "being with" children who are participants and allowing them agency is a more ethical and productive way to do research than forcing them into the typical adult/child, powerful/powerless binary. I want to work in my own research on embracing that ideal of "being with" participants and fighting the temptation to claim the knowledgeable adult authority figure role.

I will try in future studies to plan for a longer timeline with participants. I feel that they were growing more comfortable with me at the end of the study (as evidenced by their conversation with me about race), and we might have pushed the conversation even further had I had the opportunity for more meetings with them. It also might be helpful to spend some time in the school during the actual school day. Viewing the participants in their environment during the day might have given me additional entry points for conversations with participants about the messages they were receiving from the school.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Control of bodies. One implication for policy at the school level is that schools should consider lessening the intense control of student bodies, particularly when those bodies are from minoritized populations or low-SES. The tight control sends the message to both students and teachers that student bodies are dangerous and unruly. Numerous scholars have looked at the ways in which school policies such as discipline plans contribute to the "school to prison pipeline" (e.g., Khalifa, Okilwa, & Briscoe, 2017; Meiners, 2010; Raible & Irizarry, 2010). I would argue that controlling the ways that student bodies move through the building (e.g., not allowing students to use the bathroom by themselves, not allowing them to walk in certain hallways) also contributes to that pipeline. The messages that students and teachers receive about the unruliness of those student bodies carry over into larger society. Students, as citizens, continue to see their bodies as dangerous and in need of control; teachers, administrators, and other adults in the school see bodies that look similar to student bodies (other minoritized bodies) as unruly and in need of control. Schools think that control is necessary because that is the message that exists currently in society, not because it is actually true. Student bodies do not need to be constantly controlled. However, it is important to note that it will still *feel* (for adults and students) like student bodies need controlling for a while after changing policy. The affective feelings of fear of dangerous and unruly bodies will remain until it has been proven (for a while) that these bodies do not need tight control. It is important not to let the lingering affective feelings of fear dictate policy. Only working past those feelings will bring about change.

Acknowledging inequality. My participants knew that they were not being treated equally, despite the schools insistence that they were. However, because of the hidden curriculum of equality that the school put forth, the students lacked the language to discuss the inequalities they were experiencing. They also, therefore, lacked the language to call out societal inequalities that they experience. Although it is a lofty goal for schools to treat all of their students equally, it is not realistic. Students are not all the same, and society will not treat them all equally. Pretending otherwise is to erase the lived experiences of students. It also reinforces the narrative that differences that do exist are part of the natural order of being and should not be questioned.

Students face societal inequalities based on markers such as race, class, and gender. Structural inequalities are a constant in our society. Rather than to pretend that such power structures can be negated or do not impact schooling, teachers, staff, and administrators should give students opportunities to discuss dominant narratives and structural inequalities. This is not to say that schools should not still try to treat students equitably, only that schools should stop pretending that they are treating everyone equally (rather than equitably). Although there is some debate among scholars about the differences between equality and equity (e.g., Espinoza, 2007), for the purposes of this paper, I define equality as treating everyone the same regardless of individual or group differences between them, and I define equity as dealing with students fairly (but not identically), taking into account individual and group differences (including specific needs, struggles, and privileges). Dealing with issues around race, class, and gender (among other identity markers) is a messy process. Schools need to engage with that messiness by being transparent with students about the process. Discussion should be

encouraged. This way, students will have the language and experience with the type of discussion necessary to take on societal inequalities. Not giving students these opportunities sends the false message that nothing can or should be done.

Implications for Theory

One aspect of a new materialist framework is that it decenters humans. This helps widen the focus to include non-human objects, which was clearly important to this study. This flattening can also be useful in working to combat hierarchies and push back on dominant norms. However, this decentering also creates some tensions within education research. This is because, ultimately, we are concerned with the experiences of and outcomes for (human) children. As important as the cameras, the posters, and the hallways in this study were, my primary concern was with the impact of these things on the participants in the study. It becomes necessary, then, to move in and out of a focus on the human, rather than choosing to decenter the human and staying in that position.

I believe that this is also important in terms of acknowledging the work of participants. For example, consider the resistance that occurred in this study. Entanglements, such as schools, include structures of power. Foucault (1977) argues that one part of these existing power structures is space for resistance. Therefore, within the entanglement of the school in which I did my study, there was the potential for resistance. The material place of the school and the cameras both provided a means for the resistance to occur. But it was the human participants who chose to resist the school and utilized their creativity to come up with a means of resistance. Studying the whole entanglement allowed me to understand the ways in which there was space for resistance and the ways in which the resistance unfolded, but it was the human participants that led this specific

resistance. Part of my ethical obligation to my participants is to honor their role in driving the resistance, and doing that necessitates highlighting their human agency and creativity.

