Chapter 2
Hooked on a Queer Feeling? The Paradoxes of Engaging with Affective Silences and Talk in a High School Classroom

Kathleen Quinlivan

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I make a case for attending more closely to affective silences as well as talk in attending more fully to the destabilizingly queer dynamics of interrogating heteronormativity in a high school Health classroom. I revisit data to produce a counter-reading of an incident of hetero- and gender-normative policing between two groups of students that occurred in a New Zealand high school Year 12 Health classroom research project, which triggered high levels of affect (Quinlivan 2009, 2011, 2012). My initial analysis drew on the perspectives of the young men policing heteronormative masculinities, and of several groups of young women in the class, to argue for attending more fully to the emotional responses generated in the incident. In retrospect, I became aware that one of the effects of this analysis was to render the group of students being policed as victims, and to underplay the extent to which the embodied and affective histories of students' relationships were played out in the present. Attending more closely to the silences and talk of the focus group interview with the silenced group has encouraged me to render my original analysis as problematic, to see the normative power of the ways in which silences can never be heard if voiced speech is seen as the norm (Jackson and Mazzei 2009; MacLure et al. 2010; Mazzei 2007). I suggest researchers and teachers attempting to work queerly would benefit from looking beyond the normative power exercised by the spoken word to attend to the aporias (Derrida 1992) that can be produced by affective silences as well as talk in destabilizing heteronormativity.

I begin the chapter with a consideration of the literature related to affect and silences across a range of broad queer educational contexts. I then move on to providing the methodology of the project. Next, I provide some background for the

K. Quinlivan (✉)
University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand
e-mail: kathleen.quinlivan@canterbury.ac.nz

classroom incident, and then draw on a range of data to present an alternative rereading of the incident (Nairn et al. 2005; Mazzei 2007; Roseneil 2011; Youdell 2010) from the perspectives of the silenced group of students and the heteronormative masculinity policers who challenge previous notions that I had constructed of them as marginalized and oppressive. I move toward providing a richer and more nuanced analysis of the performative social relations between the students, in ways that move between the present, the past, and the future, and consider their implications. I close by considering the conceptual and methodological implications of engaging with understandings of affective silences in ways that can work toward sexuality education in classrooms becoming sites that can engage more fully with the possibilities of becoming present in relation with others (Todd 2012).

2.2   Affectively Queer?

Queer and psychoanalytic frameworks take it for granted that in learning and teaching about sexuality, feelings and emotions will be mobilized (Britzman 2010; Gilbert 2010, 2014; Lesko 2010). Considering the power of love, Britzman (2010) notes, "Eros manages to gather all that we want, with all that we worry about losing" (p. 325). Recognizing the profound emotional labor involved in teaching and learning about sexualities, she suggests that suspending moral judgement to become queerly curious about the unknown could be a helpful pedagogical orientation to cultivate. One of the key tenets of queer theory is its interest in problematizing the normalcy of heterosexuality, and the potential theory can have to disrupt fixed biological notions of sexuality and gender, allowing for an exploration of sexual and gendered subjectivities as something more fluid and temporal (Rasmussen 2006; Talburt and Rasmussen 2010). Rather than reinforcing binary framings of gender and same sex desire as abnormal and "at risk" in relation to heterosexual and gendered norms (Rasmussen et al. 2004), I am interested (albeit within the largely normative cultures of school classrooms) in the ways in which destabilizing notions of sexual and gendered normalcies can provide an opportunity not to foreclose ways of thinking about gender and sexual difference (Britzman and Gilbert 2004). Rereading the marginalized students' meaningful silences as representing more of a challenge to, than a tacit acceptance of, gender and heteronormativity are attempts to work toward foreclosure.

Acknowledging the potential of queer and psychoanalytic approaches in sexuality education, Britzman (2010) notes that open-mindedness and a willingness to be affected by the lives of others is our best pedagogical resource but also the most difficult of capacities to sustain. Working within a high school Health classroom to develop a partnership with teachers and students that explored the possibilities of destabilizing normalizing representations of sexualities and genders highlighted Britzman's paradox. The challenges Emma (the teacher), the students, and I faced in remaining open-minded and showing a willingness to be affected by the lives of others in a classroom context were largely dominated by cognition and rationality

(Boler 1999; Boler and Zembylas 2003). In this chapter, I suggest that destabilizing the normative value of the spoken word by attending to meaningful affective silences, as well as spoken talk, may hold some potential for engaging queerly with sexuality education. Next, I turn to discuss queer take-ups of the *affective turn* and productive silences, and their relevance to my arguments.

