“Past the Point of Messing with it”: Exploring the Digital Video Composing Processes of an
After-School Film Club

By

Nichole Marie Barrett

May 2nd, 2018

A dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University at Buffalo, State University of New York
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Learning and Instruction
“We are never wholly free from the sense of something that lies beyond”
(John Dewey, 1934, p. 201)

For my MeMe.
You’ll forever be mine.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my committee Dr. David Bruce, Dr. Ryan Rish, and Dr. Mary McVee for their endless support and guidance. More specifically, thank you Dr. McVee for asking me to be a part of the special Positioning Theory Club and for sharing all your wisdom with me. Dr. Rish, thank you for always pushing me to think beyond and for continuously exposing me to new and exciting opportunities. Finally, Dr. Bruce, I cannot thank you enough for your guidance and support over the past 4 years. You helped me discover and shape my identity as a researcher and gave me a chance to be a part of something really wonderful. Without WWV I would have not met Johnson and his awesome students. Also, thank you for helping to create my alter egos. Heather and Tonya will forever live on as a part of my psyche.

To Johnson and the kids in Film Club, especially DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia – Thank you for welcoming me into your world and sharing your lives with me.

To my family – I am thankful for each and every one of you. David, there are not enough words in the world to thank you for your endless support and your encouragement. Thank you for reminding me to breathe and picking me up when I was down. Thank you for dealing with all the post-its and the highlighters, and all of the binders and papers. Most importantly, thank you for believing that I could do it. Mom, you’ve always taught me to reach for the stars and to never give up on the things that I wanted. You’ve taught me to work hard and fight for what I believe in. I wouldn’t have been able to make it this far without you.

To the Trifecta – 14 years ago we stumbled upon each other and my life has never been the same. Thank you for having so much faith in me.

To the LAI-Community, especially my fellow LAI-GSA Officers and my office cohort - I cannot begin to express what it means to have shared this experience with you. Thank you for helping me see that I was not alone.

To “Big Dawg” – You taught me to trust my instincts and reminded me that my voice is important. Thank you for helping me become a better researcher. And, thank you for being my friend.

To my MeMe – I know you would’ve been the proudest of all. You taught me to push myself and to never settle. I will love you forever. Thank you for being you and thank you for loving me.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** iv  
**LIST OF TABLES** viiii  
**LIST OF FIGURES** ix  
**ABSTRACT** x  
**CHAPTER 1: Introduction to the Problem** 1  
  - What Counts as Literacy 3  
  - Identities and Literacy Practices 4  
  - The Possibilities of Digital Video 5  
  - The Absence of Rural Voices 7  
  - Purpose and Questions 8  
**CHAPTER 2: Literature Review** 9  
  - Rurality 9  
  - Reframing what is Valued in Classrooms 13  
    - Digital Video Composition 17  
  - Compositional Artifacts 20  
  - Theoretical Perspectives 21  
    - Dialogic Engagement 22  
    - Figured Worlds 24  
    - Identity Positions 26  
    - Sedimented Identities 29  
**CHAPTER 3: Methodology** 30  
  - Research Purpose 30  
  - Research Design 31  
  - Research Site 32  
  - Participants 33  
    - Focal Participants 34  
  - Researcher Perspectives 35  
  - Data Collection 37  
    - Video and Audio Recordings 37  
    - Student and Teacher Artifacts 37  
    - Researcher Field Notes 38  
    - Interviews 38  
  - Data Analysis 39  
    - First Round Analysis 39  
    - Second Round Analysis 40  
    - Third Round Analysis 41  
    - Positioning Analysis 43  
**CHAPTER 4: Findings – Johnson’s Pedagogical Stance** 44  
  - The Space of Film Club 45  
  - Johnson’s Pedagogical Stance 48  
    - Dialogic Engagement 48  
    - Johnson as Soundboard 50  
    - Validating and Extending 53  
    - Focus on Technique 56
Authorial Control 136
Schooled Pressures 137
Rethinking Process 138
Limitations 140
Future Research 140
Conclusion 142

APPENDICES 145

Appendix A: Student Interview Questions (Formal) 145
Appendix B: Examples of Informal Interview Questions 146
Appendix C: Teacher Interview Questions (Formal) 147
Appendix D: Images of Data Reduction 148
Appendix E: Examples of Documents Created during Third Round Analysis 149

REFERENCES 150
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Focal Participants and their Videos 34
Table 2. Definitions of first Round codes 40
Table 3. Examples from Second Round Coding 42
Table 4. Examples of Positioning Analysis 44
Table 5. Non-student Films used as Text During Film Club 61
Table 6. Lyrics and Images in DJ’s Mr. Blue Sky Video 99
Table 7. DJ’s Video Ideas 100
Table 8. Books and Authors Mentioned by Mortimer 105
Table 9. Ophelia’s Documentary Questions 124
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Theoretical Perspectives

Figure 2. DJ and Johnson talking through “The Brunch Club”

Figure 3. Mortimer and Johnson Exploring Edits

Figure 4. Section of Mortimer’s Google Doc

Figure 5. DJ editing the “I never saw another butterfly” video

Figure 6. DJ’s Instagram

Figure 7. Toe tag still from “Together with the Dead”

Figure 8. Mortimer ordering Paige away During Filming

Figure 9. Mortimer directing the filming of “Together with the Dead”

Figure 10. Mortimer editing in iMovie

Figure 11. Ophelia’s planning documents

Figure 12. Ophelia’s use of Planning Documents

Figure 13. Ophelia’s Video Confessional

Figure 14. Ophelia Answers her own Questions
Abstract

This ethnographic case study explores the experiences of the Rolling Hills High (RHH) after-school Film Club as they engaged with film both as consumers and creators. Created by the students of RHH, the Film Club was a space in which they could explore the compositional process outside of academic pressures. Current educational research focused on the use of digital video (DV) in classrooms tends to place emphasis solely on students’ academic gains. This study adds to the scholarship by drawing attention to the ways that DV composition can provide students with opportunities to explore their identities and social positions. Observational data, including audio, video, interviews, fieldnotes, and artifacts, were collected over 9 months in an after school Film Club advised by RHH’s 9th grade ELA teacher, Johnson. Focal participants include Johnson, as well as DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia, three student members of the club. Data reduction and analysis included open and thematic coding, as well as positioning theory analysis. These procedures allowed the researcher to explore the relationship between Johnson’s pedagogical stance, students’ composing processes, and shifts in identity positions as a result of their participation in Film Club. Findings reveal that Johnson’s pedagogical stance, as well as his contributions to the space of Film Club, created an opportunity for students to not only retain autonomy over their compositional choices and processes, but to also navigate their identities as composers of film. In addition, because of their membership and participation in Film club and its activities, DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia experienced shifts in the way they positioned themselves both in and out of Film Club. This study highlights the ways that collaborative space and DV composition can be used in conjunction to positively support student exploration and autonomy.

Keywords: Digital Video Literacy, Student Identity, Rurality, Figured Worlds, Positioning
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Problem

I sat between Lou and Sally as they worked on their video poems. We were all members of a digital video (DV) professional development workshop for rural teachers at a local university. Lou and Sally, husband and wife, are both English teachers at a high school in a rural community and identify as novice DV users. On the third day of the workshop, everyone was working on their video poems. To my left Lou was cutting down the video clips he had captured the night before and was working to line them up perfectly with the recorded audio of his poem. To my right, Sally was trying to use an audio program in order to manipulate the pitch and tone of her voice. Matching the voice of the reader to the gender of her poem’s author was very important to Sally and she was becoming frustrated with the process.

I bounced back and forth between each of these teachers as they attempted to navigate unfamiliar technology and create something new from texts that they knew and loved. Lou and Sally were both determined to get things just right. I felt their frustrations when clips were accidently deleted or audio would not download, but I also felt their sense of accomplishment when they accidentally discovered a beautiful shot or found the perfect sound effect. I experienced Sally’s joy when her manipulated audio helped her convey the tone of her poem and I was there when Lou accidentally deleted his entire video and wanted to give up. And, I was present to see the look of pride that sprawled across each of their faces as they premiered their videos to their colleagues and friends. That is something that I will never forget.

As I worked with Sally and Lou during that professional development workshop two summers ago, I saw a lot of my own experiences reflected in their process. Since I can remember, I have been interested in the arts. I have a background in drama and a love of all things visual. Drawing, collaging, or listening to music tends to help me brainstorm and process the tangled knots that are my thoughts. I had worked with video in the past, but I had never considered its connection to literacy or its
implementation as a tool in an English language arts (ELA) classroom. Over time, the more I read and
the more that I worked with video, the more my understanding of it changed. I began to position digital
video as a literacy tool rather than an activity. I began to see the connections between DV and writing.
What working and composing with DV provided me was a way to brainstorm and explore my ideas
visually as I worked through my existing thoughts and discovered new ones. I realized the incredible
potential in something that once existed in the margins of my own learning. I started to understand how I
was using video as an important meaning making tool.

Working with DV changed how I defined myself as a writer, but working with Lou, Sally, and
the other 10 rural teachers who were a part of that professional development workshop has helped to
shape and define this research. As I followed Lou and Sally into their classrooms as a part of my pilot
study, I saw the ways in which DV was being used with and alongside students as they navigated both
print and digital writing assignments. I observed notable changes in student behaviors as they worked on
their DV projects. Students who often stayed to themselves and sat in the corner were talking with their
classmates, asking for help and sharing their work. Sally showed me meaningful videos from students
she defined as struggling writers and Lou introduced me to students who were excited about composing
video research projects.

While I saw DV being used as tool that not only engaged students, but helped many of them
develop their voices, I also began to see many students using it as a way bring literacy practices and
identities not often sanctioned by school into schooled spaces. Working with Sally, Lou, and their
students has influenced my desire to highlight the voices and identities of rural students. I want to learn
more about how these students use DV as a personally transformative tool, one that has the potential to
change how they see themselves in the world. My connection to this work is multifaceted and rooted in
my personal experience as a student, as an educator, and as a writer, but most importantly, as a researcher who has seen the impact of DV in the learning of teachers and students.

**What Counts as Literacy**

For over a century, educators and researchers have worked to define literacy practices and what counts as learning. In response to those who argued learning was achieved through rote memorization and the acquisition of knowledge and facts, John Dewey sought to reform education in ways that emphasized the growth of students in present time. Rather than focusing on students’ future selves he believed that education should be the “process of living and not a preparation for future living” (Dewey, 1897/1998, p. 230) and that “life is development, and that developing, growing, is life” (Dewey, 1916, p. 59). When educators utilize the current experiences, habits, and capabilities of their students as the foundation of their teaching, they provide them with meaning making opportunities and chances to explore who they are. Failing to acknowledge the tools that students use to navigate the world outside of classrooms furthers the divide between school, learning, and life.

Dewey’s ideas helped pave the way for educational researchers like Shirley Brice Heath (1983) and Brian Street (1984) who worked to challenge definitions of literacy by exploring the connection between learning, meaning making, and literacy beyond school walls. Researchers like Street and Heath, embracing Dewey’s developmental ideas, argued that people engage in transformative literacy and meaning making practices in their communities as a part of everyday social interactions. Literacy began to be reconceptualized as more than a set of books to read, papers to write, or facts to learn. Instead, literacy began to take on a broader definition that included the use of a wide range of tools and social processes. This holistic view of literacy helped to place students’ experiences, habits, and capabilities at the forefront of learning by highlighting literacy practices other than reading and writing.

Expanding upon changing definitions of literacy, The New London Group (1996) worked to
redefine what counts as literacy and argued for an acceptance of multiple literacies across multiple modes. What was once positioned as a skill rooted in reading and writing, began to take shape as a multifaceted social practice that incorporated the visual and the aural alongside traditional print literacy practices. As definitions and perspectives of literacy began to shift beyond the confines of print, educational researchers realized that students were engaging in sophisticated literacy practices that pushed back against the limits of print. Researchers have, and continue to explore the multimodal and digital literacy practices of youth in and out of the classroom (e.g. Alvermann, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Shanahan, McVee, & Bailey, 2014; Wolfe & Flewitt, 2010). Literacy, which once only recognized as a practice involving pens and paper, has since expanded and now includes a wide range of modes and practices including film, television, video games, magazines, music, images, as well as students’ social interactions including those that take place in digital spaces. If, as Dewey (1897/1998, 1916) noted, education and development are the core tenets of life, then our students’ lives and their literacy practices in and out of school should be at the forefront of their education. Who students are is directly related to the lives they live and the literacy practices they engage in. Thus, literacy and learning are more than isolated skills learned in classroom contexts, but rather a part of everyday social practices.

**Identities and Literacy Practices**

Although definitions of literacy have changed, the literacy practices that are utilized and valued in classrooms as a part of curriculum and instruction are still rooted in traditional notions of reading and writing. When students walk through school doors they carry with them a wealth of knowledge and experience that can be utilized as a part of their literacy practices in the classroom (e.g., Alvermann, 2002; Gainer & Lapp, 2010; Hagood, Alvermann, & Heron-Hruby, 2010). Unfortunately, not all of this knowledge is welcome and encouraged in school contexts. This is despite the collections of research that support and highlight the positive impact that the inclusion of multiple and multimodal literacies can
have on learning and development (e.g., Albers & Sanders, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Miller & McVee, 2013). What prevails in many schools instead is an autonomous model of literacy that decontextualizes students’ literacy practices and foregrounds and print, resulting in learning that is proceduralized and objectified (Street & Street, 1995).

Students' literacy practices, specifically those associated with traditional notions of reading and writing, are foregrounded as measurable reflections of academic success and development through the consistent emphasis on print-based texts. Rather than being viewed as transformative tools for exploration and meaning making, literacy is treated as something that is used, not owned (Street & Street, 1995). Students’ multimodal and digital literacy practices are often pushed into the margins of classrooms, valued only as a part of students’ after-school or free time activities. This only serves to perpetuate the idea that “the things [students] know outside of school have no relevance inside school and that the things they learn in school may also be irrelevant to what they do with the rest of their lives” (Jenkins & Kelley, 2013, p. 116). In addition, what is often not taken into consideration are the ways that students' literacy practices impact their personal development, including how they navigate and explore their identities. Rather than “folding [in] literacy practices regardless of their origin” (Alvermann & Moore, 2011, p. 157), educators continue to organize and limit students’ literacy practices based on physical spaces. Hull and Schultz (2002) highlight the ways that defining students’ literacy practices as occurring either in or out-of-school perpetuates a false binary that ignores the fluidity of students’ literacy practices. Viewing literacy as unbound by contextual space draws attention to the ways that students’ literacy practices permeate boundaries and move from context to context.

**The Possibilities of Digital Video**

As a result of the learning process, students are constantly transforming and composing with DV gives them the opportunity to not only weave together their in and out-of-school literacy practices, but
also to explore the relationship between those literacies and their identities. When educators acknowledge that students are writers, artists, dancers, consumers, gamers, and more, they create opportunities to break down the walls separating school and life and welcome students’ transforming identities into the classroom. There is a growing body of research that explores multimodal (e.g., Hull & Nelson, 2009; Miller, 2010, Siegel, 2006; Vasudevan, 2006) and digital (e.g., Curwood, Magnifico, Lammers, 2013, Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Tavers, 2015) literacy practices, but they are often positioned as secondary to print, or explored in out-of-school settings (e.g. Brass, 2008; Connors, 2013; Willet, 2009). In addition, researchers tend to highlight the use of multimodal and digital literacies in relationship to academic gains and/or metrics (e.g. Abrams, 2009; Beach, 2012; Miller, Knips, & Goss, 2013), casting a shadow over the impact of digital and multimodal literacy practices on students’ identities.

Research exploring the use of DV as a transformative meaning-making tool (e.g., Bruce, 2008a; Chandler-Olcott & Fink, 2010; Doerr-Stevens, 2015; Willett, 2009) highlights the significance of composing with multiple modes. As Leander (2009) argues “Learning becomes powerful when it is driven by comparison and analogy, and when it is enacted across multiple forms of mediation” (p. 160). Just as students carefully and intentionally select words and phrases to re-present their ideas in print, DV composing requires students to work across modes in order to repurpose and construct visual, aural, and textual phrases that weave together creating something meaningful and new. Albers (2006) notes that “meaning is not located within any one mode, but in how the modes are interpreted in relation to each other” (p. 77). Each mode allows students to work through their ideas in a different way, thus mediating their thought process as it transforms as a result of composition. Moje & Luke (2009) argue that researchers need to remember that humans “are constantly in the process of identifying and making meaning of identifications” (p. 433). What emerges as a result of DV composing is a multimodal
artifact, layered and embedded with students’ meaning making experiences, identities, and literacy practices (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011). These artifacts act like windows into the lives of students and provide researchers and educators with tangible (re)presentations of students composing processes and identities.

**The Absence of Rural Voices**

Research addressing the literacy and meaning making practices of adolescents often focuses on the experiences of those students in urban and suburban contexts, unintentionally eclipsing the voices of those that live in rural contexts. Based on guidelines outlined by the United States Department of Education, 71% of public school districts in the United States were classified as town or rural in 2014 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014). However, the voices and experiences of this demographic are rarely heard within educational research. Instead, there continues to be a focus on urban education, urban literacies, and identity development among urban youth (e.g. Green, 2013; Schafft, 2016). While it is important to highlight the experiences of all students regardless of their demographic, there is certainly room to explore the learning experiences, identities, and literacies of those youth that reside outside of the city limits. To leave out any of these voices paints an incomplete picture of learning and education.

When rural voices are found in educational research they are often explored through a deficit lens, one that positions them as less than their urban and suburban counterparts. As Eckert and Alsup (2014) note, the rural narrative is often “one of lack, one of retreat, or one of escape, of teaching students to desire an (equally flawed) urban narrative and recognize the rural as impoverished” (p. 1). In effort to counter this narrative, researchers have argued for teacher education programs that work to reframe rurality (e.g. Eckert & Petrone, 2013; White & Reid, 2008) and place emphasis on the individual aspirations, identities, and abilities of rural students (Tieken & San Antonio, 2016). Donovan (2017) contends that through reading and writing educators can help rural students construct and
understand their voices in relationship to their surroundings, inspiring them to “embrace that which they have” (p. 50). Like other research conducted with rural students, their work with digital literacies, especially DV is not well documented. Therefore, exploring the ways rural students compose with DV may provide them with opportunities to engage in conversation with the deficit narrative and rewrite their stories outside of a one size fits all education. Rural students comprise almost half of all the public-school students in the United States, yet their voices continue to be overshadowed by the those of their urban and suburban peers. This substantiates the need for more research exploring the experiences of rural students.

**Purpose and Questions**

Research addressing the use of DV in classrooms has often focused on the positive impact it has upon struggling students’ comprehension and writing skills in urban contexts, overlooking the experiences of students in rural communities. This research seeks to explore students’ experiences with DV in a rural high school. Doing so adds to the scholarship by placing emphasis on the relationship between identity, meaning making, and the use of DV with students whose voices are often overshadowed. This inquiry is guided by a desire to explore and understand the ways that DV composition is and can be used to engage students in valuable meaning making opportunities in rural communities with limited technological access and/or expertise. Focusing on how DV composition can be utilized as a tool that values and reflects rural students’ individual meaning making processes and identities highlights their often under-represented voices and perspectives. Specifically, this research will explore the ways that students’ literacy practices and identities permeate perceived boundaries of schooled spaces. This project is guided by the following questions:

1. What stance is adopted by Johnson to provide his rural learners with creative space in a student generated after-school Film Club?
2. What does the DV composing process look like for rural students in an after-school Film Club?

3. In what ways are students’ identities and figured worlds reflected in their DV composing processes?

In the sections that follow, I will highlight in detail some of the existing research that I believe to be pertinent to the development of this study. Doing so will allow me to highlight where a gap in the research exists, one that can be filled by illuminating the voices and experiences of rural students. In addition, I will elaborate upon the theoretical perspectives that have, and will continue to drive this research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this section, I will detail some of the existing research and perspectives on rurality, DV composition, and student artifact creation in order to emphasize a gap in the research addressing the meaning making practices of rural youth. I will first explore how current perceptions of rural youth have impacted educational research. Then I will address the body of research that explores the use of DV as a compositional tool. Finally, I will highlight research that explores student produced artifacts in relationship to the process of meaning making. By identifying the missing voices from the existing research, I will highlight the need for research that focuses on the ways rural students explore their identities and engage in the composing process.

Rurality

While almost of half of the students that attend public school in the United States, do so in rural districts, yet educational research places emphasis on urban demographics (Schafft, 2016). When rural schools are the focus of educational research they are often positioned in direct opposition to their urban counterparts. Donehower, Hogg, and Schell (2007) note, “All too often, life in rural America is seen as
‘lacking’: lacking education, lacking economic opportunities, lacking cultural opportunities. Rural Americans are often thought to be illiterate, untechnological, and simplistic” (p. 14). They argue that by exploring the complexities and diversities of rural communities, educators and researchers may begin to reject the idea that all rural communities are the same. Furthermore, by highlighting the fact that research paradigms for literacy often presume an urban or suburban setting and do not take into account the realities of rural communities and their people, Donehower et al. (2007) emphasize the underrepresentation of rural voices in educational research.

Eckert and Alsup (2015) further this argument by highlighting the way that educational policies are impacted by this deficit narrative. They argue that educational policy positions rural and urban education in contrast to white, middle class suburban education and holds rural educators to the same ideological and cultural standards. When curricular models are constructed and designed based on white middle-class concepts of education, policy makers perpetuate the deficit narrative and as a result the “normative standardization marginalizes communities, schools, students and teachers who live and work in them” (p 5). Instead of upholding this deficit narrative, Eckert and Alsup (2015) challenge researchers and educators to work on reconceptualizing the definition of rural to encompass the lived narratives of rural communities and the uniqueness of the different cultural realities of rural, without conceptualizing them as other.

Tieken and San Antonio (2016) highlight the fact that current perceptions of rural education and rural students fail take into account the impact that rurality has upon the identification and development of student aspirations and the role that the school plays in shaping them. Rather than taking into consideration the experiences of rural youth, educational policy makers often apply the same educational models of assessment and advancement utilized within urban and suburban districts. They argue that descriptions of rural schools today perpetuate a deficit view of both rural education and its students,
failing to acknowledge the nuanced development of a rural identities and aspirations. “Research and practice typically focus on only three dimensions of a youth’s future hopes and plans: career goals, choices about further education, and decisions about where he or she might want to live” (Tieken & San Antonio, 2016, p. 133). What is missing from this research is a focus on the developing student in present time.

Rather than highlighting the meaning making and literacy practices of rural students, current narratives of rural education are framed by educational policies that evaluate schools based on the percentage of students that receive free or reduced lunch and students’ performances on test scores (Eckert & Alsup, 2015). As a result, this research paints a picture of rural education that decontextualizes meaning making and literacy within rural time and space. Corbett & Donehower (2017) argue that by exploring how rural literacies operate within time and space, researchers can honor the relationship between literacy and context including the ways that “the performative work of literate practices that can make, critique, and re-make rural identity” (p. 3). In an exploration of the use of ‘rural literacy’ and ‘rural literacies’ across multiple academic databases, Corbett & Donehower (2017) discovered that several of the collected studies exhibited an urban bias when identifying and assessing rural literacy practices. Rather than utilizing a place-conscious method of assessment, of the 95 studies analyzed 38 exhibited discourses of rurality that identified and defined rural literacies based on narratives of urban and suburban learning. In addition, only 13 of the studies surveyed focused on individual learning or literacy instruction. Their findings indicate that while there is research in rural literacies that explores the impact literacy has upon several different subjects (ie: Identity, Social Capital, Schooling, Social Justice), there is a need for research that takes into consideration the impact that space, place, and rurality have upon existing and developing literacy practices, both locally and globally.
Similarly, in their search for photographs representing rural education, Pini, Mayes, and Castro (2017) amassed a collection of images that presented a generic, yet distinct story of rural education and where it takes place. The researchers discovered that visual representations of rural education depicted unoccupied fields, long empty roads, historically inspired school houses, and solitary white children. These images are devoid of technology, indicators of educational advancement or mobility, and any representations of social relationships. When “rural” was removed from the search, the researchers discovered images of technology rich classrooms, libraries lined with books, blackboards full of information, and gaggles of culturally diverse students surrounded by opportunities. These images are representative of the common discourses and stereotypes surrounding rural education, a discourse that positions education as something that occurs within city limits. The education beyond city walls is one that is often portrayed as “far removed from accomplishment and advancement” (p. 323) and lacking in resources.

Green (2013) identifies that there are still issues associated with place, specifically geographic contexts of rurality, and their absence from literacy and educational research. He argues that although the definitions of literacy are changing, a focus on literacies within urban and suburban neighborhoods serves to strengthen “metro-centric” attitudes towards literacy, perpetuating the hegemonic literary discourse. He proposes a focus on the geographical context, the spaces and places that influence literacy and education and asks the question, “What is being done with texts by students and others in rural settings” (p. 28)? Asking this question provides researchers and educators with an opportunity to contextualize rurality in terms of the literacy practices that occur there, both socially and discursively - “an interplay of the real and the representational, material and semiotic, (re)produced as much in our actions and interactions as in our worlds and texts” (p. 29). Green (2013) argues that seeing literacy, especially rural literacy, as something that draws from the “material-semiotic resources of language and
“communication” allows us see how the cultural and operational dimensions of literacy weave together within rural contexts in order to highlight the distinctive practices that take place.

As Hodges (2004) argues, not all rural communities are the same; each community has its own stories, its own history, and its students will each have their own experiences that are connected and defined by their individual rurality. Hodges (2004) found that the local history of one rural town was used as a way to engage at-risk students in a research project about the history of their rural community. Using a community’s resources, its landmarks, histories, and stories can be a way to engage with students that feel they don’t belong, or lack connections to their school and/or community. Similarly, approaching writing instruction through a place-conscious lens allows educators to place emphasis on the intradependence of the self, communities, individual and local histories, as well as “the rich way local place creates and necessitates the meaning of individual and civic life” (Brooke, 2003, p. 11). As Donovan (2017) posits, personal stories and experiences can be used as a pedagogical tool to help rural students understand the values and personal connections that already exist between them and their community and how those relationships help to shape their identities.