Therefore, when doing post qualitative education research, decisions must be made of how to negotiate the tensions between decentering humans and focusing on human concerns. For education research to be useful in informing and improving education, some return has to be made to humans as the central concern. This does not mean that notions of entanglement have to be cast aside, only that within education research, it may not be appropriate for hierarchies to be permanently and completely abandoned. The specifics of when and how to toggle in and out of a focus on the human may need to be decided within the context of each individual research project. However, I would argue that the field of post qualitative research needs to include more discussions about the tensions that exist in this area and how to navigate them.

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Indiana Association of Institutional Research
National Board of Professional Teachers
National Council of Teachers of English

Employment:
August 2014 – present
Managing Editor, Review of Higher Education

Research Experience:
November 2013 – August 2014
Graduate Student Researcher, Center for Urban and Multicultural Education

Teaching Experience:
Fall 2017 – Methods of Teaching Reading II
Spring 2017 – Methods of Teaching Reading I
Spring 2017 – Field Experience Supervision

Service:
Student reviewer for the International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education
Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Practice Graduate Student Council President
Tutor – Intermediate Statistics; Multivariate Statistics

Awards:
Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Practice Graduate Student Paper Award

Professional Activities:

Peer Reviewed Papers and Book Chapters:

Pike, G. R., & **Robbins, K.** (in process). Using Panel Data to Identify the Effects of Expenditures on Graduation Rates. *Research in Higher Education*

Robbins, K., & Helfenbein, R. (in press). Gender, Assemblage, and the Lived Experience of Schools. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy.*

Robbins, K. (in press). Resisting a Curriculum of Control. *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*.

Helfenbein, R., Rodriguez, S., Elfreich, A. & **Robbins, K.** (2017). Cracks and crevices: Case studies in youthspace. *Professing Education, 16*(02), 38-50.

Waite, S., & **Robbins, K.** (2017). The Question of Creativity for the Field of Educational Leadership. In D. Waite, & I. Bogotch (Eds.), *International handbook of educational leadership and social (in)justice*. New York: Springer.

Robbins, K. (2016). A matter of power. In N. Snaza, D. Sonu, S. Truman, & Z. Zaliwska (Eds.), *Pedagogical matters: new materialisms and curriculum studies*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pike, G. R., & **Robbins, K.** (2016). The relationships among individual characteristics, high school characteristics, and college enrollment: Using propensity as a baseline for evaluating strategic enrollment management efforts. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly, 3*(4), 282–304.

Refereed Conference Presentations:

Robbins, K. (2018, April). *Embracing emergent research design: Or when your participants refuse your research plan*. Presentation at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA), New York, NY.

Robbins, K., & Elfreich, A. (2018, April). *Ethical ontologies: The liminal spaces of research and mutual entanglements of the spirit*. Presentation at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA), New York, NY.

Robbins, K. (2017). *Resisting a Curriculum of Control*. Presentation at the annual Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice, Dayton, OH.

Robbins, K., & Elfreich, A. (2017, May). *Ethical ontologies: The liminal spaces of research and mutual entanglements of the spirit*. Presentation at the International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry (ICQI), Champaign-Urbana, IL.

Robbins, K., & Helfenbein, R. (2017, April). *The curriculum of gendered bathrooms.* Presentation at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA), San Antonio, TX.

Robbins, K. (2017, April). *Subjectivity and the entangled self*. Presentation at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA), San Antonio, TX.

Robbins, K., & Helfenbein, R. (2016, October). *Gender, assemblage, and the lived experience of schools.* Presentation at the annual Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice, Dayton, OH.

Shaver, E., & **Robbins, K.** (2016, April). *The effects of losing curricular differentiation on the perceptions of middle school after-school program participants*. Presentation at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA) Washington, D.C.

Elfreich, A., & **Robbins, K.** (2016, April). *An embodied becoming-other: Material feminism, curriculum, and the mutually entangled spirit*. Presentation at the American Educational Research Association Conference, (AERA) Washington, D.C.

Pike, G. R., & **Robbins, K.** (2015, June). *Using panel data to identify the effects of expenditures on graduation rates*. Presentation at annual meeting of the Association for Institutional Research, Denver, CO.

Pike, G. R., & **Robbins, K.** (2015, November). *Increasing STEM interest and proficiency among underrepresented minority students: The role of Project Lead The Way in improving diversity in STEM fields*. Presentation at annual Association for the Study of Higher Education Conference, Denver, CO.

Robbins, K. (2015, October). *Subjectivity, the self, and curriculum theory*. Presentation at the annual Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice, Dayton, OH.

Robbins, K. (2014, October). *Multicultural currere in the urban context*. Presentation at the annual Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice, Dayton, OH.

Robbins, K. (2014, October). *A matter of power*. Presentation at the annual Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice, Dayton, OH.

Pike, G. R., & **Robbins, K.** (2014, March). *Using propensity scores to evaluate education programs*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Indiana Association for Institutional Research, Indianapolis, IN.

Pike, G. R., & **Robbins, K.** (2014, March). *A longitudinal analysis of Project Lead The Way in Indiana*. Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Society of Engineering Education, Illinois-Indiana Section, Terre Haute, IN.