Reframing What is Valued in Classrooms

Beyond school walls, students are engaging in sophisticated literacy practices, both digitally and in print. Unfortunately, these literacy practices are often reserved for free time or utilized as a part of extra credit assignments as they cross into schooled spaces. Instead, students are continually asked to read and write in ways that are disconnected from the world they live in beyond the curriculum, creating a disconnect between literacy practices that take place in schools and those students engage in on their own time. Looking outside of the classroom and into the literacy practices that students engage in as a part of their everyday social activities may shed light on the ways that students make meaning beyond schooled spaces. Albers & Harste (2007) argue that understanding all the literacy practices that students
engage with maximizes the potential for students meaning making processes and is essential to the learning process. Bridging the gap between students in and out-of-school literacy practices can help students recognize their strengths outside of the classroom and encourage them bring them into the classroom as meaning making tools (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Jenkins & Kelley, 2013; Vasudevan, 2010). Providing students with meaning making opportunities means allowing them to access all the tools they possess rather than only those valued by the teacher. These predetermined tools may not only seem foreign to many students, but they are also defined by outdated definitions of literacy.

Devaluing students out-of-school literacy practices assumes that students are capable of separating their outside literacy practices from the ones that take place in the classroom. While many students have learned how to “do school” there are those that either refuse or are incapable of doing so. These students are often labeled as reluctant or seen as underachievers because they do not meet or ascribe to the print standards of literacy within their classrooms. As Smagorinsky (2001) notes, it is impossible for students to engage in authentic reading and writing practices that are completely removed from the social and cultural milieus that they occupy. This includes the literacy practices that students participate in while in those spaces. Research has shown that when students are able to situate their literacy practices within their own social and cultural worlds they are not only more engaged, but also participate in transformative learning experiences (e.g., Beach, Thein, & Parks, 2012; Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris, 2007). The social and cultural worlds of students are changing and therefore literacy and the role of the teacher are changing. While print literacies will always be an important component of literacy, the digital landscape and how students engage and make meaning with it must also become a part of everyday curriculum.
Rethinking literacy and what it means to be literate in the 21st century is necessary in order for educators to provide their students with tools and space for literacy and identity development both in and out-of-school. Hull (2003) argues for a focus on “the full range of communicative tools, modes, and media, plus an awareness of and a sensitivity to the power and importance of representation of self and others” (p. 230). Students’ participation in the world around them is often negotiated and transformed by the media they consume and create outside of school walls as a part of their participation in youth culture. Welcoming this youth culture, especially digital literacy practices, into the classroom not only supports students’ full range of literacy practices, but helps support the reformation of existing concepts on literacy by reframing what counts as literacy within school walls.

Hickey, McWilliams, and Honeyford (2011) argue that educators can leverage the skills and mindsets that students are developing in their use of digital technologies in order to engage them with traditional print texts. They also offer an innovative assessment practice that takes into consideration the given realities of the classroom. By exploring the relationship between students’ online practices and schooled practices, they argue that the level of engagement and participation that students have in digital spaces is something that many teachers can only dream of. In classrooms, those students that remain silent, often referred to as lurkers, may be looking for a point of access. By welcoming students’ out-of-school literacy practices into the classroom, educators may provide them with another access point. Similarly, while working with students on a unit designed to increase students’ engagement with canonical texts, Ostenson and Gleason-Sutton (2011) found that the more they rooted their instruction in the interests and meaning making processes of their students, the more engaged they became. They saw a significant increase in student participation and success noting that “students felt that they were doing something fore authentic and meaningful with this project than with some of the other things we assigned” (Ostenson & Gleason-Sutton, 2011, p. 42). The videos that students turned in as a part of the
unit on *The Scarlet Letter* not only (re)presented a deep understanding of the characters and the novel, they also reflected students’ unique identities and interests.

Drawing on the hip-hop literacies of his students, Morrell (2002) argues that students’ popular culture consumption can be used to help students deconstruct dominant narratives and work towards achieving a more inclusive society. He argues that oftentimes students do not do well in school because they do not have access to the dominant or mainstream cultural practices, which include the academic literacies often favored in classrooms. Morrell argues educators should then be looking to popular culture to unearth the logical connection between the lived experience of and the school experience of youth. The students that participated in this unit did not just provide critical interpretations of existing texts, they also became cultural producers of social commentary. Dyson (1997) also found that students used popular culture representations of superheroes to gain access to classroom culture and position themselves as vocal members in the classroom. The superheroes allowed the children to challenge the hegemonic discourses of power and gender within society as they constructed and transformed their existing identities. By using them as inspirations for their writing, the children we able to author stories that rejected and/or accepted popular narratives. She discovered that the children moved between official and unofficial worlds that while they often overlap, are disguised from each other.

Nagel and Stooke (2016) remind readers that in addition to consumers of information, students are also creators and contributors, especially within the digital landscape. In their study with 7th and 8th graders, they found that when given the opportunity to use the method and mode of their choice, may students drew upon their out-of-school literacy practices, such as popular culture and video games as they experimented different ways to communicate their ideas. Nagel and Stoke (2016) note that students create with multiple modes in their out of school endeavors and therefore it is important for educators to provide them opportunities to do so in the classroom as well. Doing so places value on the totality of
students meaning making processes rather than partitioning them. As Williams (2005) notes, perceptions of students out-of-school literacy practices, especially those associated with the digital landscape are often seen as not sophisticated or useful as a part of classroom practice. On the contrary however, it is often students’ digital literacy practices that provide them with the most access to the world around them.

**Digital video composition.** It is no secret that “New media platforms and practices were giving students much greater opportunities for communication and expression that could have been imagined by any previous generation” (Jenkins & Kelley, 2013, p. 5.). There is a growing body of research that addresses the multimodal nature of students’ literacy practices and focuses on the use of DV composition as an important meaning making tool because it requires students to engage with multiple and across multiple modes (Bruce, 2008; Chandler-Olcott & Fink, 2010; Doerr-Stevens, 2015; Smith, 2016). The modal choices that youth make during the compositional process may also be explored in relationship to their developing identities. While the research connecting students’ identity development to the composing process is limited, and mostly occurs in urban contexts, it does shed light on the ways that students explore their sense of self throughout the process. For example, Pahl (2011) notes “The process of creating digital stories springs from the everyday and then changes the space of the everyday by new transformations and representations” (p. 22). Because it is rooted in everyday practices, DV composition becomes an important link between home and school. In her work with primary students and their families in the United Kingdom, Pahl (2011) discovered that digital storytelling was a way for students to make modal choices based on the parts of themselves that they want to make available to others giving students “ownership of what kinds of story they want to tell and in which mode” (p. 37). The videos that students created represented their personal connections between home and school.
Similarly, Halverson and Gibbons (2009), looking at the DV composing practices of four youth media organizations in both urban and rural contexts, discovered that it was possible to trace representations and the evolution of students’ identities throughout their films by focusing on the key elements of production. Tracing identity in this way allowed the researchers to explore students’ identity construction as it occurred over time and as a result of the composing process. Hull and Katz (2006) also found that digital videos “reposition both authors and the texts (words, images, music, voices) they appropriate and recontextualize” (p. 69). In particular, one of their participants, Dara, was able to negotiate her identity as both an author and a storyteller as she worked to reposition herself as knowledgeable.

Halverson (2010) found that students’ autobiographical videos “demonstrate the ways adolescents from marginalized groups actively represent a viable social identity” (p. 2373). The students in Halverson’s study used DV to tell their story and bring their voices out of the margins. Similarly, Friesem (2014), working with 22 foster students, ages 14-16, gave students the opportunity to compose digital videos that told their stories, in their own way. Friesem discovered that composing with DV gave students an opportunity to work through and make sense of their own histories, ultimately unearthing new meaning and coming to terms with their difficult pasts. These students “created meaningful narratives” and “had an empowering and transformative experience” (Friesem, 2014, p. 52).

Working with rural middle and high school students, Wake (2012) found that DV composition allowed students to communicate and navigate their identities in relationship to their community. Many of the students explored their identities through their community engagement and social/familial relationships. By using both images and narrative, Wake (2012) discovered that students increased the power of the messages they chose to share and that the identities embedded in their DV compositions were heavily impacted by their rural surroundings. Pyles (2016) also found that youth utilized the
affordances of the video making tools to portray their rural identities “by tying their own work to an organization that prides itself on representing rural Apalachia” (p. 7). The students utilized their videos to not only advocate for their rural communities, but to also highlight their personal connection to community and rural space.

While a significant portion of the research addressing the use of DV composition emphasizes the value of the final product over the path it took to get there (Dubisar & Palmeri, 2010; Halverson, 2010; Williams, 2014), there is a small body of research that places emphasis on the composing process (e.g., DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Jocius, 2013; Smith, 2016). Bruce (2008) found that the techniques utilized as a part of the DV composing process allowed students to visualize and express their ideas more effectively than they could in print. He also discovered that students utilized several compositional techniques - planning, drafting, feedback, reflection, and revision - as a part of their composing process. Similarly, Bruce (2009) discovered that the multimodal choices available to students throughout the composing process allowed students to compose multiple drafts as they negotiated the different ways that they could (re)present their thoughts and ideas.

Fulwiler and Middleton (2012) argue that DV composition draws from multiple semiotic channels whereas, “alphabetic writing involves invention, selection, and revision in one semiotic channel” (p. 48). This serves to emphasize the recursive writing process imbedded in the digital composing process. Cercone (2012) found that students’ writing became more meaningful as a result of their composing process. He states that “Making the video brought them back to and extended their writing, giving it a deeper meaning, a place to be in the world, as they worked to capture their ideas on film” (p. 76). Focusing on the composing process allows educators to explore the ways that students utilize DV to compose their own stories and find their place in the world.
Compositional Artifacts

While there is a need for research that places emphasis on DV as a process, it is also important to explore the ways that compositional choices impact the meaning and identities reflected in students’ compositional artifacts. The research highlighting students meaning making practices across multiple modes is vast (e.g., Alvermann, 2011; Curwood, Magnifico, Lammers, 2013; Gee, 2004; Street, 1984; Vasudevan, 2010) and paints complex picture of the many modes that students rely on to make meaning. Students construct and rework meaning with image, film, and music (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; New London Group, 1996); they are transforming knowledge as they compose with digital media (Bruce, 2009; Kist, 2005); they are exploring themselves through the popular culture they navigate every day (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999; Alvermann & Hagood, 2000; Curwood, 2013; Dyson; 1997). Albers (2006) notes that “Modes of communication, such as visual, speech, writing, gesture, musical, and so on, enable humans to interpret and represent meaning, yet meaning is not located within any one mode” (p. 77). Composing with DV requires students to weave together multiple modes in order to create something new as the work with digital, print, and visual texts. Meaning is created as a result of the relationships between modes and can be explored in conjunction with students’ compositional choices.

Kress (2003) highlights the importance of mode in the meaning making process. He states that modes “change, through their affordances, the potentials for representational and communicational action by their users” (p. 4). Through the use of multiple modes, DV allows students to situate their compositions within “certain collective emotional, political, spiritual, or other milieus” (Gainer & Lapp, 2010, p. 19). By investigating the multimodal nature of students’ compositional artifacts, educators may discover the ways that these artifacts are infused with the personal meanings and identities that students have constructed throughout the composing process. Pahl and Rowsell (2011) argue that the objects that
students engage with as a part of their literacy practices hold stories that become a part of their literacy histories and may be a reflection of the transformation process students’ experiences as they engage with multiple modes and discourse patterns. These artifacts carry stories and reflect students’ realities and identities (Church, 2015; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007). The tell the story of process and meaning making and reflect the way that modes are meaningfully layered upon each other as a result of negotiation. For teachers and researchers these artifacts shed light on the meaning making practices of their students. For students, these artifacts are a constant reminder and reflection of a meaningful experience. The artifacts that students create provide them with the opportunity to continually experience and transform their trajectory.

**Theoretical Perspectives**

This section details the theoretical perspectives that are guiding the development of this research. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) maintain that “Identities constitute an enduring and significant aspect of history-in-person, history that is brought to current situations” (p. 65). Understanding how identity transforms as a result of DV composition means not only exploring the identities that students bring to their composing process, but also understanding how those identities are negotiated and developed in action throughout the composing process. Drawing upon theories of the dialogic, identity construction, and positioning, I hypothesize that DV composing is a process by which students can explore their place in the world (Figure 1). In addition, I suggest that as a result of composing, student produced artifacts reflect not only the process of negotiation, but students’ refracted sense of self.
Dialogic engagement. Sociocultural theorists posit that learning takes place socially, more specifically, Bakhtin (1981;1984) maintains that learning and the construction of knowledge are the result of dialogue. While much of Bakhtin’s work is associated with literary criticism, his theories and ideas have been taken up by educators as a way to understand how dialogue positively impacts students’ learning and development. As Lyle (2008) notes, Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism “stresses the intersubjective nature of language as a social system. According to dialogism we produce and organize social reality by talking and writing” (p. 225). When students think and talk with others they are exposed to new perspectives and engage in a sharing of ideas that results in the construction of new meaning. As Holquist (2002) maintains, dialogue depends on the needs of the speaker as he navigates the global requirements of his social environment. Dialogue as a part of the composing process allows students to see beyond their own perspectives and gain access to the tools and knowledge of others. As a result, their own processes are shaped by voices beyond their own.

In addition, if as Bakhtin (1984) argues, knowledge and understanding are constructed socially in dialogue with others, then writing processes rooted in the dialogic may serve to further students’ understandings of composition in ways that are not possible when writing is treated as an individual
endeavor. In describing the human nature, Bakhtin (1984) identifies dialogue as the root of human participation in the world:

To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (p. 293)

Dialogue has the potential to ignite the totality of a person’s being and as a result, the self exposes itself to the give and take that is required as a part of engaging with others. As a part of the writing process, dialogue provides students with the opportunity to explore themselves in relationship to both space and the people within it. In this way, they also are encouraged to gain knowledge from their peers, and to use this knowledge to further their own understanding of the composing process. This all occurs while students remain true to the human instinct to talk things through.

In summarizing Bakhtin’s ideas, Shields (2007) defines dialogic interaction as, “the totality of the experience in which one human being comes into contact with another (or others) different from himself or herself” (p. 79). Engaging in dialogue with another person is the result of a give and take of ideas, knowledge, and purpose, something that is essential to the creation of meaning. Drawing on this definition, *dialogic engagement* can be defined as the purposeful use of dialogue as a meaning making tool within social interaction and as a part of learning. In addition, Bakhtin (1984) also argued that truth does not live within the mind of the individual but reveals itself through dialogue with others. Therefore it is reasonable to argue that dialogic engagement also provides students with an opportunity to search for truth and explore their sense of self as a part of the learning process. By relying on dialogic
engagement as a part of the composing process, learning becomes less concerned with the transmission of knowledge. Instead, emphasis is placed on the process of composing and the construction of meaning.

**Figured worlds.** Figured worlds are the “socially and culturally constructed realm[s] of interpretation” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 52) that impact individuals perceptions of the world. They are constantly under construction as people take what they know and transform that knowledge into interpretations of current and past events. Identities are formed dialogically in these spaces because they “grant shape to the coproduction of activities, discourses, performances, and artifacts” (p. 51). The longer people participate in individual figured worlds, the more embodied and tangible their worlds become. The more invested in the happenings of the world, the more comfortable people become with sharing parts of themselves, often through the authoring of narratives-in-action. As narratives are authored, “Figured identities arise and are reproduced in the special attitude of play or, more precisely, imaginative framing” (p. 141). Authorship increases as individuals become more aware of how their sense of self impacts their participation. Holland et al. (1998) maintain that “The identities we gain within figured worlds are thus specifically historical developments, grown through continued participation in the positions defined by the social organization of those worlds’ activity” (p. 41). Authorship is one of the ways that individuals utilize their identities to tell others who they are and to explore the different positions afforded to them within these worlds.

By defining identity as “the imaginings of self in worlds of action,” fluid within social situations and impacted by the available resources within a particular context (Holland et al., 1998, p. 5), it is possible to see the ways that identities are formed through, and are a direct reflection of, participation in and across multiple contexts, or figured worlds. Holland et al. (1998) articulate two different types of identities within these contexts - *positional* and *figurative*. Positional, or relational, identities are constructed based on how people position themselves in relationship to others. They reflect
apprehensions regarding the social positions individuals adopt in the lived world and the access and agency they believe they have in relation to those around them (Holland et al., 1998). Positional identities may represent the awareness of a perceived worth and determine how individuals navigate within and across contexts. Furthermore, positional identities are constructed and adopted in relation to a person’s figurative identity. Holland et al. (1998) note that figurative identities draw attention to the stories and characters that constitute one’s figured worlds, and are composed as a part of lived experience. They reflect both their perceptions of the world and beliefs regarding membership and participation. Identities are shaped and negotiated in action with others as individuals work to explore the tensions between their positional and figurative identities, as well as their participation in multiple figured worlds. Over time, individuals may adopt and reflect upon the signs that are utilized to position them in specific ways and negotiating the meaning ascribed to these signs becomes a function of identity development.

Individuals build and transform identities in order to reflect a sense of self and tell others about the things that matter most to them in the world. Most importantly, “Persons [are] composites of many, often contradictory, self understandings and identities” (p. 8) and these identities are not bound to a single unit, but spread across the totality of a person’s social landscape, or figured worlds. As a “historical phenomena” that “gives us form as our lives intersect them” figured worlds are the socially created and reproduced spaces that give our social landscapes voice (p. 41). Perceptions of self develop through participation in multiple cultural and social worlds, and this participation impacts the degree to which individuals develop agency in respect to their own actions. In short, “Identities are formed in the process of participating in activities organized by figured worlds” (Holland et al., 1998, p. 57). The figured worlds that individuals construct and inhabit can, and must, be understood in terms of the social histories and interactions within them.
A feeling of increased authorship creates an opportunity for people reevaluate their identities, specifically in relationship to the positions that they adopt and reject as a part of their participation in a figured world. “When individuals learn about figured worlds and come, in some sense, to identify themselves in those worlds, their participation may include reactions to the treatment they have received as occupants of the positions figured by the worlds” (Holland, et al., 1998, p. 143). These reactions are formed “by orchestration, by arranging overheard elements, themes, and forms” (p. 171) and may emerge as physical artifacts that represent the process of negotiation. Artifacts created and authored as a result of participation in a figured world are the modes by which those worlds are ascribed meaning (Holland et al., 1998). These artifacts are embedded with pieces of our identities, portions of our process, and evidence of our transformation.

Identity positions. Drawing on positioning theory to investigate the process of identity construction may also shed light on the ways that social positions are navigated and transformed by participation in and across social contexts. Described by Harré and van Langenhove (1999) as a way to understand the complexities of social action, positioning theory is “The study of local moral orders as ever shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting” (p. 1). They argue that “Taken over a period of time it becomes clear that each person has many personas, any one of which can be dominant in one’s mode of self-presentation in a particular context” (p. 7). One of the goals of positioning theory is to understand the process by which individuals adopt, reject, and assign roles and duties through the creation of narratives and storylines. As people engage in dialogue with others they not only position themselves in relationship to the roles and duties they believe they have access to, individuals also determine the roles and duties of those they are engaged in dialogue with through the construction of narratives-in-action. Individuals assign roles and duties in order to position themselves and others within narratives. (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). If researchers understand
positioning to be the “Discursive construction of personal stories that make a person’s actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts” (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 16), then positioning theory can help them understand how individual positions are constructed and contested, as well as how others’ positions contribute to the creation of individual and shared storylines.

Determining the position of an individual in dialogue with another relies on what van Langenhove and Harré (1999) call the *positioning triad*. They argue that every conversation consists of three elements: positions, storylines, and speech acts. The social force behind an individual’s speech acts is crucial to understanding the positions that they take up and the storylines they construct in dialogue with another; “The stories people tell about themselves will differ according to how they want to ‘present’ themselves” (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999, p. 25). This triad can also help researchers to understand the ways that narratives-in-action are utilized to negotiate and explore identity and purpose within a particular social space. van Langenhove & Harré (1999) also establish that there are different modes of positioning, two of which are important in understanding how individuals navigate perceptions and self. *First order positioning* happens when personal storylines are used to discursively locate the self and others within a social space. By contrast, *second order positioning* occurs when first order positioning is rejected and challenged. First order positioning often happens unintentionally, but when deliberate decisions are made in regard to the roles and duties an individual adopts as a part of social action, it becomes an act of deliberate self-positioning.

*Deliberate self-positioning* is the result of an individual’s desire to express a part of his or her identity, unique point of view, personal history, or to draw attention to their agency (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). This type of positioning is also influenced by an individual's acts of *reflexive positioning*. Tan and Moghaddam (1995) define reflexive positioning as the process by which an individual determines their position through private discourse. During reflexive positioning, an individual collects
and negotiates new and existing storylines in order to reevaluate their existing positions and identities. Similarly to the ways that individuals negotiate the tensions between their figurative and positional identities, reflexive positioning occurs as individuals interpret their own thoughts and behaviors alongside the narrative they are constructing as a part of social action (Tan & Moghaddam, 1995). Without reflexivity, individuals cannot consciously engage in deliberate first or second order positioning. Acts of deliberate self-positioning can be utilized as a method of rejecting those positions that are thrust upon them.

Resisting and modifying identities and forced positions is, as Davies (1991) argues, possible when an individual able and encouraged to move between available discourses and experience. These acts of resistance are defined as second order positioning. Second order positioning occurs as individuals reject positions and/or storylines they have been cast in by others, whether intentionally or unintentionally (van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). As they reject these positions, individuals deliberately re-position themselves in opposition to how others have positioned them, exhibiting agency and “the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert, and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted” (Davies, 1991, p. 51). Shifting between how others have positioned them and how they want to be positioned, individuals may begin to occupy new social space and compose new storylines in interaction with others. From a positioning perspective, looking at talk in interaction allows researchers to explore narratives in which “the subject is determined by existing narratives” and also narratives in which “the subject is the ground from which all narratives are invented” (Bamberg, 2005, p. 225). It is possible that transformation takes place when these two narratives intersect.

Positioning of oneself within a storyline involves determining which categories they do and do not belong to. By choosing to accept one position, individuals intentionally and unintentionally reject
others. This occurs as narratives unfold in conversation with others. (Davies & Harré, 1990). The positions adopted and rejected are part of the “cumulative fragments of a lived autobiography” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 39) and reflect how individuals want to be understood in relationship to their sense of self. As a result of the composing process, students’ positional identities may become important parts of their process and artifacts, as they reflect shifts in identity and thought.

Sedimented identities. Rowsell and Pahl (2007) argue that by exploring the multimodal nature of student created artifacts, it is possible to discover reflections and refractions of students’ identities. Often times, student produced texts are created through an assemblage of Discourses that are negotiated, transformed, and remixed into artifacts. These artifacts reflect not only the identities of their authors, but also the processes by which identities are transformed and negotiated. They posit that “identities can be found within practices and that it is possible to trace the sedimentation of these practices into text making” (p. 393). When identity is associated with action it is easy to see how composition practices are influenced by students’ identities.

In the multimodal production of a text, the identity of the producer comes through in the artistic choices that are made. Rowsell and Pahl (2007) refer to these identities as sedimented because they represent the history of the individual as well as the process. Using sedimented identities as a heuristic for looking at artifacts provides researchers opportunity to not only discern an artifact’s details, but explore the way those details reflect the processes by which individuals weave together the personal with the social (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007). It is possible to uncover where and artifact is made, by whom, and through what set of practices. It is also possible to trace the narrative of the artifact over time as it moves through multiple contexts and figured worlds (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010). Every artifact has a story and uncovering that story is important to understanding texts as wider social processes, full of creativity and infused with identity. “In the space of practice, individuals embed
fundamental aspects of their identities into texts” (Rowsell & Pahl, 2007, p. 396) and create artifacts built from pieces of themselves.

Thus, the view I present in this model (Figure 1) highlights the way students’ artifacts become embedded with their identities and as they are developed over time and space through the process of DV compositing. In order to understand how students’ artifacts reflect their identities, it is important to participate in their composing process. By observing and engaging in dialogue with students as they compose with DV, I hope to understand how their figured worlds and their positions within them become embedded in their stories and their artifacts. In the next section I describe the methods that I employ to investigate the ways that students’ identity positions and narratives are negotiated and transformed as the result of DV composition.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Purpose

This research sought to understand how one teacher and his rural students utilized DV to explore the composing process and construct their identities and identity positions. I utilized qualitative research methods the emphasized observation, interviewing, and the collection of student artifacts. This section outlines the details of data collection and analysis, and is guided by the following research questions:

1. What stance is adopted by Johnson to provide his rural learners with creative space in a student generated after-school Film Club?

2. What does the DV composing process look like for rural students in an after school Film Club?

3. In what ways are students’ identities and figured worlds reflected in their DV composing processes?
**Research Design**\(^1\)

This research followed guidelines for ethnographic (Blommaert & Jie, 2010; Spradley, 1980) and case study research (Creswell, 2013). Conducting an ethnographic case study allowed me to not only explore phenomena that was bound by time and space, but also to observe how this phenomena changed over time in an existing setting. By focusing on the students’ composing processes and artifacts, as well as the actions of their teacher, I sought to “describe the apparently messy and complex activities that make up social action” (Blommaert & Jie, 2010, p. 12), as well as highlight the shared practices that occurred within a specific cultural space over time.

In order to explore how both the participants and their process evolved over time, the data for this study was collected during two separate research periods. From January to June of the 2016 – 2017 school year in an after-school Film Club, and from September to December of the 2017-2018 school year in both an ELA film elective and the after-school Film Club. Both the class and the club met in the same physical space and were guided by the same teacher. Globally, this physical space and the people within it are defined by widely accepted definitions of schooled space. At the local level, this research is bound by the classroom space, the participants of the Film Club and the film elective, as well as the culture that is created by the students and teacher across both spaces. While the film elective occurs during school hours and in a schooled space, the Film Club takes place in a schooled space during *out-of-school time*. Students participation within each of these spaces may differ as a result of their local contexts. Exploring students’ identity development within and across these spaces, may be one way to understand how students’ identities are connected to the spaces in which they compose.

---

\(^1\) A digital summary of the research methods may be found at the following link: https://youtu.be/A2iiYF0A7jY (Barrett, 2018).
Research Site

Located in rural New York, approximately 75 miles from the nearest urban city, Rolling Hills High (RHH) sits atop a hill just behind the city’s middle school. RHH serves grades 8-12 and houses almost 800 students. 83% of the students that attend RHH are classified as white and more than half are considered to be economically disadvantaged. In 2016 the graduation rate for RHH was 86%, with 96% of those students receiving a Regents diploma. The average class size at RHH is 20 and the teacher to student ratio is 1:15. Alongside their core classes, students are given the opportunity to take 16 different courses for college credit. What has been missing from RHH are electives outside of the core or university sponsored curriculum.

In the 2017-2018 school year this changed. RHH now offers students an ELA elective film class. This class was proposed and developed by Mr. Jeremiah Johnson (pseudonym), RHH’s 9th grade ELA teacher and although permission was granted, Mr. Johnson’s efforts have been met with apprehension from administrators. As a part of this class students not only watched and read films, but were also expected to plan and compose their own films. They spent time learning the techniques and language associated with filmmaking and were given the opportunity to engage in writing practices that extended beyond traditional pen to paper. In addition, students enrolled in the film elective were encouraged to join the school’s after school Film Club, which although it was student created, is also advised by Johnson.

The RHH Film Club meets once a week on Wednesdays after school for 60 – 90 minutes. During the 2016-2017 school year, the club also occasionally met on Thursdays at a local theatre to watch and analyze student selected films. The Film Club was established during the 2015-2016 school year by a group of students that sought out a teacher who would be willing to work with them on developing both their film reading and film writing skills. Known in the school as a teacher with an affinity for film, the
students approached Johnson and the Film Club was born. During the first year of the Film Club, the emphasis was place primarily on the reading of film. Johnson helped the students develop film language and understand production technique by exposing them to a wide variety of cinematic and short films. It wasn’t until the second year that students planned and composed their own films. My observations began in January of the 2016-2017 school year, just as students were brainstorming their very first video ideas.

**Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of members of both the Rolling Hills High after-school Film Club and members of the school’s ELA film elective, as well as the teacher/advisor of both of these spaces. Johnson’s interest in digital composition had been fostered through his participation in two Writing with Video professional development workshops. As a member of these week-long workshops, Johnson engaged in DV composition projects that he was then able to adapt for his own students.

The students enrolled in Johnson’s film elective, as well as the members of the school’s Film Club, ranged in ages from 14-18 and while a select few have experience composing with video, most of them are novices to working with DV. All students were given the option to participate in the research and were assured that their participation was neither mandatory, nor part of their grade in the ELA film elective. Across both the Film Club and the film elective 12 students agreed and received parental consent to participate in this research. All participants were given the opportunity to select a pseudonym in order to protect their identities. Of the student participants 4 were enrolled in just the film elective (Skizzy, Alfie, Blaze, and Pete), 7 were only members of the RHH Film Club (DJ, Ophelia, Jaelyn, Paige, Abby, Steve, Mark), and 1 student was both enrolled in the film elective and a member of the RHH Film Club (Mortimer). While data were collected in both the Film Club and the ELA film elective, from this point forward I will focus my attention to exploring the composing process and identities of
the members in Film Club, as well as Johnson’s pedagogical stance. I will address the data collected in the ELA film club as a part of future directions for this research in chapter 7.

**Focal Participants.** The focal participants in this study include the teacher, Mr. Johnson and 3 students: DJ, Ophelia, Mortimer (Table 1). These participants were chosen based on both their level of participation and their productivity. As a part of early data analysis and reduction, I began to focus on the data from students who attended the most Film Club meetings, completed at least one video, and participated in the formal interview process. While the voices of all of the students are included in the construction of the Film Club narratives, DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia each offer very different perspectives on what it means to compose with digital video. The table below offers a snapshot of each of the focal participants and the videos that they completed.

Table 1. **Focal participants and their videos**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Grade (Spring/Fall)</th>
<th>Title of Video(s)</th>
<th>Genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>Mr. Blue Sky &amp; I Never Saw Another Butterfly</td>
<td>Lyric &amp; Video Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortimer</td>
<td>10/11</td>
<td>Together with the Dead</td>
<td>Movie Trailer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>12/x</td>
<td>The Caste System of High School</td>
<td>Documentary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beyond school walls, each of these students also led very different lives. DJ often talked about his sister and the money she owed him for babysitting his nephews. He described a relationship built on distrust and frustration, yet she was his source of transportation each week when film club was over. When I returned to Film Club in the fall, DJ also shared with me that his parents had split up, so he had a “crappy summer.” About halfway through my spring observations, Ophelia missed over a week of school because of familial obligations. When I asked Johnson about this, he admitted that it was not the first time she had missed school to help her family in some way. Joel’s mother was a teacher at RHH and his father worked for the town’s water authority. He often talked about the technological access he had at home, including membership across several social media platforms. To the best of my knowledge,
none of these students rode the bus to school, but relied on family or their own two feet as transportation.

**Researcher Perspectives**

First and foremost, my background in theatre and the arts played an important role in the perspectives that I brought with me as I negotiated membership into Film Club. As someone who has and does rely on artistic and multimodal means of expression as a part of learning, I assumed that students in Film Club would constantly be engaged and motivated by the use of film as a compositional tool. I assumed that every student in Film Club would be there because they wanted to work with film. And, I assumed that each of the students would produce artifacts that re-presented their own learning and identities. I assumed all of these things because they were a part of my own identity as a learner and as a researcher. As a member of Film Club I was able to keep these assumptions in check by continuously engaging in dialogue with my participants. Throughout the analysis process however, I worked diligently to ensure that I was allowing the words and actions of Johnson, DJ, Mortimer, Ophelia and the other members of film club speak for themselves. I relied on my peers and multiple data sources to help ensure that my conclusions were being drawn from data and not my assumptions.

My goal as a researcher was to be accepted into the space and positioned as a member of the Film Club. By first positioning myself as a participant observer, on the periphery, but not cut off from interaction, I hoped that membership would occur naturally over time. This positioning also allowed me to take in my settings and discover “a way of being present in everyday settings that enhances [my] awareness and curiosity about the interactions taking place around [me]” (Glesne, 2011, p. 91). Over time I shifted into the role of full participant and became an active and functioning member of the Film Club. Since this research took place during two different school years, I went through this process each time I attempted to enter into the community.
My relationship with Johnson stems from our participation in two professional development workshops. As a research and technical assistant, I spent a significant amount of time working with Johnson on his own DV projects, as well as some time brainstorming how these projects could be utilized in his classroom. After hearing about my research interests, I was invited into Johnson’s classroom as both an observer and a member.

For the purpose of this study, I relied on a definition of rurality that acknowledges the social construction of rural spaces, but foregrounds rurality as a location determined by quantitative measures of population and geography (Donehower et al., 2007). My working definition of rurality was influenced by both my own experiences growing up, and my experiences as a part of the WWV professional development workshops. While I did not ever consider myself rural based on popular definitions, I proudly adopted the identity of a *country kid*. Having grown up on the outskirts of what was already considered a small suburb, I took a bus to school, lived across from undeveloped acres of land, and often uttered the phrase “I’m going into town.” When this research began to take shape, I believed that I had and understanding of what it meant to be rural, at least in comparison to what it meant to be a country kid. When I first entered into the WWV space two years ago, I had preconceived notions of what rurality looked like and how rural students behaved in schooled spaces. These ideas of rurality were largely based in social constructions of rural students that position them in opposition to their urban peers. With the help of Johnson, and the other teachers in the WWV workshop I was able to reconceptualize rurality as fluid and individually constructed. When I entered RHH for the first time for my pilot study with Minerva, this newly developed definition of rurality continued to take shape as I engaged with students that did not seem to foreground a rural identity. When I returned to RHH and became a member of Film Club, I made it a point to not to project a rural identity onto the students. It was my goal to let this identity surface naturally through dialogue and process. What I discovered was that, like the students in
Minerva’s ELA classes, the members of Film Club did not vocalize and identity as rural. This is something that I will explore as a part of my discussion in chapter 7.

**Data Collection**

Both ethnography and case study research depend on the collection of multiple data sources including observation, fieldnotes, and artifacts in order to compose an accurate picture of the phenomena being explored (Creswell, 2013). Data for this research was collected in the Film Club once a week from January – June during the 2016-1017 school year and once a week from September – December during the 2017-2018 school year. As a part of observations I collected audio and video data, student and teacher artifacts, and compiled researcher field notes. In addition I conducted both formal and informal interviews with both the teacher and the students.

**Video and audio recordings.** Video and audio recordings were collected in several ways. First, both audio and visual data was recorded by an iPad set up in the back of the classroom and adjusted to capture as much of the classroom as possible. This allowed me to capture a wide range of classroom interactions and gain a global perspective on students’ participation in club. Small group work was also documented by small USB recording devices that I asked students to keep with them as they filmed and edited their videos. This allowed me to capture in the moment and unprompted conversations that occurred as students progressed through their projects. Finally, I carried my own recording device as I moved throughout the classroom and the club. This allowed me to capture conversations with students outside of formal interviews and capture both video and audio of students as they planned, filmed, and edited in hallways or alternate classrooms.

**Student and teacher artifacts.** Copies of all student planning/brainstorming documents as well as their final videos were collected and utilized as a part of data analysis. Examples of student artifacts may include: storyboards, shot lists, narrative scripts, and final videos. Teacher artifacts, including planning
documents and assignment sheets were copied, collected, and used as support throughout the analysis process.

**Researcher field notes.** Fieldnotes were both written in a journal and audio-recorded as a part of the data collection process. Because of my active role within the space the Film Club, I was not always able to compile handwritten fieldnotes. As a result, in order to ensure that my observations were captured, I audio recorded fieldnotes immediately following data collection and then transcribed them verbatim.

**Interviews.** Student participants were formally interviewed in a 1:1 setting at the beginning of their film-making process, and informally (Spradley, 1980) throughout the duration of the composing process and as they completed their videos. Using guidelines for semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 2013), I asked students about their activities and experiences with DV during and beyond school (Appendix A). In addition, as students engaged in the composing process I periodically asked them to talk about their choices and to reflect on their experiences as they worked with DV. These questions were individualized and based on both the student and the processes that I observed. Examples of the kinds of questions that I asked during informal interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Johnson was also formally interviewed once (Appendix C) and informally interviewed throughout the data collection process. During informal interviews, I often asked Johnson to talk about specific events that had occurred, or to elaborate on something that he said during Film Club. These interviews took place after Film Club meetings and were guided by my previous observations and field notes.

The data collection procedures outlined above allowed me to immerse myself in the community, gain a better understanding of the cultural practices of the space, and develop research relationships with each of the participants. This created opportunities for me to gather data without significant disruption of the spaces. By collecting student and teacher artifacts, I was able to make connections between both the students’ composing processes and the meaning they ascribed to the artifacts. I was also able to explore
how these artifacts functioned as transformational tools (Glesne, 2011; Spradley, 1980). The wide variety of data sources served as a way for me to ensure the trustworthiness of this research. By looking for themes and patterns and triangulating across multiple data sources, I was able to substantiate my findings and ensure “qualitative validity” (Creswell, 2013, p. 201). The next section will detail the procedures utilized as a part of data reduction and analysis.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis occurred in several steps. Using my theoretical framework as a guide throughout my analysis, I was able to clearly articulate the way that dialogue, process, and identity became interconnected throughout the space of Film Club. I engaged in several rounds of coding, which Miles and Huberman (1994) define as creating “tags or labels for assigning meaning” (p. 56). In this section I will first detail the processes I engaged in as a part of data reduction. I will then describe the three stages of analysis that allowed me to discover not only how Johnson guided his students, but also how DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia engaged in the DV composing process, and how their identities became sedimented in their processes and artifacts.

**First Round Analysis.** First round data analysis focused on data reduction. Over the year I was a member of film club I amassed a significant amount of data that needed to be curated before a more focused analysis could take place. First, all student and teacher interviews, as well as all of my audio fieldnotes were transcribed verbatim and all student artifacts were organized by participant. I then shifted my focus to the observational data that I collected. In order to focus my inquiry, I transcribed only the data that was necessary to my study. Using my questions, as a guide, I transcribed the dialogue that related to film, composing, and student identity. I also transcribed moments during which students talked about Film Club as a space. I relied on multiple video and audio sources to construct accurate transcripts for each day that I observed. I did not transcribe moments of generalized chatter but did
provide a summary of their content in the event that I needed to return to these transcripts later. When I finished creating the transcripts, I organized them in chronological order by date and placed them in a binder. Images of this completed data set can be found in Appendix D.

**Second Round Analysis.** Second round coding focused on holistic coding (Saldaña, 2013) in which I read through transcripts created from data reduction and looked for large patterns in the dialogue and events. During my first pass at the data I made notes as I read, paying specific attention to the details of each section of dialogue, and attempted to create generalized descriptions of what was happening or being talked about. As a result, I was able to identify five different holistic codes: *Process, Content, Teaching, S-Process, and Identity* (Table 2), that would allow me to isolate events for further analysis.

Each of the data sources was then hand coded by both participant and one of the five holistic codes. For example, moments during which Johnson worked with students on the narrative or content of their videos, I coded the section as *Johnson-Content*. When he worked with students on the filming or editing process I coded the section as *Johnson-Process*.

Table 2.
*Definitions of first round codes.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Johnson</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Guidance/conversations about the content/narratives of students’ films. This included individual guidance as well as group discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Guidance/conversations about the editing/filming/structural components of students’ films. This included individual guidance as well as group discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Group discussions about project assignments, club related activities, or expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-Process</td>
<td>Guidance/conversations discussing the composing process including planning, filming, editing, and post-production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Dialogue in which students made explicit reference to their identities and dialogue in which tenets of students’ identities were unintentionally revealed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once all of the observational data had been analyzed, I coded each participant’s interview utilizing the same code. I finalized this round of coding by creating new documents for each individual participant based on the specific codes. For example, every instance of DJ-Process was compiled into a separate document and organized in chronological order so that I could trace his process over time. For each student participant I ended up with three documents: Participant-Process, Participant-Identity, Participant Interviews (Appendix E). For Johnson, I ended up with four documents: Johnson-Process, Johnson-Content, Johnson-Teaching, and Johnson-Interview. This round of analysis not only gave me a clearer picture of what was happening in the Film Club, but also served as a second round of data reduction.

**Third Round Analysis.** After developing and isolating the codes for each participant, I compiled these into a separate binder organized and color coded by participant. Next, I read through each participant's documents in order to delve deeper and look for more specific patterns over time. I relied specifically on pattern coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2013) and domain analysis (Spradley, 1980) to identify emerging themes. These themes would later be used to explore Johnson’s pedagogical stance and DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia’s composing processes. I did not apply this method of coding to DJ, Mortimer, or Ophelia’s Identity documents because it was not an appropriate analysis procedure for re-constructing and understanding students’ identities. In the next section I will detail how positioning analysis was used as an alternative process.

As a result of pattern coding, I developed several codes that were then collapsed into six major themes (Table 3). As I read through each of the transcripts, I kept a journal that allowed me to see how each of the codes could be combined into larger categories. It is during this process that I relied on domain analysis (Spradley, 1980). The table below gives examples of some of the pattern codes that were developed, as well as the thematic codes they collapsed into.
Table 3.

Examples from Second Round Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Pattern Codes</th>
<th>Thematic Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Johnson</strong> I am here to support, Giving advice, Soundboarding, Offering validation, Encouragement, Advice on filming, Validation of narrative, Validation of process, Individualized guidance, Sharing Approaches, Developing Students, Students as Knowledgeable</td>
<td>Dialogic Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples and options, Guiding instruction, Film in real life, Reading for technique, Conveying message through edits, Reading for structure, Film as inspiration, Film as teacher, Reading Film for Content, Student films as example, Developing technique, Making choices</td>
<td>Film as Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual pre-writing, Guiding Assignments, Establishing direction, Realistic expectations, Setting goals, Setting expectations, How to pre-plan, Storyboarding, Setting Assignment, Why Planning is Important,</td>
<td>Composing is Messy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong> Developing Narrative, Verbal Storyboarding, Switching Gears, Becoming more Realistic, Technical Issues, Verbalizing Structure, Discovery Through Process, Articulating Purpose</td>
<td>Shaping at the Point of Need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to Suggestion, Collaboration, Helping others, Giving Direction, Waiting for Feedback, Advice from Peers, Checking Understanding</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making it his own, Taking ownership, I've got this, Justifying Choices, Pride, Proud of Progress, Reading Film, Criticizing Film, Sharing Knowledge, Taking the Lead</td>
<td>Taking Ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once these themes had been identified, I reached out to members of my academic community that were familiar with qualitative research, specifically coding methods. I explained each of my codes and asked them to take a look at the data. I also turned to the transcripts of my field notes and isolated moments that substantiated claims. These two processes allowed me to ensure the reliability of my analysis and to keep my researcher bias in check. As a result of my third round analysis procedures, I was able to discover the “patterns of behavior, artifacts, and knowledge” that the Film Club learned, adopted, and created (Spradley, 1980, p. 86).
Positioning Analysis. In order to understand how DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia constructed their figured worlds and positioned themselves and others within Film Club, I relied on theories of how people position themselves and others both intentionally and unintentionally as a part of social action. In dialogue with others, people position themselves as well as those they are engaging in conversation with. Defined as first-order positioning by van Langenhove and Harré (1999), these acts of positioning helped me to understand how each of the students located themselves and others within the space of Film Club. More specifically, while I read DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia’s Identity transcripts and their interviews I was cognizant of instances of deliberate self-positioning which van Langenhove and Harré (1999) argue, “occurs in every conversation where one wants to express his/her personal identity” (p. 24). In addition, I looked for more nuanced instances of positioning in students’ dialogue and artifacts. This less deliberate type of positioning is what Tan & Moghaddam (1995) refer to as reflexive positioning. This type of positioning often happens in dialogue with others, but may only be understood by the speaker because of a personal, cultural, or insider perspective. For example, the statement “I’m only a graduate student” may imply a reflexive positioning as less than because of the use of the word only. DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia’s reflexive positionings are what I used to validate my perceptions of both their identities and their identity positions.

The table below gives examples of data that I coded as acts of deliberate self-positioning and reflexive positioning for DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia (Table 4). Once I completed positioning analysis, I created identity position codes for each act of positioning. Examples of these codes include: DJ as Photographer, Mortimer as Writer, and Ophelia as Curious. These identity positions are what I relied on to understand and describe the figured worlds that DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia constructed as members of Film Club.
Table 4.  
*Examples of Positioning Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Deliberate Self-Positioning</th>
<th>Reflexive Positioning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DJ</td>
<td>Mr. Blue Sky is supposed to bring the positivity...have you met me?</td>
<td>He’s like, DJ you disappoint me every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortimer</td>
<td>I do like reading. I bought like $60 of classic literature a couple of weekends ago.</td>
<td>One of the first things I learned in Johnson’s class was break the rules if you have to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>I was never really a hands-on filmmaker.</td>
<td>You can just engrave my name on the trophy, right?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, in order to understand how DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia’s figured worlds became embedded in both their artifacts and their processes, I returned to their *Process* documents and their artifacts and relied on their identity positions to isolate moments that reflected how they positioned themselves or others. As a result, I was able to draw attention to the ways that their figured worlds influenced their composing processes from start to finish.

Viewing the data through a positioning lens also allowed me to discover some of the ways that the students and Johnson positioned each other, the space of Film Club, and film. While I did not engage in a thorough and detailed analysis of this dialogue, a brief positioning analysis did highlight some important aspects of these relationships and will be discussed throughout the next two chapters. In this chapter I have detailed the methods utilized as a part of data collection and analysis. The next three chapters will detail the results of my data analysis and explore the ways that Johnson, DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia constructed and composed within Film Club.

**Chapter 4: Findings – Johnson’s Pedagogical Stance**

The previous chapter detailed the analysis processes that I relied on to explore and understand the space of Film Club and the experiences of those who occupy and create it. While the data were collected in both the after-school Film Club and Johnson’s ELA film elective, my findings will focus on the experiences and space of Film Club. This section will be comprised of three chapters, each responding to one of my three questions. In this chapter, I will first provide an overview of how the space of Film Club was constructed and perceived by both Johnson and his students. I will then detail
the findings of my analysis, focusing the elements of Johnson’s pedagogical stance and how they contributed to the creation of a creative environment. I will articulate the ways that Johnson’s pedagogical stance helped to create a space in which students could explore the DV composing process alongside their identities. The chapters that follow will detail the composing experiences of three members of the RHH Film Club, DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia, and how their identity positions became reflected in their process and their artifacts.

The Space of Film Club

My very first observation occurred at the end of January. As I got into my car to make the hour and a half drive, I remember hypothesizing about what I was going to encounter when I got there. Rolling Hills High was not a foreign place to me. During October and November of the previous year, I spent time in a 10th grade ELA classroom as a part of my pilot study. I was excited to see Minerva again and I was excited to see Johnson in his element, so to speak. I pulled up to the school, grabbed my bag, and headed toward the main entrance. I signed my name on a bright yellow visitor’s pass and told the secretary where I was going and why I was there. She buzzed me through the door and I headed up to the second floor, to Johnson’s room. I waited anxiously in the hallway for the bell signaling the end of the school day to ring. I entered Johnson’s classroom and he greeted me with excitement. The students began to filter in slowly and once they were all there, Johnson introduced me to the members of the Film Club and welcomed me to the space.

In order to understand how Johnson and his students navigate who they are and what they do within Film Club, it is first important to understand how both Johnson and the students talk and feel about the space. As Soja (2010) argues, space is more than just physical boundaries; it is a product of social interaction that reflects the “biographies and geo-histories” of those that create and maintain it (p. 18). In this case, space is more than the four walls that separate Johnson’s classroom from the rest of
the school. The space of Film Club includes the feelings, identities, and experiences of those that consider themselves to be members. For some students Film Club is somewhere to go other than home and for other’s it’s somewhere where they can feel like they belong to something.

During her interview, with tears in her eyes, Paige told me that “Everyday coming to Film Club on Wednesdays, it’s always the best day of my week. It’s like my family here.” Later in her interview she added that, “They’re all very accepting. Johnson has become like a father figure kind of.” Paige is not the only one that views Johnson as a father figure. Several times throughout the course of my observations DJ referred to Johnson as “dad” or made reference to being Johnson’s adopted son. DJ also shows his respect for Johnson when he talks about joining Film Club. He states that he would’ve joined during the previous year “…but I am too nice of a kid to play Johnson like that.” Struggling to keep his grades up, DJ didn’t want to be given special treatment.

For Mortimer, Film Club is a space in which he feels he can be creative in ways that are not endorsed during regular school hours. During my interview with Mortimer I asked him why he joined Film Club:

I joined last year because I like Johnson and then I got sidetracked and was unable to come. This year, I started coming again because I like Johnson. It was also that I wanted to come and hang out and because the writing stuff is fun and I like to have an outlet for that because really there isn’t one.

Mortimer relied on Film Club as a space in which he could engage in more creative types of writing, something that he feels is missing from his academics. Paige, DJ, and Mortimer represent just some of the ways that this space was perceived differently by each of the students that participated in it. How the students perceived the space greatly impacted how they participated in it, which is something that I will explore more throughout this section.
The students were not the only ones that talked about the space. Johnson also had his own thoughts about Film Club. First and foremost, Johnson recognized that the space was created for and belonged to the students. He believed that it was his job to do what it took to help maintain it. During my interview with Johnson, I asked him to talk about the goals that he had for the Film Club:

It’s just providing a space for those kids…that sort of became the island of misfit toys and that is what I wanted it to be. That’s just a space for those kids to exist.

Johnson never lost sight of the film part of Film Club, but he allowed the space to also become somewhere for students who may not have many other places to go.

We revisited this question during a subsequent conversation he elaborated on the ways that Film Club had morphed into both a creative and a safe space:

My intention was more of a project based club, but what it's really become for some of these kids is community…So, I think that there's just a range of places where kids fit...for good or for ill that's what it is. And, I don't care. I'm in this for the kids, and if that's what it needs to be then that’s what it is. I think that what this provides for them, is a space where they can just feel that they're protected. I want to provide them some sort of shelter from the storm here.

By actively monitoring the climate of Film Club, Johnson was able to ensure that both his intentions and the students’ needs were being met. What occurred as a result was a space in which students were encouraged to create and engage in composition practices, but also to seek solace and support when necessary.

Johnson consistently positioned himself as a member of Film Club, not as the leader. He actively worked together with the students to construct and maintain their space. By giving students the space they needed, Johnson was able to earn their respect and their trust, which resulted in the creation of a community and mutual understanding of what it meant to be a member of Film Club:
You don't really have to be a teacher. You're a human being collaborating with other human beings creating good work. Which is what school should be…You don't have to manage kids and say, where were you during this time? Or, why are you wearing that? Because, when you're all working together on a project, it's expectation rather than management.

Johnson provided students with personal support and encouragement when they needed it and the students worked to ensure that new members felt welcome and that compositional endeavors were supported. By constructing it together, Johnson and the members of the Film Club built a space in which an emphasis on creation and community encouraged students to engage in DV composition on their own terms. Throughout the rest of this chapter I will detail the ways that Johnson’s pedagogical stance was built on trying to ensure that the students received the compositional support they needed and acknowledged their individual identities as composers.

**Johnson’s Pedagogical Stance**

Relying on my first research question as a guide, in this section I will detail the specific ways that Johnson’s pedagogical stance added to the creation, preservation, and transformation of Film Club. While he did not position himself as a leader of the club, many of the students positioned him as a more knowledgeable other when it came to production and development. As a result, Johnson worked with students to develop their film language and technique in a multitude of ways, all of which provided students with options and autonomy in terms of their compositional process. Johnson’s pedagogical stance was crafted from dialogic engagement, the use of film as text, and an emphasis on the messiness of composition. By providing students support in these ways, Johnson worked to ensure that each of his students felt supported in their compositional choices and processes.

**Dialogic engagement.** It was not unusual to see Johnson sitting at a desk talking with a student about their film or leading a group discussion about film structure and technique. Johnson made sure to
check in and provide students with the guidance based on their individual needs. He worked closely with students as their narratives began to take shape and he offered criticism and suggestions as they entered into the editing process. Throughout my observations, I noticed a few different ways that Johnson encouraged students to engage dialogically as they navigated the planning and editing stages of DV composition. As a part of the Film Club, dialogic engagement is considered to be any instance in which Johnson worked with students verbally in order to develop their ideas, provide technical guidance, or explore editing options. This included acting as a soundboard for students, validating and extending their ideas, focusing on technique, and helping students work across modes.

From the very beginning stages of this projects, Johnson made himself available to his students so they could talk through their ideas. For example, as Jaelyn began to construct the narrative for her first video, a tribute previously incarcerated father and her uncle that highlighted the ways they were working to make things right, Johnson encouraged her to talk through her idea by asking questions. These questions served to help Jaelyn conceptualize and clarify the structure of her narrative:

Johnson: Like he's in prison?
Jaelyn: Yeah. Like, I don't know...because that's what I have...my dad would write
me letters when he was in prison, but I thought maybe I could like...her writing letters,
but him...he receives them but doesn't pay attention to them. Kind of like when they come
in the mail and he puts it on the table and doesn't open it.
Johnson: Why? Because it's like too much?
Jaelyn: Yeah. He thinks he's not good enough and he knows he's messed up so he isn't able to
like face what he's done wrong. But, I wanted a third, totally forgot what. That one was
the pictures and then, this one is the…my uncle in the fading out.
Johnson: It's your what?
Jaelyn: Like this one, the four all together would be like the fading out with my uncle and maybe my family and not put it in with this one. Like, not put my family in with this one. Conversations like the one above occurred frequently during Film Club. By asking Jaelyn simple probing questions, Johnson acts as a soundboard for her ideas. Rather than giving students explicit instruction, these questions give students the opportunity to talk through their ideas and their processes and think about their project on their own terms. 

**Johnson as soundboard.** Engaging students in dialogue about their projects also provided Johnson with an opportunity to help students think about and talk through gaps in their narrative and challenges they may encounter throughout the planning and composing process. Johnson checked in with students often and these conversations, which I define as soundboarding, frequently began with general questions asking how things were progressing and then shifted to shaping ideas and determining purpose and direction. What often happened as a result was a kind of back and forth in which Johnson would ask a question and then students would talk through their response in the moment.

This kind of conversation proved to be particularly beneficial for DJ as he struggled to conceptualize his video. Recognizing that DJ may be struggling, Johnson checked in with him to see how things were going. Johnson had previously been working with DJ on “The Brunch Club,” what DJ originally called an adaptation of *The Breakfast Club* that took place years after the characters spent time in detention. Confused by the scope of the narrative, Johnson worked with DJ to conceptualize the actual structure and genre of the video. Before this conversation occurred, DJ’s focus had been on planning out his shots and the technical details. He had spent very little time working through or articulating the actual story that he was going to tell.

Johnson first asks DJ where he is in the process so that he can begin to gain and understanding of and progress that DJ has made. This allows DJ to articulate the structure of his film and results in a
realization that his original idea is not clear. As DJ worked to explain what his idea was, Johnson continued to ask questions, encouraging DJ to develop a more cohesive narrative concept. He asked DJ to talk through what he wanted his video to look like (Figure 2) and over the course of their conversation, DJ began to reshape his video as a sequel, rather than an adaptation. Having made this shift in the structure of the film, Johnson then encouraged DJ to think about the characters and the narrative. DJ begins to shape a narrative that extends upon the original narrative of the film:

Figure 2. DJ and Johnson talking through “The Brunch Club”

DJ: And then I thought about it some more and literally as I was doing the characters, it sounded just like the princess...I think I want to...because that was another hole in the movie was...

Johnson: Who do you think that would've been.

DJ: I have no idea yet Probably the athlete. Because he was all about scholarship this and scholarship that and I need to go to college. Because, that's one of the main things in it.

What's going to happen to us when we get out of here? Are we going to talk to each other in the hallways or ignore each other?

Johnson: Right, okay. So, it's picking up on some of the questions left by this.
DJ: Yeah, like one of the dudes killed a guy.

By engaging DJ in a conversation about the direction of his narrative, Johnson not only created an opportunity for DJ to bounce ideas off of him, he encouraged DJ to think beyond the existing narrative of *The Breakfast Club* and make it his own. Johnson used this moment to help DJ think about the content of his film in conjunction with structure and technique.

While DJ’s conversation focused on the development of his narrative, Johnson also engaged students in this same kind of dialogue about their filming process. Towards the end of the school year, Mortimer’s group began filming a movie trailer that they were working on called “Together with the Dead.” Having collected many of their shots outside of Film Club, they were having trouble capturing one particular scene that portrayed someone, quite literally waking up from the dead. Mortimer took the lead on all of the filming and after unsuccessfully shooting this scene in the hallway a few times, Johnson steps in to offer them some filming support. He first offers them a summary of what they have showed him, but then uses their clip to help Mortimer rethink the filming process:

Johnson: So, maybe the initial shot...

Mortimer: I'm confused.

Johnson:...the initial shot is him lying on the floor so we get the establishing shot. We know it's him. He's dead. He's got the toe tag on and then we switch to the shot.

Mortimer: So, we're going to want to replace that first thing with him zoomed out?

Johnson: With it zoomed out?

Mortimer: With him waking up. [*Mortimer navigates to the specific spot in iMovie, see Figure 3*]

So, this shot is going to be whole body
Unhappy with the way this particular shot is turning out, Mortimer asked Johnson for help. Rather than explicitly telling Mortimer how to film this shot, he encouraged him to think about the structure of the narrative by offering a small filming prompt that focused on the way that the sequence was telling the story. Mortimer and Paige then worked together to plan how they would go about their next attempt at shooting this scene. Johnson then repeated what they had each said, encouraging Mortimer to make the connections between the narrative and filming technique.

Validating and extending. One of the other ways that Johnson relied on dialogic engagement to maintain Film Club was to not only validate students processes and compositional choices, but to also
help students extend their ideas and move forward with the composing process. In one of his very first planning conversations with DJ, Johnson talks to DJ about the development of his characters. Johnson first validated DJ’s decision to move forward with “The Brunch Club” by encouraging him to work on character development. DJ responds by beginning to tease out the narrative in terms of the relationship between each of the characters in his film:

Johnson: Ya know what you should start with DJ? You should start with the characters.

DJ: It’s kind of like my plan. Like, what happens? Because everyone constantly has brunch. Like that's the main thing. It's a group of people that go out to brunch every Saturday, but for some reason there's a quarrel between them and they don't do brunch, but they go out to dinner to resolve their issues because one of them is really smart and likes to keep everybody happy. And, I'm not going to be in it but I'm going just going to say...who I'm going to be.

Johnson then provides DJ with suggestions for the next steps and how he can work to create the character narratives. DJ began furiously writing and stated that he needed a “whole ‘nother [sic] page for ideas.” By helping DJ focus on where to start, Johnson provided him with the tools necessary to further shape his characters and narrative. It is during this conversation that “The Brunch Club” becomes more than just an idea.

Validation and extension also became an important part of Johnson’s work with Mortimer’s group as they began filming. After receiving feedback from Johnson, Mortimer films the toe tag scene again and the group then asks Johnson to take a look. Johnson starts off their conversation by acknowledging that there is something not quite right about the scene that they are working on. He gives a brief reenactment of what they have filmed and then focuses on Paige’s concern that something about the shot was not quite right.
Johnson: This part, he comes up, grabs the toe tag, then I feel like...

Mortimer: You want it cut a second sooner?

Johnson: I feel like that's when [whoosh noise] that's where. Because when he holds it up like this, it's kind of just like [imitates Marks's face and everyone laughs]. Ya know what I'm saying? Because, when the toe tag leaves the frame, that's the transition.

Paige: How I pictured that shot in my head, how you were talking about it, it totally different than how it turned out.

Johnson: How were you picturing it?

Paige: I pictured it kind of like how it was in those pictures and then his foot not coming up and you're just like seeing his leg, you can like see him sit up, but you can't really see his face.

Johnson: Well, let's do it that way then. Let's do it that way. Do it that way, were all you can see is his feet. Just like that.

Having been in the background for much of the film process, Johnson created a space for Paige to reposition herself as a vocal member of the group. By encouraging her to talk through her visions, he provided her with an opportunity to play an active part of the filming process, which until this moment had been controlled by Mortimer.

Immediately following this conversation, Mortimer’s group returned to the hallway and Paige took control of the filming process and attempted to execute the idea in her head. She made adjustments as she went and worked to further the narrative of the story through this particular shot. Johnson not only validated Paige’s idea and paved the way for her to reposition herself, he also positioned her as an important part of the group. This collaboration and the scene that was created as a result of this
conversation are further validated and extended during a discussion of technique during the following school year:

    Johnson: I loved Mark's zombie awakening where he comes alive in the morgue and rips the toe tag off of his toe. That's super cool and you could do something that's just every bit as good as Silence of the Lambs.

This moment served to emphasize the work that went into this scene and further encourage Paige, Mark, and Mortimer to move forward with this narrative.

**Focus on technique.** As Johnson worked with students dialogically, he did not offer much guidance on content specific details. Instead, his content guidance was rooted in the techniques that students could use to convey their message clearly and create meaningful videos. Johnson utilized dialogic interaction as a way for students to talk through the editing process. In particular, Johnson worked with Ophelia as she began to shape the structure of her documentary film “The Caste System of High School.” As a part of this project, Ophelia canvased the teachers and students at RHH, and asked them to talk about their feelings about friendship, learning, and high school in general.

Since her project relied on the responses to her questions, understanding both the question and the answer were important parts of the structure of her film:

    Johnson: So, make sure when you're editing that the sound is condensed and that there's continuity throughout the entire thing. So, it's not like people are going to listen up real close and then get blasted.

    Ophelia: Okay.

    Johnson: So maybe in that space you're using subtitles?

    Ophelia: Yeah, that's what I was thinking.

    Johnson: To make sure that people get that point.
Ophelia: I was going to use subtitles anyways because in some...especially in the commons, when everyone is talking at the same time and I'm only trying to focus in on one person. Throughout this conversation, Johnson draws on a genre that Ophelia is familiar with and uses this conversation to make sure that Ophelia is considering her audience as she constructs her narrative. He reminded her of documentary films that she had seen and how the editing contributed to the overall clarity of the film. He also wanted to ensure that Ophelia was including her own voice in the film. When she confirms that her voice will indeed be heard, Johnson suggests that she think about how that can be used to further shape the structure of her fill.

While Johnson does provide Ophelia with a couple of specific ideas, Ophelia seems to have already thought about her audience and how her approach to editing needs to place emphasis on what is said and what is heard. This conversation provided her with the validation she needed to move forward with the editing process. By engaging in conversation with Johnson in this way, Ophelia’s plans are reinforced and supported, and her technique is developed.

There were also instances in which Johnson offered students guidance on technique and students responded by exploring the content of their films. For example, while talking with DJ about the logistics of filming his second video, a lyric video incorporating his own photography, Johnson offers DJ a short summary of the kinds of shots that he needs to collect in order to convey the overall message:

DJ: So, anything else?

Johnson: So, the whole idea with this...you would be acting out ways in which people can be negative and then Mr. Blue Sky is bringing the positivity. So, like...

DJ: Oh my God, I got it! I've got it all in my head. You know the cemetery over there? Yeah, that's going to be my ending place.

Johnson: Oh, so you're going to be kind of sarcastic about it.
DJ: No. I'm going to use like all of these dreary kind of days. I'm going to wait for it to rain, I'm going to start filming with somebody. I'm going to make them look all sad and I'm going to come over and make them happy blah, blah, blah, and it goes throughout the song and at the way end where it's like "Watch out over your shoulder, here comes Mr. Night" I can go ta-dah! the night's coming. Or, I could have someone that's coming around and making everyone feel bad.

In response to Johnson’s summary, DJ excitedly described his idea for the film’s narrative, while also articulating the ways in which he could it could be filmed. Johnson’s reminder of the connection between technique and mood helped DJ to further develop and take ownership over this particular video.

**Transmediation.** Throughout the composing process, Johnson encouraged students to draw on their own strengths as artists and work across modes in meaningful ways. Transmediation is the process by which students work to invent new meaning across modes (Siegel, 1995). In one instance, Johnson recognized DJ’s continued struggle with “The Brunch Club” and offers him a more realistic idea for a film that draws on DJ’s passion for photography. Johnson supported DJ’s initial idea over the course of approximately three weeks. He listened to DJ’s ideas, provided him with advice and support. It wasn’t until DJ began to visibly struggle with its conceptualization and become frustrated that Johnson stepped in. DJ’s was having trouble moving beyond the film process. Rather than watch him struggle, Johnson offered DJ a suggestion that was rooted in DJ’s existing composing practices:

> Come here real quick. I like this whole idea and everything, but I feel like it's going to take a long time. So, another idea...I've been thinking a lot about your photography. And, I think you could find a cool way to merge your photography with some music and create…

At first DJ felt this was Johnson’s way of telling him to “dumb it down” which is something that I will discuss in the next chapter. However, over time and with the support of Johnson, DJ soon became
excited about creating a new video. He decided that by taking one of his favorite songs, “Mr. Blue Sky” by Electric Light Orchestra and using his own photos to help create the narrative, he could make something that reflect his experiences over the past year. By pairing his photos with the song, DJ felt that his video could remind people that “there are good days to these bad days and sometimes the clouds just go away.”

Johnson continued to work with DJ as he began to articulate new ideas and form a new narrative. DJ’s Mr. Blue Sky video went through several different stages of development, but DJ ultimately decided it would be a great way to showcase his photos and put himself out there. After working on combining his photos with the first verse of “Mr. Blue Sky” by Electric Light Orchestra, DJ began to feel overwhelmed by the length of the song and brought his planning and in progress video to Johnson for advice. DJ’s concern was that there was too much blank space and Johnson suggested that he really use that space to highlight his photos. Johnson worked with DJ to figure out a solution and reminded him that this was a chance for him to draw attention to who he is as a composer:

Johnson: This would be a great place to really feature your photos because there's no lyric.
DJ: Till the way, way end?
Johnson: It's cool to make a lyric video but, it's sort of like a way to, I don't know, to feature your photos.
DJ: That's what I was talking about to Nichole out there in the interview the other day. I was like, it really puts you out there.
Johnson: Yeah, it does and because this song is super popular, you put this up there and...oh, I'm so pumped to see how many hits you get. [They watch what DJ has] And that's got to be a sweet photograph, slow dissolve and it'll say DJ.
Johnson’s continued emphasis on DJ’s strengths as a photographer provided DJ with the opportunity to create meaning across multiple modes and produce something that was rooted in his own experiences and identities. Johnson initiated this shift in DJ’s composition by first engaging him in a conversation about the obstacles he encountered as he worked on “The Brunch Club.” He then continued to offer him support as he beings to reshape his ideas and encounter new challenges.

By adopting a dialogic stance, Johnson actively positioned his students as the most knowledgeable in regard to their projects, encouraging autonomy over both their processes and their products. He provided them with space and time to talk through and shape their compositions, both narratively and technically. He guided the members of Film Club by validating and extending their processes and encouraging them to talk through their ideas. Johnson promoted thinking that went beyond simply re-presenting knowledge and meaning in different modes. As a result, Johnson actively refrained from dictating students processes and provided them with space to learn and create by exploration.

**Film as Text.** One of the first things that I noticed about the way that Johnson cultivated film culture as a part of the space was his use of film as a teaching tool and a device that students could reference as they began to compose their own films. Throughout the course of my time with Film Club, I was exposed to a wealth of different types of film. From full length feature films, to YouTube tutorials and clips, all the way to student produced films. Johnson consistently relied on film as both example and inspiration. I witnessed Johnson utilize film to teach approaches to content. I watched clips that he selected to help students understand technique. By using and positioning film in this way, Johnson defines film as a resource many students can find among their own experiences and interests.

Most importantly, Johnson never positions himself as a film expert. In his interview he self-identified as a novice and as willing to learn:
I'm still at the beginning, working things out. Especially iMovie is a really user friendly program. That's what's really great about where I am right now. I'm learning at the same time as the kids are learning and some of the kids have surpassed me in what they know, so that makes for a good classroom when kids can be experts.

He encouraged students to share film resources they find interesting and often asks them for suggestions when it comes to selecting content, especially films that were viewed as a part of Thursday movie days. For Johnson, film is not only a device that he can use to help students understand the process of film making, it also allows him to create a shared language that the Film Club can utilize as they develop their own films.

**Myriad of examples.** Over the course of my observations, Johnson used the following non-student films or videos (Table 5) to help teach technique and narrative development:

Table 5.
**Non-student Films used as Text During Film Club**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature Films (Including clips &amp; trailers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Godfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand by Me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferris Bueller’s Day off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silence of the Lambs (clip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Last Jedi (trailer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunset Boulevard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YouTube Videos/Tutorials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Frame a Painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/everyframeapainting">https://www.youtube.com/user/everyframeapainting</a>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blu-Muto Graffiti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="https://youtu.be/LQWNNH8oiio">https://youtu.be/LQWNNH8oiio</a>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Dream to Reality – Max Joseph (student)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="https://youtu.be/mlCflbcj6EM">https://youtu.be/mlCflbcj6EM</a>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History Channel – “How will you remember 2017?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="https://youtu.be/SOfQ231ZfFQ">https://youtu.be/SOfQ231ZfFQ</a>]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Johnson also utilized several student created videos, including video poems created by his ELA classes, as well as past videos created by Film Club members. In addition, Johnson used videos created by students from other schools for a local film festival in order to show the members of the Film Club what they were capable of. As a part of his pedagogy, student videos were treated the same as professional films and he asked students to analyze and critique them in the same way.

Johnson’s use of video as text was connected not only to his own positioning as a novice film maker, but was also rooted in providing students with techniques that remained within their means as students and amateur film makers. During an interview with Jonson, we talked about the diversity of the films that he relied on as text and how by breaking them down, students were able to see all of the different ways they could create effects. He compared Film Club to a Cinema 101 class that you might take in college and how each movie offers students a different technique. He also talked about the value of including clips YouTube channels and how:

We don't have any money and we have very low production value in what we're doing. Like, we're using iPads to make videos. So, what can we do with that? So, it's like, what kind of tricks can we use using perspective. Or, like when we were watching *The Thing*, how can we position a camera and do a slow pan in order to create some sort of effect and heighten... all you're using is a slow pan and a shadow to create a very chilling effect. So, we break things down while we're watching them.

By relying on a wide range of text, Johnson gradually built up the Film Club’s language and tool kit. As a result, students in the Film Club not only drew on these movies as they worked to build their own narratives, but they also began to adopt film language as they talked about other films and provided feedback to each other.
**Film as example of technique.** Johnson also utilizes films, both student and professional, as a way to expose students to and teach them about different film techniques that they can use. During a Film Club discussion about video poems, Johnson showed the students Paige’s video poem from the previous year in order to give students and example of the kinds of things they can do with the technology and resources that they have. Johnson drew attention a clip in which Paige captured someone pulling soup from the microwave in order to draw attention to her use of available resources. He then used the poor sound quality of her film as an example of a challenge that the Film Club could work together to troubleshoot and overcome:

Johnson: That shot is so sophisticated. That is something that a sophisticated film maker would do.

Paige: Yeah, I had to tape my mom's phone to the inside of the microwave.

Johnson: From our first year, I think the big takeaway is that audio matters, maybe even more than visuals matter. So, that's going to be something that we're definitely going to be working on this year is how to solve these audio problems. How can we get it to be crisp? How can we get it to be equalized? So, we'll practice some things like that. When we're recording audio, we're never using an audio that we get from the video…Okay? Paige made hers on the school laptop so, double congratulations to you for making an amazing video. Those laptops are trash.

By using Paige’s film as an example of both sophisticated technique and technical challenge, Johnson also demystified the process of DV composition and positioned it as something every member of the room was capable of, regardless of expertise and resources.

Johnson also used box office films and trailers to guide students and teach them about film technique and structure. On more than one occasion, these examples were inspired by students’ interests
or were films that Johnson believed his students would be familiar with. For example, when Johnson wanted to engage his students in a discussion about film genre and structure as they began to work on their video poem projects, he used the most recent trailer for the new *Star Wars* film that was coming out around Christmastime. He first asks students to identify the different parts of the trailer and what their role in the construction of the trailer’s narrative is. Mortimer and Jaelyn are active members of this discussion and determine that the first part of the trailer determines the mood and provide viewers with a brief recap of where characters exist in the narrative already. As the conversation continues, Johnson begins to draw connections between the use of color and the purpose of the first section of the trailer:

Johnson: Ya know what I kind of notice about the first part. Remember when we talking about this before, like last year when we were making our video poems, one of the ways to create mood is through color. Did you notice like the two colors in the first part? There's two color schemes.

Jaelyn: Dark.

Mortimer: Red.

Johnson: Red and black and then green and...

Paige: Blue.

Johnson: Blue. So, yeah. I think if we call this first part mood, then I think it's the red and black, R & B, get it? See what I did there? Versus...we'll get there. Versus green and blue, right?

When does that end?

Jaelyn: At the Climax.

This conversation continued and the students worked with Johnson to identify each of the different parts and discuss what their purpose to the overall narrative was. Johnson used this trailer to not only teach the Film Club about the structure of movie trailers, but to also show how this structure could be used to
help them compose their video poem projects. While the Film Club would be working on video poems, not movie trailers, Johnson drew upon a familiar genre and positioned it as a parallel structure in order to give students and example that they could rely on for inspiration.

**Film as example of content.** During the same conversation about structure using *The Last Jedi*, Johnson shifted the conversation in order to place more emphasis on the way the structure impacts how the narrative is built and perceived by the audience:

Johnson: The second part is.

DJ: Mother and son issues.

Johnson: Conflict, yeah, mom issues, and, then what issues is...so, the dude in the spaceship is having mom issues, what about the girl.

DJ: She is having personal conflict.

Johnson: Yeah.

DJ: She has to decide what she's going to do with herself.

Johnson: So, if it goes from mood to conflict...oh, can we do this *[adds to the timeline on the board]* and then he's got a little line on his face…So, what's the name of the game in this last part? Mood, conflict, and what's the cliffhanger?

Jaelyn: Things start shooting. I thought everyone started shooting.

Johnson: But what is it though in the...

DJ: Companionship. The joining of two people...

By shifting the conversation in order to talk about the narrative content of the trailer, Johnson drew connections between how the structure and the mood influenced the way the narrative built over time. By asking questions, Johnson also gave students the opportunity to share their perceptions rather than providing them with his own ideas and dictating their learning. Johnson created and opportunity for
students to construct their own learning by not only drawing on a familiar genre and subject, but by also providing them with the space to share their ideas.

While his stance often included students’ interests, Johnson also used films that students may not be familiar with as a way to make connections between structure and content in the moment. One particular example of this occurred as Johnson began a discussion about shooting dialogue and developing conflict in their films. Johnson showed a clip from *Silence of the Lambs* in which the female protagonist Clarice Starling meets with Hannibal Lector, the film’s antagonist, for the first time. Johnson used *Silence of the Lambs* because it created and opportunity for students to focus on the narrative and technique without being influenced by their preconceived notions of the film. Johnson was then able to reconstruct the narrative in terms of language and experience the students would understand:

> Now, one of the things I like about *Silence of the Lambs* is, I think, the greatest movie about the relationship between a teacher and a student. In the movie, Hannibal Lector is the teacher and Clarice Darling is the student and he wants her to win, right? He pushes her, he's kind of mean to her. He does all these crazy things that seem like they're hurting her, but what they're really doing is making her strong. And, why does she have to be strong? Because she's a woman living in a world that's dominated by men in the FBI. And, there's all these guys that want to act like they can push her around and tell her what to do and Hannibal Lector is showing her that, no, you can actually win. You can be the hero here and you can be better than all of these guys, and you already are. So, at the end of that scene where he's in the cage in the hotel room, she actually shifts up…

Johnson continued to talk about how the tension between Clarice and Hannibal was built through both the use of camera angles and their spatial relationship to each other. Johnson then recreated the tension in the space so students could feel these tensions themselves:
When we want to tell someone who has power in a scene, it's kind of like what happens in class, right? Like, I'm always standing, looking down at you talking to you and you're always sitting up looking at me, listening. I wish it was the other way around [he sits down in a desk; the students make audible noises]. Yes, and when you have things like this happen then you have tension and you have a moment that's worth...

What started as a technical example was quickly tied to how film technique was used to develop content. As he continued to talk about the content of the film, he did so in a way that connected the films content to shared experiences of the students in the room. By recreating the same kind of tension within the space, he also highlighted the ease with which it was created. As a result, students were not only given another tool that they could use, but they also experienced its effect.

By relying on outside sources to guide and teach students the ways that they could utilize film to tell a story, Johnson positioned films as an important resource and teaching tool. He relied on film as a way to help students develop film language so that they could talk about their own films with confidence and expertise. He drew on familiar films as a way for students to understand the connection between structure and content. And, he treated student created films with the same respect as those created by professionals. By using film in this way, Johnson provided with several devices that can help them navigate the path from novice to expert.

Composing is messy. Johnsons consistently emphasized that the planning and composing process are recursive and different for everybody. He recognized and often talked about the messiness of film, placing emphasis on the fact that perfection is not expected. Several times throughout my observations I heard Johnson tell the Film Club that there were many ways to compose and that one clear path does not exist. He encouraged students to work within their means, gave them autonomy over their composing process, and provided them with examples and tools they could rely on to plan and
compose their videos. As a result of his guidance, students were able to follow and forge their own compositional path.

**Emphasis on realistic goals.** When Johnson set goals for both the Film Club as a whole and with individual students, he made sure to encourage students to think realistically about what they believed they can accomplish within the time they were willing to devote to Film Club. By working with the students to set these realistic goals, Johnson encouraged them to work within their means, even if that meant making artistic sacrifices. He gave examples of how students could think about the projects, as well as how they could draw on things they had already seen or worked and incorporate their strengths as artists. In the same conversation that began with Johnson encouraging DJ to draw on his own interests, Johnson also made sure that DJ was thinking about the scope of his idea for “The Brunch Club” and whether or not he was actually capable of devoting the time necessary to such a large project. Over the course of several weeks, Johnson worked with DJ on the technical details of bringing his narrative to life. While DJ continued to focus on the narrative development, Johnson began to realize that the narrative was becoming bigger and more complicated than DJ realized. As DJ became frustrated he began to lose sight of the technical details:

Johnson: *to DJ* Come here real quick. I like this whole idea and everything, but I feel like it's going to take a long time. So, another idea...I've been thinking a lot about your photography. And, I think you could find a cool way to merge your photography with some music and create…

DJ: Okay. He's like "just dumb it down a little DJ, c'mon."

Johnson: Well, I'm just saying. I'm just saying...

DJ: Do something that you're not going to overdo yourself on.

Johnson: That's exactly what I'm saying. I don't want it to get out of control.
While DJ initially responded to this conversation negatively, he recognizes that he may have been overzealous with his previous idea. Johnson’s guidance in this instance is rooted in making sure that DJ would be successful. By helping him scale back his idea and focus on something that was well within his capabilities and time frame, Johnson worked with DJ to position him as capable.

Similarly, when setting one of the compositional goals for the Film Club as a whole, Johnson drew on his experience working with Mortimer’s group as a way to encourage students to not take on more than they are willing to work on:

Rather than trying to tackle maybe a whole movie this year where you go end to end on your story, take little pieces of your film. Shoot it out of sequence. Because, nobody shoots a movie...a director never goes in and says "okay, day 1, we're shooting scene 1 of the movie. And, then we're going to shoot scene 2." They don't do that. I would encourage you to pick a scene. Like, lay your story out. Take some time to write things, to brainstorm.

Because of Mortimer’s identity as a writer, something I will explore in a later chapter, Johnson also used this conversation as a way to reinforce that the composing process is not linear. He encouraged Mortimer’s group, and the rest of Film Club to think about and plan their narratives fully, but to then focus on one section that they want to develop further. In both of these cases, Johnson worked to ensure that the students were given the best chance possible to be successful in their endeavors.

Multiple Options. The expectations that Johnson set for Film Club were rooted in choice. While there may have been general themes associated with projects, such as the video poem, the parameters were open and students were given the freedom to choose their own paths. Johnson does not dictate the genre or format that the students’ films need to take. His only stipulation is that there needs to be forward motion. When he introduced the video poem idea to the Film Club he gave them the freedom to choose their own narratives:
In school, you're going to be encouraged by whomever your English teacher is to create video poems based on the poems that you have to memorize for Poetry Out Loud. I want to encourage you to, in this club, to create and write and then plan and construct your own narrative within that short space of a poem.

This was the case with each of the projects that students worked on in Film Club. These included documentary, lyric video, trailer, poem, music video, and narrative sequence. Each of these projects was self-selected by the students and the paths that they follow to get there were all rooted in their own experiences.

Choice and individuality are important parts of what make Film Club appealing to its members. While talking to a new student that had shown interest in film club, Johnson chose to foreground that Film Club was built on the idea of choice:

The whole idea is that you pick a project and say, “this is the video that I want to make.” DJ’s making a lyric video for a song that he really likes. These guys [points to Mortimer, Paige, and Mark] are making a trailer for a horror film. Ophelia is making a documentary about high school and Jaelyn’s doing a music video.

When Johnson explained the goals of Film Club to this particular student, he gave him real examples of how the members of film club were composing within their own interests. In doing so Johnson reinforced that the space of Film Club was not dictated by his ideas, but the needs and ideas of the students.

Johnson also encouraged students to think about the different ways they could work within the genres by highlighting the different ways that props and stunts could be used. He also drew their attention to how different film techniques could be possible within their means:
Johnson: [after watching Blue Muto stop-motion clip] If you were to do stop-motion, or if you were to do time lapse, it probably wouldn’t look like that. But, just to give you an idea of what’s possible. You could do something really…you wouldn’t have to be restricted to just the page. It could be something different.

Johnson used the stop-motion example to show students that they have options when it comes to the way that they film their narrative. He also took this opportunity to remind students that they have the freedom to explore composition beyond the page. These examples highlight one of the ways that Johnson encouraged students to follow their instincts and forge their own compositional path. By self-selecting their own projects, the students were given the freedom to explore DV composition on their own terms and create their own parameters.

**Encourages Storyboarding/Pre-planning.** One of the ways that Johnson attempted to ensure that students were successful throughout their composing process was by placing emphasis on the importance of a compositional plan. Whether it was creating storyboards comprised of visual re-presentations of ideas or shot lists that detail camera angles and content, Johnson encouraged students to have a plan before they begin to shoot. Johnson used planning as a way to help students move forward with their projects, but did not dictate how he would like them to plan:

However, you guys want to proceed with planning this is totally up to you. Some of you are more artistic than others, but some of you are just going to want to write it out…At this point it's the plan, coming up with the plan on how to proceed.

By focusing on the creation of a plan but not determining the process of planning, Johnson placed emphasis on exploration and progress.

Johnson also with each of the students individually to develop the right approach to their project. With DJ Johnson stressed the idea of starting with his photos. Planning for Mortimer included drawing
inspiration from others and Johnson encouraged him to watch movies that had similar narratives to his group’s project. Recognizing Paige and Jaelyn’s strengths as artists, Johnson encouraged them to storyboard their ideas in order to gain a clearer picture of their narratives. He also encouraged all of his students to follow channels on YouTube in order to get ideas during the initial phases of their planning. By giving students the freedom to craft their own process, Johnson ensured that his students maintained autonomy over their own projects.

This chapter detailed the pedagogical stance that Johnson adopted as a co-creator and advisor of Film club. This stance included dialogic interaction, the use of film as text, and an emphasis on the messiness of composition. In the next chapter I will talk about how the students in film club, specifically DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia engaged in the process of composing and what it looked like for each of them. Johnson’s pedagogical stance provided the members of film club with space to create dialogically, tools and texts they could use throughout the composing process, and confidence explore the messiness of creation. As I will explore in the next chapter, Johnson’s stance influenced each of the members of film club in a different way.

Chapter 5: Findings – Students’ Composing Processes

In the previous section I discussed the ways in which Johnson contributed to the space of Film Club through his leadership and pedagogical stance. In this section I will shift my focus to the students of Film Club and explore, in detail, what their composition process looked like within this co-created space. More specifically, I will focus on the experiences of DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia as they navigate planning, filming, and editing. Although DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia each approached their videos in different ways, they engaged very similar processes. They shaped their ideas “at the point of utterance” and need (Britton, 1982), which allowed for both shifts in narrative and shifts in structure. They relied
on collaboration, both directly and in-directly. And, as a result of their individual composing process, DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia navigated their positions as novice filmmakers.

**Shaping at the Point of Need.**

One of the very first conversations I had with DJ was about his idea for “The Brunch Club.” I listened to him talk about how he was going to pay homage to *The Breakfast Club*, and how the main character’s name was going to be Jane, and how every time he sat down to work on this project, “Don’t You (Forget about Me)” by Simple Minds got stuck in his head. Over the next few months, I would have several of these conversations with DJ, and each time he would articulate a new idea or describe the shots that he was going to collect, often making a new discovery or furthering his narrative. I would also begin to overhear similar conversations as Mortimer’s group worked on the development of their characters and the structure of their horror film. *Shaping at the point of need* refers to the ways that DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia shaped their narrative in the moment, as a result of new information or experience, or in dialogue with others. This process occurred as a part of the planning, filming, and editing process. Rather than utilizing print storyboards or outlines, both DJ and Mortimer relied on dialogue and conversation with others to help them shape their ideas. DJ and Mortimer also experienced shifts in structure as they began to edit their films. In Ophelia’s case, she experienced both a shift in narrative and a shift in structure as she filmed and edited her documentary.

**As a part of planning & drafting.** There were two ways that Mortimer and DJ shaped as they composed. The first happened as they worked on character development. As DJ’s narratives grew and changed, so did DJ’s characters. First, while working on “The Brunch Club,” DJ worked through character ideas with both Johnson and me. He talked about Jane as the main character and articulated the details of her conflict with the other members of the brunch group. As DJ’s narrative began to grow, Jane disappeared and he began to develop characters that more closely resembled those in *The Breakfast*
Club. He made specific reference to “the princess” and “the jock” as he reshaped his narrative in order to fill a gap that he believed was left by the movie.

When DJ abandoned the idea of “The Brunch Club” because of its complexity, and moved onto his lyric video, he began the process of character development from the beginning. DJ spent some time talking through the idea of personifying Mr. Blue Sky as someone who is “supposed to bring the happy days.” He briefly toyed with the idea of playing Mr. Blue Sky himself, even though he does not consider himself to be a positive person. He ultimately decided that he didn’t have the resources or the time to act out this narrative. Several more times throughout the composing process DJ engaged Johnson or me in conversation about his characters. Character development was one of the first ways that DJ began to plan each of his narratives and he relied on dialogue with others as a way flesh them out.

Mortimer’s group worked on the development of their movie’s characters over several weeks. Once they had decided on a direction for their narrative, they then began to work on developing the character profiles:

Mortimer: So, who is the cast of characters?
Paige: I don’t know. How many people do we want to include in this?
Mortimer: I say 5 and like each of them has a secret.
Student: Do any of them know each other?
Mortimer: No.
Student: So, the main character is the one that quickly becomes friends with the other characters?
Paige: Are they all going to be in the same room when they figure out where they are? Or are they going to be in different places? Like there are 2 in 2 and 1 in 1 and they all like have to find each other?
Mortimer: I think we should have them all start in different places and they have to help each other, but they can't leave their area until they help…

Mortimer actively seeks the input of his group members in this moment. They talk through how many characters, their relationship to each other, and how they all fit into the narrative. They continued to discuss potential identities for the characters in the film including a spy, a nerd, a jock, and the pretty girl. Mortimer then asked everyone to work on coming up with names for the characters. When one of the students suggests that they each take a character to develop individually, Mortimer said that he would rather they work on them together.

Over the next couple of weeks, Mortimer’s group continued to focus their time on building each of the characters. They create a shared Google Doc (Figure 4) in order to keep record of their decisions:

![Figure 4. Section of Mortimer’s Google Doc](image)

By encouraging his group members to work collaboratively on this document, Mortimer was able to extend the conversation beyond the time associated with Film Club.

As the character identities began to become solidified, Mortimer shifted his focus onto identifying the students in the room that he wanted to play each of the characters and they talk through the logistics of casting:
Mark: So, who's playing the characters and who are they.

Mortimer: [points to different students] I don't actually know who's playing the other one.

Mark: That's a little important.

Mortimer: You can be one of them.

Mark: I figured I was one of them. Well, who's there? Who are the different characters?

Mortimer: You have the weirdo. He knows what's going on. He's in on it. And, he's quiet. And then you have that kid. And there's 2 girl characters, and there's...

Mark: How many characters are their total?

Mortimer: There's 5.

Mortimer spent more than a month working with his group on the development of these characters. While there were also moments of narrative development throughout this process, they were always in relationship to how the characters identities furthered or hindered the story. By engaging in this process verbally and in collaboration with his group members, Mortimer was able to shape each of the characters in the moment as new ideas surfaced and the narrative began to take shape.

*Verbal storyboarding.* The second way that DJ and Mortimer shaped their videos in the moment was through the use of storyboarding. In film, storyboards are often used as a way for filmmakers to plan their shots and visualize their narrative. Traditionally, these documents are completed in print and rely on a combination of text and image. Verbal storyboarding was defined as processes during which students relied on dialogue with others to plan and think through the filming process. These conversations included detailed shot lists, camera angles, explorations of sound, and plans for editing. While there were a few instances of traditional storyboarding, for DJ and Mortimer storyboarding and planning took place verbally in conversation with either myself, Johnson, or other students. These
conversations often started with a generalized conversation regarding the direction of the narrative, but then they articulated detailed descriptions of the shots they were looking to take.

DJ utilized verbal storyboards each time he began to plan a new video. Rather than sketch out his ideas, DJ preferred to talk them through with someone else. During his work on “The Brunch Club” DJ described, in detail, the way that he was going to set up the mood of his film:

DJ: I have an idea. So, I'm going to take an inside shot of one of those restaurants over there, somewhere, by the football field. And we're they're all done having their dinner, they'll walk the football field.

Nichole: It's like the little things.

DJ: They'll all have trench coats.

Nichole: Yeah.

DJ:… So, that's what I got to do. I've got to get a shot of everyone walking out of the restaurant. For every project that DJ worked on or idea that he came up with, he relied on verbal storyboards to think through the shots that he needed.

When DJ’s narrative shifted from “The Brunch Club” to his “Mr. Blue Sky” video, his storyboards went through a couple of different iterations. As DJ began to think about the personification of Mr. Blue Sky, he also began to think through some of the shots that he could get:

No. I'm going to use like all of these dreary kind of days. I'm going to wait for it to rain, I'm going to start filming with somebody. I'm going to make them look all sad and I'm going to come over and make them happy blah, blah, blah, and it goes throughout the song and at the way end where it's like "Watch out over your shoulder, here comes Mr. Night" I can go ta-dah! the night's coming. Or, I could have someone that's coming around and making everyone feel bad.
While this conversation highlights the ways that Johnson’s technical guidance resulted in the development of content, it is also an example of how DJ constructed storyboards in conversation with others.

This trend continued as DJ began to work on his video poem. DJ starts off with an idea but is unsure whether or not he has the available resources to complete this film. By talking through this idea, DJ discovered that he had access to many different spaces that he could use as the backdrop for his film. As a result, DJ’s excitement about this project increased:

DJ: Or, I could do it stanza by stanza in different places. My thing is just that I want it to be outside.

Nichole: Well, you can take people outside and put them in different spots.

DJ: I mean it could go from Walmart all the way to…

Nichole: Okay, so use what's around the school. Think about specifically inside of the school, outside of the school, within walking distance, how many different backdrops do you have?

DJ: Sports. I've got cars. The Library, I've got industrial over here and if I hit it from the outside, if I shot it right and didn't get Rolling Hills high in there, it would look like a government type building, kinda...

Nichole: But I mean, right. You've got a library, you've got the industrial side of the back. you've got those fences around the back…You can totally nail it. You just need to scope out...

DJ: This is only the first draft though. That's the thing. It's got a lot to change before we hit final.
These verbal storyboards not only helped DJ realize that the resources he needed were right in front of him, but that he could also use them in creative ways. Most importantly, DJ recognized that composing is a process and that these ideas will likely change. This not only reflects his willingness to flex his ideas and allow his narrative to grow, but also draws attention to one of the tenets of Film Club in general.

As a part of the editing process. DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia all experienced shifts in their narrative as a result of the composing process. One of DJ’s shifts occurred as his original film idea was abandoned and a new one took shape. Another occurred as his Mr. Blue Sky video shifted from narrative to lyric. Mortimer’s narrative shifted as his original plan for a horror film became a movie trailer as a result of time. And, Ophelia’s narrative changed as she began to collect the data for her film. Beyond the planning process, each of these Film Club members allowed their videos to shape their process and allowed their process to be shaped by their videos.

All of the time that Mortimer and his group spent working through the development of the characters for “Together with the Dead” was questioned when they realized that they were running out of time. While Mortimer talked through the details of the story and the setting with his group, he also drew attention to the specific cameral shots that he wanted to use. Relying on Paige’s interest in drawing, he asks her to storyboard some of his ideas. In order to make sure that the storyboards reflected their ideas, Mortimer provided Paige with very specific direction about camera angles and articulated his idea to make one of the shots feel like it is coming from a security camera. As Paige begins to storyboard, she makes a suggestion about the format of their film:

Mortimer: Do we want to put music to this?

Paige: Not for this scene. Do you know what I was thinking? We shouldn't do just a whole bunch of little scenes. Why don't we just make a small trailer for our movie that doesn't exist.

Mortimer: That's a really good idea.
Paige: I thought of that while he was talking.

As a result of this dialogue with Paige Mortimer allowed his ideas to shift his ideas to shift and he is eager to share this idea with Johnson. What was once a full length narrative almost instantly morphed into a trailer and Mortimer redefined the opening scene as the featurette:

Mortimer: Johnson, we've figured out what we're going to do.

Johnson: What?

Mortimer: We're going to make a movie trailer.

Paige: Because you were saying make a whole bunch of little scenes and that's what they do for trailers. I thought of that while you were talking about it.

Mortimer: And, we're going to use the opening scene as our featurette.

Throughout the rest of the composing process, Mortimer made adjustments to the narrative in order to mold it into a new genre. This conversation with Paige highlights Mortimer’s willingness to work with others in order to shape ideas. This is also another example of how Johnson’s guidance played a part in the development of students’ videos.

Although Ophelia worked on a good deal of her video outside of Film Club time, she engaged in several conversations with both Johnson and I about the challenges she was facing as a result of her filming. When I first interviewed Ophelia, she described her video as a way to expose what she called “the caste system of high school” and debunk students’ perceptions:

Starting out I was a very angry high school student and I was mad at everything in high school and everything was horrible and I wanted something, I wanted to make something that I could understand about high school. I mean high school is very complex, but I wanted it to make sense to me and I wanted it to make sense to other people. So, I'm really making it...my goal is to make it so people understand that we're not as different as we make ourselves out to be.
Ophelia spoke very articulately about what she believed students would say and what she was hoping to find. As she began to film her peers, Ophelia realized that what she was hoping to find was not what she was discovering. She anticipated that students would position themselves in relationship to their peers in negative ways. She admitted that some of them were talking that way, but that it’s “not the main thing they’re talking about.” As she continued to interview her peers and ask questions about their experiences in high school, she began to realize that their responses were much more positive.

Ophelia’s peers did not talk about their popularity. They did not position themselves as better than or less than, but as equal. They talked about their experiences and how high school isn’t going to make sense in the moment, but at some point it will. What Ophelia began to realize was that she wasn’t quite as different as she thought she was and that the original narrative she was hoping to tell was not supported by the data that she collected. Ophelia was resistant to the shift in her narrative at first, but over time she began to realize that this new story was just as important:

I got really mad and I stopped for a little bit. I was like why am I…and I realized that the picture that I’m painting is not one it actually is. I’m okay with that now because I realized a lot of things. Like, people that I thought they thought they were better than me and people that I thought they thought they were less than me, we’re all on the same playing field now especially since we're seniors. So, really, that's where it brought me. That's where it is right now.

Once Ophelia came to terms with her new narrative, she was able to move forward with the editing process. It would have been easy for Ophelia to give up completely or twist her data in a way that supported her original narrative. Instead, she gave herself the space and time to reshape her own perceptions and ideas. She began to focus on telling a very different story. As a result, Ophelia’s video, which I will discuss in detail in the next section, emphasized both her original idea and highlights the way that it shifted.
By remaining flexible and negotiating changes in their narrative that occurred throughout multiple stages of the composing process, DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia we able to create and shape meaning in the moment. Rather than pushing back against challenges and obstacles, latching onto unrealistic goals, or simply giving up, all three of these students embraced the complicated and messy process of DV composing. As a result of these shifts in narrative structure, each of the students’ videos reflect the processes they went through as they worked to reshape their ideas.

**Collaboration.**

It was common to see students talking to each other and wandering around Johnson’s classroom during Film Club. To someone entering into the space for the first time, it might seem as if the students were unfocused or off task. But, to those that worked to create and maintain the space, movement and conversation were essential parts of the composing process because they were essential parts of collaboration. Collaboration does not just mean working in groups. In this case, collaboration is any process that actively draws on or seeks out support, advice, or opinion as a part of planning, filming, or editing. While Mortimer and DJ actively work as a group with other students during the planning and editing process, Ophelia relied on the teachers and the students in her school to help build her narrative.

**To plan and edit.** During Mortimer’s interview, I asked him to talk about some of the things that appealed to him about composing with video. One of the things that he stressed was its connection to creative writing. He talked about how both creative writing and video, “help you develop these deeper ideas.” In addition, Mortimer placed a lot of emphasis on the collaborative nature of film and how it can help with people skills because it requires you to work together with other people. Mortimer’s feelings about collaboration are reflected in his decision to work with Paige and Mark on “Together with the Dead” during the spring. All of the members took part in character and narrative development, and each of them play a different role in the editing process.
As they composed the structure of their trailer, Mortimer and Paige worked together to flesh out the filming location and the tone. Paige reminded Mortimer about the structure of film trailers and how their decisions regarding filming location should reflect this structure and contribute to the tone:

Mortimer: Okay, which character...did we want to try in the convenience store first? What do you want to have first?
Paige: Nice, light fluffy things at the beginning.
Mortimer: So, we could do it like bright and vibrant.
Paige: Yes, exactly.
Mortimer: So, like what? A park? Or convenience store?
Paige: Like, I don't know. There's a very small open field near my house. And I don't know, we could have a person there eating a picnic or something or doing something nice or fun.

This conversation served to help Mortimer think about location as a part of the narrative structure of their trailer. Following this conversation, Paige and Mortimer tossed around a few more ideas and reached out to Mark for his opinion. They decided to open their trailer with a sunny outdoor scene because it reinforced the lighthearted tone they were looking to create. Once this decision was made, they immediately shifted their attention to how the characters should be introduced.

Paige suggested they start by introducing the main character Trey, who would be played by Mark, since he was a big part of the narrative. Mortimer and Mark offer up some ideas about what Trey could be doing that include mowing the lawn, reading under a tree, or talking with friends. Paige offered a suggestion that she thought would further the narrative and help define Trey’s character. Mortimer agrees with Paige’s suggestion and the rest of the conversation is focused on deciding how they can use the time and resources they have to film this particular introduction scene:

Paige: Wait, was Trey the athletic one?
Mortimer: Yes.

Paige: He should be doing basketball or something.

Mark: Wait, who is Trey?

Paige: The main character.

Mortimer: The Athletic one. The Jock.

Mark: Well, yeah, I know.

Mortimer: I would have an easier time getting [inaudible] football. I could actually drag some kids and be like, you...

Paige and Mortimer worked hand in hand to solidify the beginning sequence and once they made final decisions, they began to discuss the technical details like music and sound effects. Almost every decision that was made as a part of Mortimer’s planning process included the opinions and feedback of the other members of his group.

As the group begins to move into the filming and editing phase, Mortimer relied on his group members to fulfil roles that he was not comfortable in, or that he felt they would be more successful in. He encouraged Paige to storyboard and help with some of the props and he placed Mark in the role of Trey. By making sure that each of the members of the group were able to contribute to their trailer, Mortimer emphasized the importance of team work in creative composition.

One of my very first observations during the fall also highlighted the importance of team work in composing. As a part of a school wide assembly, the Film Club was asked to create a video poem inspired by, “I never saw another butterfly.” While Johnson made the decision to have students share the composition responsibilities, it was DJ who took the lead and worked with others to piece together the video. Each layer of the video was assigned to a student or group of students and DJ collected these elements from the students as they finished them.
DJ took the lead on finding and editing the photographs. Mortimer took the lead on recording and uploading the audio of the poem. And, Jaelyn searched for music to compliment the narrative. As each of the students worked on completing their task, DJ continued to take lead on the editing of the video. He inserted each of the pictures that he had found and edited. Once Mortimer returned with the recorded audio, he inserted that into iMovie and then layered Jaelyn’s music selection on top of that.

As he began to finalize the edits, DJ realized that he needed more content to fill the time. Rather than select the photos himself, he asked the other members of Film Club for their opinion. He gave them three different options that he believed fit within the narrative of the poem. Johnson, Mortimer, and Jaelyn all helped to make the decision:

Johnson: That one.

DJ: That one, or this.

Jaelyn: That one looks good.

DJ: I think this one would work better because it's got a butterfly.

Johnson: Yep.

Mortimer: It's got a vibrant blue too, so if you keep the blue hues.

Johnson: Yep. I like it.

Jaelyn: Or we can paint our own thing.

By reaching out to the other members of Film Club, DJ ensured that this project was truly created in collaboration. While DJ did all of the editing in iMovie himself, and was credited by Johnson the author of the film, this video poem would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of the other members of Film Club.

To build the narrative. For Ophelia, collaboration occurred in a very different way. While the development and editing of her film were done with guidance from Johnson and a few others, these
processes did not directly rely on anyone else to be completed. However, in order for Ophelia to complete her documentary, she needed the support and collaboration of her peers and her teachers. In order to compose a picture of what high school relationships and experiences are like, Ophelia developed a series of questions for both the students and the teachers at RHH. While Ophelia developed the idea own her own, these questions and the answers that she received determined the structure of her video and helped reconstruct the narrative:

I think that I'm focusing on how everybody, how everybody's answers are the same and everybody does the same things in the footage I got. Cause that's my, that was my goal, to show that we're all like, I don't know why we try and distance ourselves from each other when we're all very much alike and we're also the same…That's what I'm seeing a lot of from the footage I have.

As previously discussed, Ophelia experiences a significant shift in her narrative as she navigated the film process. The responses that she received as a result of her collaboration with the peers and teachers in her school helped her to work on restructuring and refocusing her narrative.

Ophelia relied on the questions, as well as the answers that she received to determine how she was going to piece together her portrait of RHH. She uses both her voice and the voices of her peers to create the structure of her documentary:

I am taking the question and giving their answers like piece by piece. I'm doing it that way so that you see each person, you know what the question is and you can get their vibes from it. You know, their sense of it and I think that that's my technique so far. Of course, it's probably going to change tomorrow.
While the students and teachers Ophelia interviewed may not have realized their direct impact on her compositional process, she undoubtedly would not have been able to complete her video without the willingness and support of both her teachers and her peers.

While Johnson provided students with endless support and guidance, it was often the support of others that helped to influence and direct students’ projects. Mortimer and Ophelia could have chosen to work on each of their projects individually and DJ could’ve chosen to disregard the opinions and contributions of the other members of Film Club. Instead, each of these students made a choice to include the voices, processes, and suggestions of others, thereby upholding the collaborative nature of the space.

**Taking Ownership.**

Over the nine months that I spent as a member of Film Club, I had the opportunity to experience shifts in students’ behaviors, confidences, and identities. In particular I discovered that over time, DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia repositioned themselves as leaders and experts in the space. By taking ownership over their own learning, knowledge, and skill each of them changed the way that they interacted with the space and the others in it. For example, after Ophelia graduated from RHH, DJ and Jaelyn became presidents of Film Club. DJ took ownership over this role made it his responsibility to check in on other students and provide them with resources when necessary. As a member who previously spent most of his time working on his own projects, DJ took and active interest in the success of the Film Club as a whole. In this example, DJ repositioned himself as one of the leaders of Film Club, a position previously held by Ophelia. Not only did the composing process result in DJ’s shift in leadership, DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia moved from novice to expert and adopted the language of Film Club.

**Novice to expert.** In the previous chapter I discussed the ways that Johnson created resources and a shared language within the space of Film Club. Providing the students with these tools was not
enough for them to reposition themselves as experts in the space; they needed to consciously adopt and utilize these tools as a part of their composing processes. DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia all identified as film novices in their interviews. DJ positioned himself as someone who could always be found taking pictures, but admitted that he doesn’t really have much experience composing. Mortimer also positioned himself as a novice, having only tried to make a couple of gaming tutorials when he was younger. Ophelia however, positioned herself as a novice in terms of composition, but admits that she is an experienced film reader.

Over time, I witnessed Ophelia begin to talk about films more frequently in terms of their technique, rather than their content. She openly talked about her frustrations during editing, including her use of an alternative editing program and admitted that she collected way too much data. As Ophelia put the finishing touches on her documentary film and confirmed its acceptance in a local film fest, she confidently exclaims, “You can just engrave my name on the trophy, right?” This example of repositioning from a novice film maker to award-winning composer is rooted in the fact that overtime, Ophelia took ownership over and learned from her experiences.

Throughout the course of the composing process DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia experienced shifts in both their technical skill and their ability to read films and became eager to share their knowledge with others. As a result, each of them took on a new role within the space as they not only adopted, but also took ownership over the tools made available to them in the space. This happened in terms of both the learning they experienced as a result of their own composing, but also as a result of their participation in Film Club activities.

**Technical skill.** As students navigated the editing process, they learned to compose on the iPads. They figured out how to create effects using the resources that were available and created workarounds for dealing with school internet servers. As challenges arose, students worked together to troubleshoot,
and in doing so they gained valuable knowledge that was then passed on as other students encountered the same. More importantly, as students moved from planning to filming to editing, they began to rely on the language of film to convey their ideas and draw on resources as they worked to create the perfect narrative.

In the spring, as Mortimer worked on editing “Together with the Dead,” he rarely utilized film language to talk about his ideas or the process of filming. This sometimes lead to misunderstandings and confusion since Johnson utilized this language as an important part of the learning process. Mortimer was also more focused on completing the trailer than making sure the edits were clean and the narrative was strong. When I returned to Rolling Hills High in the fall, one of the first conversations that I had with Mortimer was about a project that he was working on for the ELA film elective taught by Johnson. He was using Film Club as an opportunity to complete this project because he wanted to have access to the resources that Film Club offered him. When I asked him about his video he admitted that he was struggling with a particular part of the editing:

Mortimer: So, I want this one, from maybe like here back to slide into this half. And I want this one to slide in because it's a really jarring transition to go from this one to this one because they're rotating in opposite directions.

Nichole: So, you want this to go away…but did you see how that, did you see it?

Mortimer: I'm much more okay with that. That jump cut, what's wrong with a jump cut is the panel is going one way and then the wheel is going in the opposite direction so it's a very jarring cut.

Nichole: So, there's that one...

Mortimer: I think I'm okay with that. Although I wish it wasn't a fade, I wish it was a line.
During this conversation Mortimer not only adopted film language in order to explain the edits that he wished to make, he was also very focused on how those edits added to the structure of his film. He exudes confidence as he talks about ensuring that the edits are smooth and don’t distract from the narrative. This conversation is an example of how, over time, Mortimer adopted film language and repositioned himself in terms of his technical skill.

DJ also experienced a shift in confidence when it came to his technical skill. During the first half of my observations, DJ struggled with iMovie frequently. He often became frustrated with the program and rather than work through the challenges, he often took short cuts or sacrificed an editing idea. As DJ worked on the “I never saw another butterfly video,” he navigated the screen with ease and was able to complete tasks that previously would have resulted in frustration (Figure 5).

By taking the lead on this project DJ also took ownership over his own learning process and repositioned himself as technically capable. In my fieldnotes from the day the Film Club worked on this particular video I noticed this shift in DJ’s confidence:

…it was really cool because DJ, who previously, last year had...kind of some confidence issues with what he was doing in iMovie on the iPads and working with the videos, took charge of putting the whole thing together. Ya know, ordering the pictures and constructing the narrative
and layering in the audio and putting the music into iMovie and he created the finished product.

That is something I found to be very different from how he engaged with the program and stuff last [spring]. There seems to be a whole bunch more confidence in him.

DJ’s newfound confidence, as well as his role as a leader, also gave DJ the push he needed to share and talk about films in terms of their technical content.

On more than one occasion, DJ showed Film Club video clips that he found to be interesting. He would then proceed to lead a conversation about the clips use of film technique. Just as Johnson relied on film as a way to guide the Film Club, DJ also utilized videos to help validate the ideas of his peers and give them ideas when they were struggling. On the very last day of my observations, DJ played the History Channel’s 2017 end of the year commercial and engaged students in a conversation about its use of camera:

Now what I think it very interesting in how they are making the shot. If you watch, you can see that these people stay the same but they move them. It’s like they have a background and a foreground. I feel like out next one should be figuring out how to do that.

This example shows that DJ has not only adopted the role of leader in the room, but that he also felt confident enough in his own technical skill to talk about, and figure out, how to replicate the ideas of others. A large part of both DJ’s and Mortimer’s development occurred as they navigated the composing process, but their repositioning occurred as they accepted and utilized their newly acquired confidence and language as a part of their process.

Film reading. As discussed in the previous chapter, Johnson often utilized film as a way to expose the Film Club to varying film techniques and engage them in film reading. As a part of this experience, students were asked to think about how the editing of the film was used to develop its narrative. During film readings, Johnson encouraged students to draw upon film language as they
discussed the content and structure of the films. At the beginning of my observations these conversations we often one-sided, with Johnson taking the lead. The very first time that I witnessed students take the lead during a film reading was during the fall, when Johnson utilized the trailer for *The Last Jedi*. The conversation that followed the showing of this trailer, while guided by Johnson, was largely comprised of students’ own readings and interpretations of the clip. They began to draw connections between content and editing and continued to develop their shared film language.

It was during my next observation that Johnson introduced the video poem project and announced the club’s participation in a local film festival. The first few videos that the students watched were created by the students at RHH. After watching the films, the students all chimed in with critiques, including the use of found images and the quality of the sound. Immediately following these videos, Johnson played a video created by students at another school as a part of the previous year’s film festival. Rather than let Johnson lead this conversation, the students, especially DJ, became more vocal and critical of the students’ film.

As the film plays, DJ vocalizes his critique, focusing on the editing and the content of the video. His running commentary continues throughout the duration of the film and he offers suggestions, as well as both positive and negative critiques. What follows the viewing is a discussion of several technical issues that students had with the video, including the use of space and messy edits. DJ once again offered a critique, this time focusing on a particular edit that he felt interrupted the narrative:

Well, there were a couple issues with the start of each scene. Like the light flick one. She started and it like took...it's not like a very big difference, but it's a noticeable difference that it took a second for her to hit the light.

The specificity with which DJ and the other students read this film is a far cry from their approach to film reading during the spring. The attention to detail and awareness of even the smallest of
editing choices highlights one of the ways that the students began to think about films differently as they worked on composing their own. Over time the students not only gained confidence, but adopted and enacted their new identities as filmmakers.

In this chapter, I explored the processes and experiences of DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia as they composed their videos. Each of these students relied in the moment shaping and collaboration as a part of their composing processes. In addition, many of the students in Film Club, especially DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia, took ownership over their own learning. As a result they were able to reposition themselves as experienced film makers. In the next chapter I will discuss how identities of DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia were reflected in their processes and artifacts.

Chapter 6: Findings – Student Identities Reflected in Process

In the previous chapter I discussed the processes that students engaged in as a part of DV composition. This included shaping at the point of need, collaboration, and taking ownership over their learning and identities as composers. In this chapter I will explore that ways in which students’ identities and figured worlds are reflected in their DV composing processes. More specifically, I look at how DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia’s self-reflexive identities are reflected in both their compositional process and their artifacts. Treating each of these students as their own case, I will first identify the figurative and positional identities they embody as a part of their figured worlds, and how these identities influenced acts of reflexive and deliberate self-positioning. Based on my analysis of their interactions, I will articulate the ways that DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia unintentionally positioned themselves through both dialogue and action. Finally, by drawing connections between the students’ identity positions and the processes enacted as a part of DV composition, I will explore how their identities and processes are sedimented within their artifacts. I will start by presenting the case of DJ, and then move onto Mortimer, finally ending with Ophelia.
The Expert with a Deficit

When I first met DJ I was unsure of his role with in Film Club. He was one of the very first students to agree to be a part of my study and one of the very first students to refer to me as member of Film Club. DJ’s energy was often infectious. He commanded attention when he entered the space it was hard not to engage with him. Over the nine months that I was a member of Film Club, DJ became one of my focal students because of his transparency as a composer. DJ often vocalized his successes as well as his struggles and relied on dialogue in order to navigate each part of the composing process. He openly talked about his family and his relationship with his sister. He talked often about his presence on social media and his struggles with academics. DJ was often excited to see me when I walked into Film Club and consistently greeted me by telling me what had happened during his week or showing me his latest pictures on Instagram. Over time I witnessed DJ work to position and reposition himself socially as well as academically as he engaged in the composing process. In this section I will detail the figured world that DJ created for himself. DJ consistently positioned himself as both an expert photographer and a deficit academic and placed a lot of emphasis on the ways that others positioned him. By looking at both DJ’s figurative and positional identities, I will explore the ways that his identities intersected with his role and participation in Film Club.

DJ as Expert. DJ most often positioned himself as a photographer. He regularly referenced his Instagram and beamed with pride when he talked about his pictures. Very early on in my observations, DJ shared his Instagram with me and asked me if I would follow him. When I asked if it was okay for me to share his Instagram with others, he smiled widely and said "that would be awesome!" His photography, and his identity as a photographer, were a big part of the future that he envisioned for himself:
Well, it really like, sets it off. Cause since forever, not really forever, mid-summer because I remember taking my first sunset, not sunset, sunrise picture. I figured I'd stay awake all night long instead of getting up early. And, um, it really proves all of my hard work since then with the taking and the making of these picture and putting it into a real life scenario…and further in life I'd really like to be a photographer…And that would make a really cool job and it would probably make me smile a lot.

DJ’s Instagram is full of pictures he deems to be beautiful. These pictures are a way for DJ to capture beautiful moments in time and to help him capture moments in time:

![Figure 6. DJ’s Instagram](image)

The captions that he creates for each picture are a reminder of his thoughts in the moment. For DJ, his identity as a photographer is directly linked to his past, present, and his future. It is both something that makes him happy and something that he positions as an important part of his success.

**DJ with a Deficit.** While DJ talked positively about his identity as a photographer, in school spaces he often positioned himself as inadequate when it came to school and traditional academics. DJ’s feelings about his grades and the way that he positioned academic success were largely influenced by what he believed success looked like. For DJ, academic success was directly related to positive
assessment and high grades. Several times throughout the nine months that I spent with DJ he referred to himself as “not smart” or less than his peers. One particular example of this is when Johnson attempted to help DJ avoid frustration with his first video project. Rather than seeing this moment as a helpful suggestion, DJ immediately positioned himself as “dumb.”:

Johnson: I think you could find a cool way to merge your photography with some music and create...

DJ: Okay. He's like, just dumb it down a little DJ, c'mon.

Johnson: Well, I'm just saying…

While DJ does eventually reevaluate this particular conversation, comments like these were overheard frequently during the course of my observations.

When we talked about his grades, DJ hesitated to tell me about those that were not what he deemed to be good, but often excitedly shared those that were above a 90. During an interview with DJ, I asked whether he was prouder of his Mr. Blue Sky video or the last paper he wrote for school, he admitted that the 90% he received on his paper was something that he wanted to make sure everyone knew about. In my fieldnotes from the day I interviewed DJ for the first time, I reflected on the emphasis that DJ placed upon academics:

…we were talking and what I thought was going to be an interview about how cool and awesome video is, turned into a conversation about academics and him being proud of the fact that he got a 90 on his last essay and it's not about the essay, it's about the grade. And, everything that he came back to me with is associated with the idea of doing school. What he's supposed to be doing. He's supposed to be a straight A student. He's supposed to get good grades. He supposed to work on all of this stuff and video doesn't fit into what he's supposed to be doing.
Through his dialogue, DJ consistently positioned himself outside of the academic mold crafted by both his school and society. While he viewed himself as a successful photographer, he did not connect this part of his identity to his academic success.

DJ also cared very much about his reputation and wants to be seen as someone with potential. How others position him is an important part of how DJ positions himself:

Yeah, reputation. Everything, like everything goes on to something. All we'll remember is how one thing happened and it will just ruin everything or it'll make everything.

Since he does not view himself, or believe that others view him as academically successful, DJ placed emphasis on the things that he felt he had more control over.

DJ admits that he wants to be remembered for his photography and wants other to tell him that he has the potential to be successful. He want’s someone to say, “Hey! That Guy! He’s really great!” He hoped that his teachers will talk about him as a talented photographer. He wanted them to say, “Pursue this. Find somewhere to go.” Over time DJ also began to position himself as a filmmaker, but this identity also heavily relied on the skills DJ associated with taking pictures. For DJ, his reputation and success did not rely on academics, they relied instead on his figurative identity as a photographer.

**DJ’s unintentional positioning.** During the very beginning stages of my observations, I mentioned in my field notes that I was intrigued by the way that DJ talked about himself and his photography. As I returned to the data as a part of analysis I began to see patterns in DJ’s talk that helped me to realize that his identity as a photographer was rooted in more than just pretty pictures. I discovered that DJ used his photography as a way to search for validation that he does not receive as a part of the school day.

On multiple occasions the first thing he did when I walked into the room was show me new pictures or talk about and idea he had for a picture. In doing this DJ is looking for feedback and
commentary that supports his identity as a photographer. As a result of his deficit positioning, DJ sought out support and validation by not only focusing his energy on photography, but by also sharing it both within and outside of Film club. His commitment to receiving feedback highlights DJ’s need and willingness to continually better himself as a photographer.

Over time, as DJ’s identity as a filmmaker began to take shape, he relied on the planning process as a way to explore this identity through the creation of new ideas. In a conversation with DJ, he admitted that the very beginning stages of the composing process were his favorite:

My favorite has to be when you first get an idea and start making it ’cause that's past the point of messing with it.

Although DJ positioned film as something outside of his academic success, he began to redefine what success might look like for him. He slowly started to adopt an identity as an author of films. DJ spent a lot of time talking with others, including Johnson and myself about the different ideas that he had for films. He asked for help shaping his ideas and for advice on how he could move forward. These conversations, much like the sharing of his photography, highlight DJ’s need for validation.

As I stated previously, at the beginning of my observations I made mention in my field notes that I was unsure about DJ’s role within the space:

When I first met DJ I had this idea of him as the goof off kid and they kid that was kind of there because he thought it was cool or whatever…

What I came to discover over time is that DJ cared very much about the Film Club and the people in it. The shift in DJ’s identity from spring to fall included an increased sense of confidence and a repositioning of himself as a leader within the space. After only a single year in Film Club, DJ became co-president with Jaelyn and actively worked to ensure that the other members of the Film Club felt supported. DJ’s leadership and confidence are reflected in the role that he played in the creation of the
collaborative video poem, as well as the role he adopts as co-president. By taking an active leadership role and supporting the other students in the Film Club, DJ works to ensure that the way others see him positively impacts his reputation.

**DJ’s reflected identities.** Throughout DJ’s composing process, there were several instances in which his identity as a photographer influenced either his projects or the way that he approached his projects. The most striking example of this is the final structure of DJ’s first video project. DJ’s Mr. Blue Sky video is constructed from original pictures taken from his Instagram and paired with a song that he has “liked for a while.” When talking about the narrative of the video, DJ suggests that it is a reflection of his current experiences:

It's pretty much a music video about my year or so that I've gotten into photography, and it really hits home with me because I really like photographing skies when they're like pretty, clean, and when you put that over Mr. Blue Sky from Electric Light Orchestra it's really like, wow. It really goes with it. Because it's really like, hey, there are good days to these bad days and sometimes the clouds just go away and it can last for a while.

The photos that DJ selected to be a part of his video were picked carefully and purposefully and then lyrics were superimposed over the pictures. The table below (Table 6) shows the lyrics DJ used as well as the 8 original pictures that comprised his “Mr. Blue Sky” video:

**Table 6**

*Lyrics and Images in DJ’s Mr. Blue Sky Video*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lyrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sun is shinin’ in the sky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There ain't a cloud in sight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's stopped rainin' everybody's in a play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And don't you know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's a beautiful new day, hey hey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runnin' down the avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See how the sun shines brightly in the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the streets where once was pity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mister blue sky is living here today, hey hey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mister blue sky please tell us why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You had to hide away for so long (so long)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Video fades out]
When I asked DJ to talk about the meaning behind the Mr. Blue Sky video, he very quickly articulated its importance in validating his career choices.

He uses this video and the visual work that he does on other videos to highlight his strengths as a photographer and gain the positive affirmation he does not receive elsewhere. He wanted to make sure that this video leaves its mark and that people remember him. When the video ends up unfinished, DJ was not only concerned about what Johnson would say, but also felt like he could’ve done more:

I could go so much more in-depth with it. I wish I could like...the one thing that every filmmaker wants is all the time in the world and all the money. Well, not necessarily all the money, but all the stuff that they need to do what they need to do.

Although DJ did not finish this video, during the fall, DJ frequently mentioned it as a baseline for the progress that he hoped to make. Once again, he articulated a desire to improve upon his technique and create films that reflected his developing identity as a film maker.

Creating and shaping films was one of DJ’s favorite processes. Over the duration of observations, DJ came up with and articulated, in detail, ideas for 6 different videos (Table 7).

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Film Idea</th>
<th>DJ’s Articulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Brunch Club</td>
<td>Because everyone constantly has brunch. Like that's the main thing. It's a group of people that go out to brunch every Saturday, but for some reason there's a quarrel between them and they don't do brunch, but they go out to dinner to resolve their issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mr. Blue Sky | it's a personal film, it's a personal song...not a personal song, it's a song that I've liked for a while...and when I put my photos with that it makes me think of times that I've had with my family...the times that you can't get back...

Music Video | DJ: Well, yeah. I wanted to make something that currently reflects what everything is...Because, that's the only way you can fix things is coming to terms with them. Like a lot of bad happened and there are a lot of things that I could've done differently and had it worked out differently and Logic's number song would've been like the really super sad parts and John Prine's “Blue Umbrella” are the parts I regret me making and or wanting to fix.

Video Poem (x2) | #1: So, my thought is I'm going to start at the left side of her face and then go to the right side and then I'm going to start at the right side of [the] face and go to the left, so it's like...but it's going to be different...

#2: The thig is, I changed it to something funny. So, it's not going to be like faces. It's going to be me trying to read my poem and somebody interrupting me. It's like "thanks" I'm going to go here and do it. I'm going to go there and do it. And then something else interrupts me and...

Dream Video | Oh yeah, it is. I think I might use that dream one for that other semester project because that's an awesome dream and I've been looking into techniques on how to continue dreams because that's an actual thing that happens and I'm trying to finish it up because there was obviously a beginning and ender...I was just stuck in the middle. It was literally, it was first person through some dude that wasn't me and his girlfriend had him locked in her basement because he had a very traumatic accident like 3 weeks prior where his reality shattered and he had all these personalities...

Film Fest Submission | DJ: Okay. What I want it to be is my nephews. Like I really plan on putting like a super metal song over it. I know that sounds weird...We're going to go play. It's supposed to be super sad.

The table above shows just a snippet of DJ’s idea for each of the videos he articulated. Both “The Brunch Club” and “Mr. Blue Sky” were developed during the spring, the others were developed during the fall.

During the fall, it seemed as though DJ had a new idea each time I talked to him and each time he shaped the details of these ideas in great detail. At the end of my observations, “Mr. Blue Sky” was the only video that DJ published by himself. Aside from the collaborative video poem, the only other video that DJ worked on beyond the idea phase was the second iteration of his video poem. The time that DJ spent working on and developing the ideas for videos, combined with the lack of follow-through draws attention to DJ’s search for validation as a part of the composing process.
By continuing to develop ideas and talk through them with others DJ engaged in and placed emphasis on the generative nature of his own identity as a composer:

…that's a really big thing to me because when you're finally starting to do something you're like okay, we have this base idea, how are we going to build off of this and what are we going to change when we're done?

DJ latched onto the process of narrative development because he believed the process to recursive, and therefore it was not subjected to the same kinds of assessment he was used to receiving with the completion of final projects.

The process of composing was not something that was ever graded and therefore, DJ believed that he could not fail. His desire to be validated, his reflexive positioning as less than, and his previous failed experiences during the spring resulted in an uneasiness and apprehension about his own finished products. As a result, DJ never completely finished any of his non-collaborative films. While DJ’s confidence with film tools and film language increased, his own composing processes was influenced by his fear of compositional commitment. This fear did not impact his work as much on the “I never saw another butterfly video” because it of its collaborative nature. Even though he took the lead on its editing, if the film was unsuccessful, DJ would share the responsibility with his peers.

Finally, DJ’s care for the Film Club is reflected in a few ways. First, he held the other members of the Film Club accountable for the composing process. Late in the fall, DJ and Jaelyn addressed the Film Club as co-presidents:

DJ: A country without rules is no country at all. A club without rules doesn't count as a club, it's a hangout.

Johnson: I am standing in support with my students DJ and Jaelyn.

Jaelyn: It's either this or no film at all. Like this will not happen.
DJ: You need limitations to have fun sometimes.

Paige: We need to bring Ophelia in, she'd be outraged by this.

DJ: She'd be outraged by the less progress that we've made. The real point is that we aren't doing anything. That's why we have these rules. To be completely and bluntly honest.

DJ’s concern over the lack of progress draws attention to both his interest in the future of Film Club and his need to feed his reputation positively.

As a result of this conversation, several students speak up and express the challenges they are encountering as they begin to think about their films. Rather than dismiss their ideas, DJ makes sure to stress that the composition process is something that they can work on together and that Film Club is all about troubleshooting and providing people with support. He lets the other members know that by sharing their work they open themselves up to feedback and help from their peers.

Second, DJ also often offered words of encouragement and checked in with the other members of the Film Club as they worked on their projects, something that he learned from Ophelia during her reign as president of Film club. DJ worked diligently to uphold the reputation of Film Club by taking an active role in its leadership. Film club is an important space for DJ. Film club is a space where DJ feels like he matters.

**The Meticulous Writer**

From the second that Mortimer found out who I was, an English major working on a very large paper, his conversations with me often involved discussing literature or the writing process. He often invited himself into conversations with others by talking about the latest book he was reading, or the latest story he was writing and he was very interested in being a part of this project and sharing his interests and processes with me. The more I interacted with him, the more I began to recognize that Mortimer positioned academics, literature, and writing as very important parts of his academic and
social life, but he viewed their composing processes very differently. For Mortimer, Film Club was a place where he could work on his social writing. He could be creative and collaborate with others in ways that he felt were not permitted during the school day. Mortimer positioned himself as a reader and a writer of print, but throughout the composing process I watched him reposition himself as a reader and writer of film. In this section, I will talk about how Mortimer’s figurative identity as a reader and a writer, as well as his positional identity as a perfectionist influenced his composing process and became sedimented in his videos.

**Mortimer as reader and writer.** Almost immediately after turning in his signed consent form, Mortimer inquired about when I was going to interview him. He asked what the interview was going to be about and what kinds of questions there would be. I got the feeling that he was concerned that he needed to prepare for his interview in some way. I assured him that it would be nothing serious, but he disagreed:

Nichole We'll just chat. It's nothing serious.

Mortimer: It's about literature it's serious.

Nichole Well, it's also about writing.

Mortimer: Well that's serious. Writing is very serious.

From the very beginning of my observations I made note of Mortimer’s continued reference to books that he was reading and writing that he was working on both during school time and on his own.

Throughout the course of my observations, Mortimer mentioned 13 different authors and 25 different books conversation (Table 8). Mortimer most often initiated these conversations and this information was offered by him rather than elicited. There are a few conversations in which Mortimer references the titles and/or authors in relationship to school, but he more often talked about the reading and writing that he was doing outside of school.
In addition, the title character in Terry Pratchett’s book Mort inspired his self-selected pseudonym. He made specific distinctions between books like Harry Potter and A Tale of Two Cities, referring to the later as “classic literature.” He often bragged about spending money on books and consistently referenced his desire to read books that were considered to be classic literature:

Mortimer: Next, I'm going to read Catcher in the Rye and I still have Phantom of the Opera, I have a couple by Kipling. I have Sherlock Holmes, Robinson Crusoe, Last of the Mohicans...

Nichole: How far back do you want to go?

Mortimer: If it's a classic I'll read it, I mean I have A Thousand and One Arabian Nights.

Nichole: What about Inferno?

Mortimer: That's one I was thinking...I was thinking about getting that.

Nichole: I mean, book one.

Mortimer: I hadn't decided whether or not I wanted to get Dan...Alighieri. I'll probably read it at some point, just because like, as I'm reading something I want to be able to understand all the allusions that he's making and then maybe in my writing, be able to allude to those things again. I came across a Sir Richard Francis Burton translation of Arabian Nights,
which is the old one and I couldn't...it only has like 40 stories in it and I couldn't...I read like 5 of them before I started to lose interest in them.

Mortimer’s figurative identity as a reader was how he initially participated in Film Club and how he defined his role within the space. Later in this section I will discuss how this positioning shifted as a result of the composing process.

Mortimer simultaneously positioned himself as an academic writer and creative writer, a separation he makes himself and one that influences how he engaged with the space and the others in it. He articulated his identity in terms of visages that he wears. He makes a distinction between the visage that he wears as a part of Film Club, the one that wears throughout his school day, as well as the one that he wears at home with his family. Mortimer navigates the tensions between his writing identities by participating in Film Club. It is here that he can engage in “a flow of ideas” and create things beyond what is expected of him by his teachers.

In my interview with Mortimer, he talked about the reasons that he writes, making a clear distinction between the kind of writing he does for school and the writing he engages in on his own time:

I think I write for two reasons. You look and you go in high school and everybody always talks about the themes, the thematics. That's why I write, to get the themes out. I also write for other reasons. One, because I get these ideas and I go, "That would be cool." Because I don’t want to lose that internally. I want this. I want to make this thing.

Mortimer often talked about the writing he does for school in terms of literary themes and analysis, common language used by ELA teachers as a part of English curriculum. By contrast, he talks about the writing he does on his own time as a way for him to create and explore his own characters and narratives.
For Mortimer, writing in school meant taking others’ words and using them build your idea. Writing creatively, something he believed was not supported throughout his academic day, is all about his own creation:

that’s a lot of why I write, is because I want to say, "Okay. I have this character, roughly with this profile. How do they react?" Or I have a scene in my head and then I go, "Okay. I have this little idea. Let's make it bigger. Let's see where it goes and where all the characters go.

Mortimer’s identity as a reader and a writer is what fueled his participation in Film Club, and as I will explore later in this chapter, impacted the way that he engaged in the compositional process. The distinction that Mortimer makes between his academic identity as a writer and the one that he adopts as a creative writer are important in order to understand the reasons Mortimer joined Film Club in the first place. He saw Film Club as a creative outlet, but also placed emphasis on the seriousness of reading and writing by continuously positioning himself as well read and capable.

**Mortimer as meticulous.** Part of Mortimer’s identity as a writer is connected to his desire to be in control of his characters, his narrative, that the world that is created as result of their development and interaction. His meticulousness throughout the writing process was linked to his desire to follow the rules associated with each genre of writing. I first began to understand the relationship between Mortimer’s figurative and positional identities when I asked him about his experience with fanfiction.

Because of his identity as a reader and a writer, I made the assumption that Mortimer would be very interested in the idea of fanfiction, as it often involves the creation of a new world. What I did not think about was the fact that fanfiction means also borrowing ideas and characters from another author, something that Mortimer associated with academic writing:

Mortimer: I never write fan-fiction.

Nichole: I love fan-fiction.
Mortimer: Messing with someone else's characters? I wouldn't be able to do it…I wouldn't be able to write a story about *Harry Potter*. I wouldn't be able to use somebody else's characters. I wouldn't...not just fit...I'm not sure that it's that I wouldn't be able to, but that I wouldn't want to. I wouldn't feel comfortable doing it…And if I'm not comfortable doing it, I'm not going to do a good job.

Mortimer’s enjoyment and comfortability with writing comes from his ability to exert control over the characters and the way they interact with others. This particular conversation, and the way that Mortimer rejects my positioning of him as someone who would enjoy writing fanfiction, also drew my attention to the fact that it was not only control over creation that Mortimer needed and enjoyed, but also control over and adherence to the rules of writing.

I asked Mortimer why he wouldn’t feel comfortable drawing on another author’s characters, even if that meant he could make them his own. He very matter-of-factly told me that in writing you cannot just bend the rules. He explained that it was not as simple as just creating new interactions. I asked him to explain more, because it sounded like something that he would enjoy doing:

Mortimer:...because there has to be rules to how everyone interacts.

Nichole: But that would be part of the fun. You would be inventing those rules.

Mortimer: I’m not sure that I would want to though because I wouldn’t want to screw it up.

Looking to understand this idea more, I asked Mortimer to talk about the rules he believed to be associated with the two different genres of writing and how they impacted the writing process and how they were different:

It's polar opposite, the non-fiction versus the fiction. Non-fiction, you have a very set goal and you use very big, verbose words and you steal things, tropes, quotes, other people's ideas and you put them together and you build this thing, and there's certain rules: in the third person, cite
your quotes, never use pronouns. Creative writing is more, to me, about trying to figure out the world. I guess that would be another reason I write, is trying to figure out what's going on in the world.

He emphasized their difference again in terms of borrowing and creating. Overtime, Mortimer continued to talk about his frustration with academic rules, but also his need to remain in control of his creations and create his own rules.

Mortimer also continually reiterated that creative writing is the process by which an author creates and figures out a world. During these conversations he also talked about how the rules of a created world are important, and are sometimes something that can take weeks, if not months or years, to develop. During one particular conversation, Mortimer described a fictional world that he was creating based on the popular board game Dungeons and Dragons. While the general idea came from Mortimer’s participation in the game, the physical make-up, characters, and language of the world were something that he designed by following the rules of creative writing.

Not only did Mortimer see these rules as different, he also positioned the writing that he did while following the rules and staying in the parameters of academic writing as stifled and not indicative of his skill as a writer. While talking about essays that he wrote as a part of a project while he was a student in Johnson’s English class, Mortimer talked about how the rules forced him to make choices that negatively impacted his performance:

You're doing a Wall of Heroes thing? My essay was terrible because I was still stuck in the rule of, never use first person in an essay.

Similarly, while talking about a writing contest the school holds each year, he complained that his submission was poor because the prompt did not allow him the freedom to break existing rules in order to create new ones:
I would've killed it if it was creative writing, because I'll take a prompt and say nope, I'm going
to do the complete opposite, just because you told me I could break the rules.

Mortimer believed that in order to be a successful writer both academically and creatively, you had to
follow the rules. He also believed that success as a creative writer could also be achieved by knowing
when to break the rules. Knowing the rules and knowing when to break or bend them are how Mortimer
exerted meticulous control over his own writing.

This meticulousness was also evident in Mortimer’s reading of others’ films and processes.
During film readings Mortimer’s critiques often involved articulating the ways that he could do
something better and without error. He talked about the ways that he could sophisticatedly develop
narratives and ensure that his editing was perfect. For example, during one particular critique, rather
than noticing the artistic quality like his peers, Mortimer is taken aback by the fact that the narrator of
the piece stumbles while reading the text. His response highlights his need for perfection:

Mortimer: If you stumble in a recording, you record again…like if you use a recording and you
stumble your words, you stop the recording and start again until you don’t stumble.

Johnson: Then I expect flawlessness out of you young Mortimer, flawlessness.

Mortimer: They only time there will be stumbling in my film is when there is supposed to be.
During another critique he states his frustration with the way the author created the narrative, arguing
that if he were to make a video like that, he would “want it to be such a good question…like the way
you have it composed, the reader would ask themselves the question.” Mortimer’s opinions focused on
writing process and the development of story rather than the artistic choices made by the film’s creator.

The rules associated with writing were an important part of how Mortimer positioned himself
within Film Club. Not only did he believe that reading and writing were very serious academic and
creative endeavors, Mortimer also made sure to identify himself as someone who followed the rules. It
was important to him that others understood his need to uphold the integrity of the each of the writing processes. Mortimer’s positional identity as an expert writer was rooted in his consistent negotiation of the rules and processes associated with composition.

**Mortimer’s unintentional positioning.** As I talked about in the previous section, Mortimer’s distinction between reading and writing academically and creatively was strong. His continuous mention of his reading and writing process highlights the pride he takes in this part of his identity. While he intentionally positioned reading and writing in terms of their schooled definitions, Mortimer also talked about his experiences with the creation of imaginary worlds, both in reality and as a part of video games like *Minecraft* and *Rollercoaster Tycoon*. While he never classified these as a part of his writing practice, he talked about them in the same way that he did creative writing. He mentioned their rules and talked about how they were created as a result of exploration of character and action.

Mortimer’s constant interjections into conversations signaled to me that being a reader and a writer was not only how he wanted his peers to see him, but also how he wanted me to see him within the space of Film Club. He used our shared literary language to position himself as more knowledgeable than his peers, and as someone who cared deeply about what it means to be a reader and a writer. Although Mortimer spent a lot of time talking about the writing he did creatively, I got the sense that Mortimer was proud of his identity as a reader because it separated him from his peers academically. The frequent use of the word “classic” to define literature that is typically associated with the ELA cannon highlights the fact that he wasn’t just reading books, he was reading books associated with academics. He often used this language as a way to “one-up” his peers and position himself as more advanced academically than his peers.

While Mortimer states that the reason he joined Film Club was because of his desire to work with others collaboratively, the way that he engaged with others drew attention to the fact that he was
searching for a community. Unsure of how to engage with some of his peers, there were several instances in which Mortimer would use his identity as a reader or a writer to enter into a conversation that he wasn’t participating in, or one that had nothing to do with reading and writing. While these interjections often shifted conversations in a way that provided Mortimer with an opportunity to deliberately draw attention to his identity and knowledge, they were also his attempt at social participation. Overtime, as other students began to engage with him socially, Mortimer’s interjections became more relevant to the conversations and occurred less frequently. As Mortimer gained a community, he began to understand how to interact with others beyond positioning himself in terms of his knowledge. Film club provided Mortimer with a sense of belonging that he did not have during his school day.

**Mortimer’s reflected identities.** In the previous sections I talked about Mortimer’s figurative identity as a reader and a writer, as well as his positional identity as meticulous. In this section I will talk about the ways that Mortimer’s figured world impacted his composing process as he worked on “Together with the Dead” with Paige and Mark. Evident in Mortimer’s composing process are not only an attention to detail and adherence to the rules, but also a love of creation and narrative development.

![Figure 7. Toe tag still from “Together with the Dead”](image)

Mortimer’s group spent several weeks working on the character development and narrative for their movie. While the original idea was to create a short film, the decision was made early on to scale the project back and make a trailer. Mortimer’s identity as a creative writer and creator of worlds is what
impacted the process of creating the backstory for these characters. Before filming even began, Mortimer ensured the each of the characters was fully developed, that their interactional rules were defined, and that the narrative was clear. He worked with Paige and Mark to develop a shot list and spent time on ensuring that the details of the shot list matched the story they were trying to tell. Mortimer’s focus on narrative and character creation was an important part of the creative writing process. The amount of time that Mortimer spent working on this particular step, speaks to his need to explore as a part of the composing process, as well as his meticulous attention to detail.

Mortimer’s meticulousness and need for control over his creative writing process also shifted the way that he was able to work with his peers as the process of composing moved into editing. While Mortimer repeatedly stated that working collaboratively was a very big part of the creative writing process, as his group moved toward the video editing process he gradually began to exert more control. He did all of the editing himself and only relied on his collaborators when he was struggling to create a specific scene.

During the filming of “Together with the Dead” Paige made an attempt to help Mortimer film the toe tag scene, something he was struggling to complete (Figure 8). Rather than allow her to give it a shot, Mortimer ordered Paige out of the way and orders Mark around:

Mark: Well, If I'm going limp, nobody's stiff like this.

Mortimer: When you're dead you are.

Mark: No, when you're dead, you're going like this…

Nichole: You're embalmed. So, you're stiff. They maneuver you.

Mortimer: And you [points Paige away, see Figure 8]
Figure 8. Mortimer ordering Paige away During Filming

Paige: Huh?

Mortimer: [to Mark] Back.

Paige: I thought I was going to film this one?

Paige does eventually help with the filming of this particular scene after Johnson steps in and helps Mortimer remember that the collaborative process is part of filming.

As they move forward with filming, Mortimer sat to Paige’s left and continued to give her direction as she attempts to film Mark. Throughout the filming of this scene, Paige repeatedly vocalized her understanding of the shot, yet Mortimer continue to give her direction (Figure 9). Throughout the planning process, Paige was an integral part of the collaboration and someone that Mortimer relied on frequently to help talk through character and narrative ideas. During the filming and editing process however, Mortimer re-positioned her:

Paige: No. Stop moving.
Figure 9. Mortimer directing the filming of “Together with the Dead”

Mortimer: Do you want to make the camera angle down, so it's just his feet.

Paige: I'm trying to. [to Mark] Make your feet more up.

Mark: How more up can this be?

Paige: Um, I think that will be good.

Mortimer: You're going to have to stay like this when you're lying down too.

Mortimer: You're going to have to sit up.

Paige: Oh, I can see your face. I don't want that.

Mortimer: You're going to have to get a little bit of his face.

Paige: Yeah, I know.

It became evident that the kind of collaboration that Mortimer liked participating in was focused on the development of the narrative. His meticulousness and his need to ensure that the rules were being followed were projected in his need to remain in control as his group moved toward the final stages of the composing process.

His meticulousness was also seen in the way that Mortimer engaged in the editing process. Rather than film large chunks at a time and edit them together, he worked on each shot individually,
adding and editing them immediately after shooting them (Figure 10). This included the scene that was captured by Paige.

![Figure 10: Mortimer editing in iMovie](image)

After Mortimer inserted the clips into iMovie, he immediately sought feedback, but not from his peers. He searched for feedback from either Johnson or me. It was important to Mortimer that somebody that he believed had authority to determine whether or not the rules and standards of DV composition were being followed. Finally, although Paige, Mark, and Steve worked on the trailer with Mortimer, as the group finished the project, Mortimer identified himself as the author by stating “I made a video.” When both Paige and Mark audibly protested, Mortimer defended his statement, positioning both Paige and Mark as contributors, but as having a lesser role.

Mortimer: Well, I edited everything together and did all of the cinematography. You guys were just in it.

Paige: I was not in it, but I drew the storyboards and such.

Mark: I am an actor.

Mortimer: Yeah, that counts.
Mortimer does eventually acknowledge that it was actually Paige that came up with the idea to make a trailer, but still argues that he did most of the work. Throughout the end of the composing process, Mortimer positioned himself as the leader of his collaborative group and while at first he relied on others’ dialogue to construct the narrative, the execution and writing of their video was something that he believed only he was capable of. In addition, his decision to design the structure of the trailer and reject the templates provided by iMovie speaks to both his need to be in control and to write the world himself.

Mortimer’s figurative identity as a writer and his positional identity as meticulous resulted in several instance of reflexive and other positioning throughout the composing process. Because of his self-identification as a novice film maker, Mortimer used his identity as a reader and a writer intentionally and unintentionally positioned himself as superior to his peers academically and creatively. Mortimer also felt that he was the only one able to create a video that reflected his identity as a writer. As a result, he repositioned Paige throughout the filming process. Film club was a place that provided Mortimer with the support he needed to work through the tensions between his academic and creative writing identities. In addition, Film Club provided Mortimer with a community that he could rely on for support.

The Angry Seeker

I met Ophelia a few months before I began my observations with the Film Club. As a member of one of the classrooms that I observed as a part of my pilot study, Ophelia and I already had a rapport. Johnson described Ophelia to me as one of the founding members of Film Club. Her interest and passion for film caused her to seek out the support necessary to create a space in with film could be explored beyond the parameters of classroom time. When I began my observations, Ophelia was the elected president of Film Club. The other students looked up to her, not only as a role model within Film Club,
but also as a friend and support system throughout their day. The other students positioned Ophelia this way because of the way that she positioned herself within Film Club. In this section I will talk about Ophelia’s film, “The Caste System of High School” and how her composing process caused her narrative and her identity positions to undergo significant changes. In addition, I will explore the ways that this shift in positioning and identity is reflected in her final product.

**Ophelia as Seeker.** First and foremost, Ophelia positioned herself as a consumer not a producer of film and a seeker of information. Unlike Mortimer and DJ, Ophelia did not identify herself as a complete novice. Instead, she made a distinction between her identity as a consumer and a producer of film:

Ophelia: I was really never a hands-on filmmaker. That's never really been my specialty. So, I guess I am still...I mean, I know stuff, ya know. I know about it, but I haven't taken courses on it like people at BOCES do...I just know the basics. I guess that would be it, because I'm more appreciation of film and that whole section like now we're doing more hands-on stuff with the film, like I'm still learning again.

Nichole: So, you have experience and consider yourself a reader of film versus a writer of film.

Ophelia: Right, yes, yep.

Ophelia’s video consumption extended beyond full-length films. She talked about the presence of media in her life as more than simply entertainment. She explained that she often searched for videos to help her with her homework, or to catch up on current events. She relied on videos as a way to feed her curiosity. Ophelia’s consumption of video was primarily focused on helping her obtain knowledge. It is her goal to attend college for film in order to continue creating.
Ophelia’s figurative identity as a consumer is what helped her shape her position as a leader of Film Club. Not only did she identify officially as the president of Film Club, she used her knowledge of film culture to help expose the other members to new films and lead conversations about the films they were watching on their own. Ophelia often shared her own consumption experiences and made recommendations to other students. She embodied her role as a leader by drawing on her existing knowledge in order to help provide her peers with resources.

**Ophelia as angry.** The documentary film was one of the first films that Ophelia had ever written and composed. While she had worked on a video for her ELA 12 class, this film was rooted in a narrative of her own choosing. It was also a narrative that she began working on when she was just a sophomore in high school.

*Figure 11. Ophelia’s planning documents*

Her film was rooted in very real feelings of isolation and anger, something that I will explore in more detail later in this section. When Ophelia showed me the original planning documents for her documentary, I could almost see and feel the history in the paper (Figure 11):
I might frame it, ya never know. It feels like a part of my soul. And this has definitely changed in my eyes, but this is first what I...because I was mad and I'm going to write what I feel and how I see it.

The edges of the pages were crinkled and the paper was discolored, but to Ophelia these pieces of paper were more than just an idea. They were the driving force behind her video and she referenced them often. To Ophelia, these two documents were a reminder of feelings regarding her experiences in high school.

Ophelia positioned herself as a pissed off adolescent who was angry about high school cliques and disrespect. She had a hard time grasping onto ideas that many of her teachers and peers attributed to either the age of adolescence in general, or to high school culture. Ophelia articulated her need to understand why her peers behaved the way they did and why popularity seemed to determine a student’s worth.

…I was mad at everything in high school and everything was horrible and I wanted something, I wanted to make something that I could understand about high school. I mean high school is very complex, but I wanted it to make sense to me and I wanted it to make sense to other people. Rather than accept these ideas, Ophelia made it her goal to understand these behaviors and make sense of her own high school experiences and help others make sense of theirs. While curiosity and the need to understand fueled much of Ophelia’s figurative identity as a consumer of Film, her desire to discover answers through her documentary is shaped by her positional identity.

Ophelia also repeatedly positioned herself as “in-process” and recognized that she was still learning. She embraced that this is a part of her video composing process. She admitted that video helps her to develop a better understanding of her own ideas. When I asked her to talk about what she wanted
people to know about her through her video, so told me that it was important that people understand that she is still trying to figure out who she is and what she is capable of:

I would hope that they would get that I'm very...I mean, I'm still growing as a person, as a filmmaker. I'm still learning and it's really like my postage stamp to the world. And yeah, I'm still creating. Yeah. Yeah. Curious with creation.

Ophelia recognized that creating film is recursive and constantly evaluated her process. Her focus on composing as a way for her to gain understanding and make sense of her own thoughts signifies that Ophelia understood that for her, DV composition resulted in a shift in her positional identity, but I do not think that she realized the extent to which her social position shifted both within and outside of Film Club. Overtime, Ophelia became less angry.

**Ophelia’s unintentional positioning.** Ophelia experienced several emotions throughout the composing process, not just anger. I checked in with her frequently and each time she expressed either a frustration or celebration. While she did recognize that her video was reflective of her identity as a composer and someone in progress, during our conversations she also continuously reflected on her experience. Towards the beginning of May, I had a conversation with Ophelia about how her video was changing. I noted in my field notes that I was impressed by the way she was embracing the learning process:

I'm really excited to see this documentary from her because I really think it represents her ability to change and to...ya know she realized that her perceptions were maybe not as grounded in empirical information that she thought they were.

Ophelia’s willingness to accept what she was hearing and allow it to influence how she moved forward with her video emphasized Ophelia’s identity as in-progress. This constant reflection is also what led
Ophelia to experience a shift in her position as an angry adolescent and compose a new understanding of herself as a filmmaker.

At the very end of her Documentary, Ophelia took a few seconds to reflect on her own high school experience beyond the questions that she asked. She recalled her experiences as the popular girl and as a loner. She remembered feeling happy on some days and angry or sad on others. More importantly, Ophelia drew attention to both her optimist and pessimist outlooks:

The pessimist in me wants to say it’s never going to get better. It’s been like that for hundreds of years, probably not hundreds, but for a while. And then, the optimist in me is like c’mon be hopeful. And then the realist in me is like the pessimist in me.

By highlighting these tensions, Ophelia drew attention to the way that her video and the process of composing forced her to reconceptualize what high school was really like and come to terms with the possibility that her perceptions did not reflect reality. This moment at the end of Ophelia’s film highlights the fact that she is still unsure and curious and serves to reinforce the idea that she is still learning.

Finally, Ophelia has a significant amount of pride in Film Club. This is reflected in the way she positioned herself as a leader, but also how she spoke to others about Film Club and how she talked to her peers within Film Club. She made sure to offer encouragement to other students and check in with them regarding their progress. When she speaks to a reporter about the Film Club, she not only talked about her own video, but brags about the Film Club and the projects others were working on. She used this opportunity to share her pride in the club. Her consistent check-ins are a way for her to help the other members of the club be successful. This is also something that DJ models once Ophelia graduates. Ophelia’s actions served to position her as a role model.
**Ophelia’s reflected identities.** In the last two sections I talked about Ophelia’s figurative and positional identities as a consumer of film and an adolescent who wants to make sense of the world around her. I also briefly explored my interpretation of her participation within the space of Film Club. In this section I will draw attention to the way that these identities were reflected in both Ophelia’s composition and her final video. Unlike DJ and Mortimer, Ophelia was not only aware of the shift that occurred as a result of her composing process, she intentionally included her original artifacts (Figure 12) and narrated her learning as a part of her final video.

![Figure 12. Ophelia’s use of Planning Documents](image)

Rather that pretend that her process was seamless from start to finish, Ophelia’s desire to remain true to her identity as someone in progress resulted in a focus on the learning that took place as a part of her process.

Ophelia’s curiosity fueled the narrative of her video and the questions that she asked both the teachers and the students (Table 9). More than uncovering the “Caste system of High School,” her project grew out of her desire to understand and make sense of her environment.
Table 9.

**Ophelia’s Documentary Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“The Caste System of High School” Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about high school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You guys don’t feel inferior to anybody?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has high school taught you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your advice to younger high schoolers/younger self?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any advice on friendships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has high school been the best 4 years of your life?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The structure of her film also reflects the kind of videos that she consumes. By choosing the genre of documentary, Ophelia creates a video that is designed to share knowledge with others in the same way that she seeks information from the videos she consumes.

When Ophelia first began talking about her video, she described it in terms of her feelings toward high school and how angry she was. She wanted to use this video to highlight the existence of cliques and expose the ways that people treat each other. As she began to interview people and collect data, Ophelia began to notice that the answers she was hearing were not what she expected. Instead, she was beginning to find that her peers were answering in similar ways. About half-way through the spring, I asked Ophelia to talk about what she was finding:

They're talking about going to middle school to high school…you're going to go through so much and you're going to change so much as a person that it's really not going to matter...it's not going to make sense to you at all, high school's not. And, you're going to go through a lot of things that are going to be happy and hurtful and make you cry and make you laugh. That’s like a part of life that’s what they’re trying to tell me.

Unsure about what this meant for her process, Ophelia became very frustrated and took a break from her project for a bit.
A couple of weeks went by and I noticed that Ophelia had not mentioned her project or come to Film Club with her laptop or iPad. I asked her how things were going and she explained what happened. She also talked about how when she came back to her data she was able to refocus and restructure her narrative in a way that reflected her own re-positioning:

I’m OK with that now because I realized a lot of things such as, people that I thought they thought they were better than me and people that I thought they thought they were less than me we're all on the same playing field now especially since we're seniors.

Instead of continuing to feel negatively impacted by the actions of her peers, Ophelia realized that there was a community of people around here that shared her experiences.

In order to ensure that people understood how her initial narrative shifted as a result of her composing process, Ophelia included a director’s confessional as a part of her final video (Figure 13). She revisited her identity as an angry adolescent, but also talked about how this identity began to shift as she addressed the data that she had collected. What she began to realize is that her perceptions of high school and her peers did not match what she originally thought.

Rather than a caste system, Ophelia began to reframe high school as a ladder. Rather than being fixed, she described a ladder as something that allowed you to move both up and down:
…it’s not really a caste system so much as a ladder, I guess. Because, a caste system is a fixed thing. A ladder is something that you can go from being down on the bottom to elevating yourself and becoming a better person. That doesn’t always mean that going from the bottom to the top.

By including this reflection as a part of her video, Ophelia shares with her audience an important message regarding the process of DV composing. Admitting that she struggled and that she was forced to rework her narrative, Ophelia positioned composing as a process that doesn’t require perfection in order to be meaningful. Her message was not only important to her peers outside of Film Club, but also to those that were struggling as they worked on their own videos and navigated the composing process. Ophelia utilized her positioning as a leader to leave a lasting impression on the Film Club.

Ophelia also embraces the learning that took part as a result of her composing process. She admitted that she became frustrated but embraced her decision to walk away as a part of her process. Doing so allowed her to realize that the message of her video needed to change in order to reflect the true narrative that was developed as a result of her interviews. She began to recognize that high school was not just difficult for her, but that it is difficult for everyone. This was an unplanned finding, made visible through the composing process. At the very end of her video, Ophelia answered her own questions (Figure 14).

*Figure 14. Ophelia Answers her own Questions*
An off-camera voice asks Ophelia what she thinks about high school and her response is simple:

   It’s confusing. It’s messy. It’s going to make you frustrated and angry, but it’s frustrating because you’re also going to have good memories.

Just like her experience composing this video, Ophelia’s view of high school reflects the complicated process of making something meaningful. By including her own voice as a part of the narrative of her film, Ophelia connects her identity to the process of authoring her film.

In this chapter I explored DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia’s figurative and positional identities worked together as they engaged in the composing process. Each of these students constructed a figurative identity that reflected their membership in a particular figured world and then relied on that identity, alongside their positional identity, in order to negotiate their membership and participation in Film Club. I also explored some of the ways that these three members of Film Club were able to re-position themselves socially as a result of the composing process. For DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia, Film Club was more than just “messing with” video. The composing process gave them an opportunity to negotiate their identities in a space they worked to create and maintain.

**Chapter 7: Discussion & Implications**

In the previous three chapters I explored the findings of this research including Johnson’s pedagogical stance, students’ composing processes, and students’ reflected identities. In this chapter I will discuss these findings and their implications for the field of education. I will also highlight the limitations of this particular study and identify directions for future research. The purpose of this study was to discover the ways that students’ participation in and after-school Film Club provided them with a space to explore both composition and self. The following questions guided this research:

1. What stance is adopted by Johnson to provide his rural learners with creative space in a student generated after-school Film Club?
2. What does the DV composing process look like for rural students in an after-school Film Club?

3. In what ways are students’ identities and figured worlds reflected in their DV composing processes?

Discussion

Johnson’s pedagogical stance, including his emphasis on the dialogic, the use of film as text, and the reminder that composing is messy helped contribute to a space in which students could develop and retain autonomy over their own composing. In addition, the members of Film Club relied on both the space and the composing process as a way to develop meaning in the moment, collaborate with the peers, and take ownership over their own identities as composers. As a result, the processes they engaged in, especially DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia, and the artifacts that they created are evidence of their developing identities and reflect a shift in their positions both personally and collaboratively.

By talking about the ways that Johnson and his students worked together as members of Film club, I will first highlight the importance of student autonomy and exploration. I will then draw connections between students composing processes and their identities. In addition, I will explore the ways students negotiated the tensions that occurred as they navigated creative freedom and perceptions of rules within schooled spaces.

Student autonomy. As Dewey (1897/1998; 1916) argues, teaching and learning should be rooted in the needs of the students. He states that education should “begin with a psychological insight into the child’s capacities, interests, and habits” (1897/1998, p. 6). Johnson not only adopted a stance that valued the learning identities of his students, he also worked to maintain a space that provided each of the members of Film Club with the environment that they were looking for. It is important to understand that the space of Film Club is constructed differently for each of the students that
participated in it because this directly affects, and is reflected in, the way that they engaged in the composing process. Many of the students sought out Film Club because it was connected to their “capacities, interests, and habits,” but not every member of Film Club joined because they were interested in learning about and creating film. And, not every student in Film Club used the time and space to create. Nevertheless, each of the students that participated in Film Club contributed to the space in order to make it their own and Johnson valued each of them equally.

DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia are all examples of how students owned Film Club in different ways. For DJ, Film Club was a place where he felt like his creativity and voice were heard and validated. As a result, DJ’s composing process was shaped by his identity as a photographer and he searched for feedback by talking through his ideas with others. For Mortimer, Film Club was space for him to work collaboratively and find a community. He included others in his process and made sure to position himself as a member socially. Ophelia relied on Film Club as a platform for her voice and to help her move from consumer to producer. Ophelia placed great importance on sharing the story of Rolling Hills High, including how her composing process resulted in her own repositioning. As a result, the genre of her video and the learning she experienced are foregrounded in her process and reified as a part of the story. While Johnson’s focus on student autonomy started with acknowledging and reinforcing the needs of Film Club, it was reinforced by the pedagogical stance he enacted as he worked to guide students through the composing process.

Johnson relied on students’ interests, ideas, and voices as he helped them navigate and learn how to compose with digital video. The film texts he relied on to provide students with exemplars and inspiration were often picked from student selections or rooted in contemporary popular culture that the members of Film Club were familiar with. He drew on their interests and literacy practices as he worked with them to develop and shape their narratives. And, most importantly, he positioned himself as a
soundboard for students to bounce ideas off of. He worked closely with the students of Film Club dialogically through each stage of the composing process. Johnson provided students with choice at every stage and even when students’ ideas became unclear or spiraled out of control, he helped them reroute themselves. By relying on choice and dialogic engagement as a part of his instruction, Johnson maintained space for students to develop and retain autonomy over their own projects. While he often provided students with thematic structures or structural guidance, he did dictate the specific genre or content of students’ films. Johnson did not provide students with the answers; he helped them figure the answers out on their own. Students selected their own genres and stories, selected their own tools, determined their own processes, and set their own goals. As Moje et al. (2008) discovered, students read and write for a multitude of reasons both within and beyond schooled spaces. Johnson relied on these reasons as the foundation of his pedagogical stance.

**Processes and identities.** Johnson’s pedagogical stance focused on providing students with the support they needed in order to compose their videos in meaningful ways. Johnson’s use of film as a text helped students to see that they had access to the tools they needed and his pedagogy taught them how to use them. He provided them with both knowledge about film and knowledge for film. In addition, by consistently drawing on students’ interests and existing experiences, Johnson recognized that his students’ identities were a crucial part of both the buy in and the composing process. He also positioned collaboration as an important part of creation but did not force students to work with others. And, by emphasizing that the composing process was messy and never linear, Johnson attempted to alleviate students’ apprehensions of film composing. As a result, students were able to approach and engage in the composing process in their own way. They felt comfortable allowing their figurative and positional identities to be transparent in the space and as a result, they experienced a transformation.
**Processes.** The tools that students were exposed to did not come with expectations for their use. Rather than dictate their purpose, Johnson encouraged students to explore the tools and then decide how to use them in their own way. Whether it was exemplars of technique and content, time and space to talk things out, or guidance with filming and editing, students were given the freedom to choose their support system. The tools that students selected and the way that they were utilized throughout the composing process resulted in many different approaches to DV composition. Each of the students was able to tailor their composing process to their own needs and goals, highlighting that there is no wrong way to compose.

DJ utilized the tools he needed to work through the tensions between his expertise as a photographer and his fear of failure. He relied largely on his own experiences, as well as dialogue with others in order to construct and shape his narratives. Mortimer relied upon the tools provided by Johnson to help him develop his narrative collaboratively and edit the structure of his final film. Ophelia relied on the tools to pick herself up after becoming frustrated. The tools that Johnson gave her helped her to learn from her experience, rather than reject it. By drawing attention to the many different tools that can be used as a part of DV composition, Johnson works to ensure that the students in Film Club feel supported in their choices and in their processes. As a result, composing became something rooted in the individual identities and needs of the students. As each of them selected their own set of tools, they began to forge their own path.

**Identities.** Over time I watched each of these students reconstruct their figured worlds as they adopted and enacted the tools and practices that Johnson gave them, as well as the ones they brought to the composing process themselves. DJ, Ophelia, and Mortimer’s experiences throughout the composing process highlight the ways that composing with DV resulted in shifts in identity. These shifts may not have been experienced if they were not encouraged to compose within and across their existing figured
worlds. If DJ’s identity as a photographer had not been valued in the space, then he would not have been able to begin to rethink his idea of what it means to successful. If Mortimer’s identity as a writer and rule follower had not been an integral part of his composing process, then he would not have been able to develop his identity as a composer of film. Finally, if Ophelia was not encouraged to follow her curiosity, she would have graduated from RHH as an angry adolescent, rather than someone with a community.

**Rurality.** One of my initial assumptions as a researcher was that the students of RHH would actively adopt a rural identity and position themselves in direct opposition to their urban peers in the same ways the educational research reviewed for this project does. Rather than potentially assigning a rural identity to these students by asking them questions regarding their rural context, I opted to let these identities surface naturally throughout my interactions with them. However, what I found was that students did not foreground a rural identity, or so much as mention their rural context as a part of interviews or throughout the composing process. As a result, the rural identities of these students were not fully explored in the ways I had initially planned. However, the absence of a self-assigned rural narrative draws attention to the ways that students in rural contexts may not choose to define themselves by their surroundings.

While educational research positions rural students as lacking in terms academic achievement and development, the students that I engaged with as a part of the Film Club did not position themselves that way in regard to their geographical context. Instead, each of these students relied on their interests and their identities as composers and while further research could explore the degree to which these students identify as rural and how that impacts their composing processes, this research speaks to the ways that rural students do not recognize, or embody, the limitations others ascribe to them because of their location. Johnson was the only participant to speak about the students as rural, but he did not let
that influence the way that he engaged with them throughout the compositional process. He also did not
discuss students’ rurality in the presence of his students. He focused on the individual talents and needs
of these students in order to provide them with as much academic and personal support as he could.

While not perpetuating a narrative of lack as a part of pedagogy and learning may help students
develop themselves beyond their geographical context, this research also draws attention to the absence
of a positive rural narrative. Is it possible that educators are doing students a disservice by not providing
them with spaces to explore what it means to be rural? Could educators help students discover the
opportunities and resources they have access to as a result of their location outside of urbanized
narratives of learning and identity exploration? Providing students with opportunities to explore who
they are in relationship to their local and globalized spaces may provide them with opportunities to shift
their focus from schooled academics and explore the positives and negatives associated with their
context. As a result, students may begin to shape their own identities as rural, and/or reject those
imposed on them by others. If these students do not know how others conceptualize their learning,
identities, and processes, they cannot begin to construct their counternarratives.

**Negotiating tensions.** Both DJ and Mortimer’s experiences with composing reflected a tension
between their creative process and the rules they associated with school. DJ spent most of his time in
Film Club developing narratives and talking through his ideas. For almost all of his projects, he
articulated at least initial plans for filming and/or editing, however only two of these projects made it to
the final stages of production and only one was deemed to be complete. Mortimer also spent several
weeks working on the story and characters for “Together with the Dead,” but as his group moved into
the filming and production process, Mortimer took control and relied less and less on the opinions and
thoughts of his peers. Instead, Mortimer sought advice and feedback from people he positioned as
authority. DJ and Mortimer’s experiences speak to the importance they each placed on the self-designated assessment of their final projects.

For each of them, the composing process became more than just “messing around” as soon as artifacts became attached to their processes. Both Mortimer and DJ talked about the importance of the composing process and its connection to their ability to explore ideas and create worlds, but they were unable to maintain this thought process as they worked toward the creation of something tangible. For DJ, his fear of failure took over and caused him to stay within the parameters of brainstorming because it was a safe space. As soon as DJ began to feel like he was close to production, he shifted his attention to a new idea and started the planning process all over again. For him, creating a project meant that someone else was going to assign a value to it, whereas the process of composing was something that could not be graded or assessed in schooled ways. Because of DJ’s deficit positioning, he worked hard to keep himself safe from failing by continuously creating narratives.

Mortimer’s positioning as a writer and as someone who followed the rules are what caused him to shift his focus from collaborating with his peers to ensuring that his final project reflected the rules of not just composition, but also those he associated with school and assessment. The planning process and the creation of characters and narrative, while Mortimer positioned them as very important, were very low stakes because of their connection to exploration and “figuring stuff out.” By contrast, the creation of an artifact like an essay or a video was how Mortimer feed his identity as a writer and positioned himself as someone who was knowledgeable and capable. By controlling the filming and editing process, Mortimer was able to assign himself the title of author and embody a feeling of success. In addition, although Johnson and I never intentionally situated ourselves as authority figures in the space, once Mortimer’s stake in his project changed so did the way he positioned us. Johnson and I became the ones with authority and the only people qualified to offer him feedback.
DJ and Mortimer’s experiences point to the idea that for many students’ success matters even in non-schooled spaces. The idea of failure and ownership become a part of the composing process as students begin to think about their projects in terms of both their own expectations and the expectations that they believe others have for them. For many students, creation undergoes a transformation once there is a stake in the process, whether or not that stake is institutionally determined or personally developed. In both instances DV composing becomes a serious and transformative endeavor and is no longer just “messing with it.” Even on non-schooled time, schooled spaces are still imbued with school culture and institutionalized structures. Because of the emphasis on assessment and product over process in many classrooms, the rules of the institution still dictated the composing processes for some of the members of Film Club. They were unable to fully separate themselves from the fear of failure or the desire to follow the rules, even though they were working a space that gave them the freedom to set their own parameters.

Implications

How can teachers expect student to be successful in spaces where they feel like what they need to be successful isn’t valued? The experiences of DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia, as well as the other members of Film Club, were a direct result of Johnson’s pedagogical stance and his commitment to providing students with a space that allowed them to create on their own terms. In my interview with Johnson, he argued that DV helps kids become motivated because the purpose is about them and not about pleasing someone on the other side:

[Writing] all becomes part of the system. The motivation is not intrinsic. The motivation is totally extrinsic and so the work suffers. So, it’s like once you start working with kids and video, you realize that they want to do it and they want the quality of their work to be high quality.
This research draws attention to the ways that one teacher was able to provide students with meaningful learning experiences. In this section I will discuss the implications of this research by focusing on the way it speaks to concepts of authorial control, schooled pressures, and rethinking the process of composing.

**Authorial control.** When students are given the freedom to choose their own paths it creates an opportunity for them to develop and retain authorial control. As a result, student investment in their learning increases. Johnson’s dialogic approach to the writing process and the impact that it had upon student autonomy speaks to the need for more choice throughout not only the composition process, but school curriculum in general. The writing process is not arbitrary, nor does it occur without an audience in mind. Flower and Hayes (1981) argue that writing is a goal-oriented process that may be interrupted as students continuously generate and evaluate. For many students in Film Club, the school day was filled with writing that sought to fulfill other peoples’ goals, more specifically their teachers. Whether it was composing a research paper, exploring literature themes, or even creating a video interpretation of a literary text, students often came face to face with writing that already had a purpose. In addition, these schooled writing practices came with and intended audience, one who would be responsible for placing value on the final product. This is the case for many students as they complete writing tasks during the school day. The goal and the value of writing become about completing the task well enough to please the teacher and receive a good grade. The process of writing becomes less about exploration and more about checking boxes and “doing school.”

While not all of the students were able to completely shake these predetermined goals, as a member of Film Club, these students were encouraged by Johnson to determine their own audience and assign their own values. Beyond creating a space that resulted in student autonomy, Johnson, and the members of Film Club, set goals and identified audiences that resided beyond the walls of RHH. For
example when I asked DJ why his “Mr. Blue Sky” video was important, he said that the intention behind it was to really put himself out there. He wanted other people to see it and not only tell him to pursue his dreams, but to also feel encouraged to follow theirs. He states that it’s for anybody that “really just wants to do something that's…that's been in their mind since they were young.” DJ felt supported enough within the space of Film Club to expose a very important part of his identity to others if it meant that they might feel supported too. The purpose behind DJ’s video was not to please Johnson, or any other adult that might enter the space. DJ’s compositional goal grew out of his desire to make a career out of photography. His audience was anyone that needed a little push and a little validation, something DJ relied on and experienced as he navigated the composing process by continuously generating new ideas.

The authorial control that DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia retained over their projects speaks to the value of choice in terms of not only content, but in process as well. Writing, and composition in general, is often thought of as linear processes that take place along a clear path from A to B. While this may be true for some students, these findings indicate that there are many paths students can take in order to be successful in their writing endeavors. Providing students with opportunities to choose their own paths, set their own goals, and work with and across multiple modes and spaces increases the chances that students will accept and retain autonomy over their projects. In addition, by creating spaces in which students retain authorial control over their process and their product, teachers may find that students willingly draw upon and explore their own identities and social positions. Modeling the social and dialogic nature of the composing process also provides students with examples of how they can move beyond traditional notions of planning and revising in order to shape meaning in the moment.

Schooled pressures. Dewey (1897/1998) believed that school should not be a place “where certain information is to be given, where certain lessons are to be learned, or where certain habits are to
be formed” (p. 8). This research draws attention to the habits students enact that are often disconnected from exploration and identity. Instead, students have become accustomed to composing for a grade, composing for a single authority, and composing within parameters set by someone else. Students do not see connections between creativity and assessments or grades; creativity is not a part of their academic success. DJ and Mortimer’s experiences as they negotiated the tensions of creativity and the rules of school, signal the impact that institutionalized pressures have upon students’ ability to step outside of assessment and fully immerse themselves in the creative process. While each of these students was willing to take risks and explore DV composing as they engaged in the planning stage, as they moved closer to completing their films they returned to more mechanical and habitual approaches to process or, in DJ’s case, avoid the process altogether.

The pressure to do well is fueled by schooled ideas of what it means to be successful. As Street and Street (1995) argue, reading and writing in print are often privileged in many classrooms and what teachers rely on to determine students’ successes and failures. Unfortunately for many students, success looks very different. For students like DJ, who repositioned himself as successful because of his experience composing with other modes, placing emphasis on the importance of exploration and process may give students more opportunities to develop a sense of pride in relationship to academic success. Changing both the habitual definitions of success that teachers perpetuate, whether intentionally or unintentionally, along with a reconceptualization of process as a part of successful composing will may subsequently change the ways that students approach and enact their own writing practices.

Rethinking process. The findings from this research highlight the positive impact that DV composition can have on student learning because of its collaborative and social nature, something that is often lost in explorations of student composing. A focus on testing, in-school assessment, and print texts results in an overemphasis on student products. Thus, this study is an important contribution to the
value of process. More specifically, Johnson’s dialogic stance and the way that students rely on dialogue to shape their ideas, speaks to the value of process as a social act. As a part of the writing process, students are most often asked to brainstorm and outline in print. In addition, with the exception of feedback, writing is viewed as a task to be completed individually. As evidenced by the composing processes of Film Club, verbal storyboarding is also an authentic and effective way for students to work through compositional issues, receive feedback, and create outlines for their final products. Britton (1982) posits that “spontaneous shaping” like the students engaged in as they talked through both their narratives and their filming plans, is how we make sense of our ideas and shape our perceptions and learning as they occur in the moment. As a result, students are able to extend their ideas as they make sense of new meanings that have been created while continuously exploring and renegotiating themselves alongside their narratives. Thus, brainstorming throughout Film Club did not create a onetime artifact, as is often the case with print practices. Instead, brainstorming occurred iteratively throughout the composing process.

Rather than foregrounding the artifacts that are created as a result of DV composition, it is important to acknowledge the entire process from start to finish. As was the case with videography, editing, and post-production practices, composing with DV is not exempt from planning or outlining, nor does it take place without drafts and revisions. However, educators tend to emphasize the value of the final product over the path it took to get there. By focusing on the ways that both print and digital composition require students to plan, draft, and edit recursively, teachers may begin to see the sophisticated practices that are paralleled in both print and digital composing. While product was important to every project, this research foregrounds process as an important piece of the puzzle. The students’ experiences as members of Film Club draw attention to the ways that DV composition not only
positively impacted discovery and learning, but how composition that was rooted in their literacy 
practices and identities helped students navigate the world around them.

Limitations

This research is limited by both participation and time. Although I observed Film Club for 9 
months, of the 8 members of Film Club that consented to be a part of the research, only 4 participated 
across both school years. While some graduated, others simply became too busy with school to actively 
devote time to the Film Club on a weekly basis. Also, attendance was not mandatory in order to remain 
a member of Film Club. Therefore there were several weeks when my participants either did not attend 
or only attended for a short period of time. As a result, the data and time period I was able to use to 
explore students’ growth and identities shifted with participants. For example, DJ was the student that 
actively participated the longest and therefore I was able to trace his growth over the longest period of 
time.

Time also impacted the duration of my observations weekly and throughout the entire data 
collection period. Weekly, the duration of Film Club meetings was not consistent. On average, meetings 
lasted one hour, but there were weeks when they only lasted for a half hour or went beyond the one-hour 
mark. Longitudinally, while I was a member of Film Club for almost a year, my membership occurred 
over a calendar year, meaning that data collection was interrupted for 3 months during summer vacation. 
While I did stay in contact with Johnson during this period, I was forced to renegotiate my membership 
in Film Club upon my return. While some dynamics changed between school years, returning to RHH in 
the fall gave me the chance to add to my previous discovers and make new ones over a short period of 
time.

Future Research
As a part of my discussion, I explored the possibility of furthering the exploration of students’ rural identities. While the students in film club did not actively adopt a rural identity, I also did not directly question their perceptions of rurality. This study contributes to research in rural education because it draws attention to the meaning making practices of students that may unknowingly participate in a culture that continues to view their learning and achievements through a deficit lens. That being said, further research will need to explore these students’ perceptions of rurality, alongside their own narratives of participation in order to understand the ways, if at all, that rurality influences their identity construction. This research will continue to ask questions about what it means to be rural and how the students in film club accept or reject educational narratives of rurality that they may be unaware of.

In addition, initial data supporting a comparative case study between the Film Club and an ELA elective taught by Johnson were collected as a part of this study. By comparing the DV composing processes that occur both during and after school time, I hope to expand upon the value of DV composition as a meaningful and transformative tool that has a place as a part of teachers’ everyday curriculum. Looking at Johnson’s stance across both of these spaces may also shed light on the ways that teachers can work to create spaces that promote creativity and student autonomy, regardless of physical constraints. In addition, looking at the composing processes of students across these spaces will also shed light on how creative composing processes become schooled.

Not every member of Film Club was interested in learning about and creating film. Not every student in Film Club used the time and space to create. While constructing a portrait of how students utilized the space of Film Club is outside of this particular analysis, it could be important to explore the ways that students created their own spaces within the walls of school. I have argued that even though Johnson adopted a stance that encouraged choice and individuality, school culture still permeated the space of Film Club. However, I also recognize that for many students, Film Club and Johnson, were
viewed as completely disconnected from school culture. Exploring the relationship between how
students positioned Film Club and Johnson, and their reasons for participation in the space may shed
light on their ability to disconnect school from the space.

I also believe it would be beneficial to further investigate DJ’s identity as someone with a deficit
alongside his composing process. At the time that this paper was written, DJ had still not produced
another film, but remained an active member of Film Club. Further exploring the way students’
experiences with assessment and grading impact their activities outside of school could shed light on the
connection that students make between school and personal worth. DJ’s struggle with and fear of
compositional commitment speaks to the ways that negative school experiences shape students’
perceptions of themselves and of success. DJ exuded pride in his photography because it was not
something that he connected to schooled perceptions of success. Looking further into his academic
endeavors may reveal why his fear of commitment is so strong.

Finally, further analysis of students’ artifacts is needed in order to fully understand the ways that
the identities of the students in Film Club became embedded in their digital compositions. By closely
examining the compositional choices made by each of the students and interaction between modes it is
possible to uncover the stories DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia tell and the ways that these stories continue to
grow across time and contexts. Drawing upon theories of artifactual literacy (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010),
multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), as well as semiotic analysis (Kress & van
Leeuwen, 1996) may help to further explore and understand how DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia’s identities
are (re)presented and navigated across multiple modes and social contexts.

Conclusion

Gustavson (2008) argues that our students are not “finite, closed systems,” but instead are in a
state of constant transformation and represent sites of possibility and creativity. By spending time with
the RHH Film Club, I hoped to highlight the ways in which students use DV to reevaluate their place in the world and how their teacher made it possible. During the nine months I spent first as an observer, and then as a member, I discovered how these students used DV composition as a way to (re)construct and (re)present their own narratives, to engage in collaboration with their peers, and to develop their identities and skills as filmmakers. What I discovered was that Film Club was more than just a time of day, it was a co-constructed space that provided students with encouragement and support. Johnson treated each of these students as more than a vessel for knowledge. He encouraged them to be who they were and become what they wanted to. For Johnson, his goal was to ensure that Film Club was for and about the students.

The students who participated in this research, specifically DJ, Mortimer, and Ophelia relied on Film Club to fulfill their needs that were not being met during the school day. Forced to look beyond an institution that was designed for them, they sought refuge in a place with other students looking for validation. Although Film Club was technically a schooled-space and, as I argued previously, imbued with school culture, the students of Film Club and Johnson fought hard to make it their own. What continues to strike me as interesting about these students is the absence of an articulated rural identity. Reflecting back on my experiences as a member of film club, I am able to see the ways that these students pushed back against narratives that I am not sure they realize existed.

Finally, Johnson’s dedication to the students of the Film Club reminded me how influential educators can be. Having worked with Johnson on developing his own identity as a filmmaker, I was able to see how he constructed Film Club as a space that he was able to care about deeply. While the meaning that Jonson ascribed to the space of Film Club was grounded in the needs of his students, I also believe that Film Club was a space in which Johnson could engage with his students beyond school mandated curriculums. He was able to explore his own identity as a teacher and as a filmmaker as he
helped his student do the same. What I did not recognize was that Johnson’s care extended beyond just creating and maintaining a space for his students. He cared about making sure that each of those students believed that they had value and a voice that needed to be heard.
APPENDIX A

Formal Student Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your experience with digital video in school?
2. Can you describe your experience with digital video outside of school?
3. In what ways, if any, is using digital video in school different than using digital video outside of school?
4. Can you describe your favorite moment composing with digital video?
   a. How did it make you feel?
5. In what ways, if any, does digital video connect to how you compose in print?
6. What is your favorite part about the video process?
7. Can you describe how you feel about using digital video in school?
8. Can you describe the positives of using digital video in school?
9. Can you describe the negatives of using digital video in school?
10. Tell me about your project for film club (Film Class)? What’s the story?
11. What message, if any, are you trying to convey with your video?
12. What are your plans for production?
APPENDIX B

Examples of Informal Interview Questions

1. Think about what you have right now. What does this video say about you?
2. If you showed this to somebody else, what do you want them to say about you? What do you want them to know about you?
3. What are your plans for the rest of your video?
4. Have you thought about audio at all?
5. Do you know what the next project is?
6. How has your project evolved?
7. How are you editing your video? Are there specific techniques you’re using?
8. How are you accomplishing the message you want to send?
APPENDIX C

Formal Teacher Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching English Language arts?
2. How long have you been teacher at ____________(School Name)
3. Can you tell me about your own educational history?
4. Where did you go to undergrad?
5. Where did you go to graduate school?
6. What were your high school experiences like?
7. Can you tell me about your most memorable experience with digital video?
8. Can you tell me about any experiences you had in college involving digital video?
9. Can you tell me about your personal experiences with digital video?
10. Can you tell me about your experiences teaching with digital video?
11. How would you describe your knowledge regarding digital video?
12. How would you describe your knowledge regarding teaching with digital video?

Teacher Positioning/engagement*:
13. Can you tell me about a time when you relied on your students to teach you something?
   a. Can you describe how this made you feel?
14. Can you tell me about a time when you felt like your students knew more than you did?
   a. Can you describe how this made you feel?
16. Can you describe how you plan to utilize digital video in the club?
17. Can you describe what positive impacts, if any, you think utilizing digital video will have?
18. Can you describe what negative impacts, if any, you think utilizing digital video will have?
19. Can you describe your goals for the club?

*These questions were revisited during an informal interview to discuss the ELA elective during the fall
APPENDIX D

Images of Data Reduction

[Image of memo notes with handwriting and Post-it notes]

[Image of a page with handwritten text and drawings]
OPHELIA: So, it's bad to be reactive?

MORTIMER: In a way, or to stick up for yourself.

OPHELIA: Yeah, there's only so far that you can be pushed before things get worse.

MORTIMER: Like, I've had this stuff ... more at this, too, one or two kids where it's just like, "I'm signing here doing my work, I'm quiet and they turn around and they start saying stupid stuff and then want to tell the teacher about it..."

OPHELIA: Yeah.

MORTIMER: You're only going to get yourself in trouble. You're only going to get...

OPHELIA: Yeah, we're all kind of pretty much in the same boat.

MORTIMER: Thinking about things that don't want to happen...
References


Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ruraled/tables/a.1.a.-1.asp