2.3   Affectively Queer

The *affective turn* as it is often described (Clough 2010; Seigworth and Gregg 2010) reflects contemporary ongoing global challenges of negotiating ongoing war, colonialism, trauma, torture, massacre, and counterterrorism (Alexander 2005; Clough 2010). Clough (2010) notes that work on affect has also developed in response to the emphasis that poststructuralism and deconstruction placed on a range of discursive constructionisms at the expense of attending to embodied and material feelings and emotions. Lesko (2010) observes the limitations of the discursive turn in engaging with contemporary social phenomena that could be considered (I thought) rather queerly marked by in-between-ness, becoming, movement, and immanence (Muñoz 2009). She suggests that attending to, and retheorizing, a range of feelings can address such limitations.

Drawing on Tomkins's (1995) work, Skattebol (2010) conceptualizes affect as a capacity and as a "tangible, embodied force that operates between people" (p. 78). Ahmed (2004) and Cvetkovich (2003) understand feelings to be produced as effects of circulation, rather than residing in subjects or objects. Affect then can be understood as relational and as having a material sociality. Ahmed (2004), in describing emotions, notes they involve affective reactions or relations of towardness, awayness, and reorientation in relation to objects and people. She also emphasizes that the "sociality" of emotions, and how they impress upon us, may depend on histories. Affective relations can be seen as alive, insomuch as they have already left their impressions, which can then be activated in affective encounters.

Queer theory's orientation toward calling normative conceptualizations of heterosexuality into question and in exercising an "ambivalence about 'proper subjects' and 'proper locations'" (Talburt and Rasmussen 2010, p. 10) has been drawn upon by a number of theorists working with affect across a range of informal educational sites (Ahmed 2004, 2006; Cvetkovich 2003; Sedgwick 2003). Cvetkovich (2003) draws on queer theoretical perspectives to explore the ways in which popular cultural texts operate as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but also in the social practices that surround their production and reception. Cvetkovich emphasizes that feelings challenge conventional understandings of what constitutes an archive because feelings can be unspeakable and unrepresentable, marked by forgetting and disassociation, and often seeming to leave behind no records of feelings at all. Upon closer examination of a range of the project's data sources, the affective silences characterizing the heteronormative policing classroom incident seemed to speak more fully than I

had initially thought. Cvetkovich's (2003) interest in reframing unspoken and unrepresentable feelings such as silences as productive resistance rather than as a personal pathology and failure (Colum 2011; Schultz 2009) is one I want to draw on in the analysis of the silences I revisit for this chapter. As Miller (2005) reminds us, drawing on the works of earlier feminist scholars such as Magda Lewis, bell hooks, and Alice Walker, silences are politically and personally charged and often strategic. Silences are performative social interactions that occur in relation (Colum 2011), can be redolent with a range of meanings and purposes, and, in many cases, confound interpretation (see also Jackson and Mazzei 2009; Mazzei 2007; MacLure et al. 2010).

Educationalists working in formal educational contexts have also explored the role affect plays in destabilizing heteronormativity (Britzman 2009, 2010; Gilbert 2010; Lesko 2010; Quinlivan 2009, 2011; Sandlos 2010). They are interested in attending more fully to the high levels of affect generated when thinking otherwise about normative constructions of gender and sexuality. Drawing on Ahmed's (2008) explorations of the ways in which we are simultaneously directed toward, and turn away from feelings, Lesko (2010) suggests that it may be useful for scholars to consider the emotions and social relations that knowledge in learning about sexualities helps construct or directs us toward, and their implications. In this chapter, I interrogate the ways in which the dominance of the affective spoken word shapes social relations, the understandings that may be gained and lost in the process, and their queer implications.

I have found queer and poststructural literature on affect and silences useful in attending, albeit in retrospect, to the role that relational affective feelings and silences as a social, everyday, and political experience (Cvetkovich 2003; Rooke 2010) can play in exploring queer pedagogical approaches that work toward confounding normative subjects and locations in the classroom. Next, I describe the methodological approaches that informed the study, and provide some background for the incident I will be revisiting.

2.4   Methodologies and Background

The incident I am revisiting in this chapter took place during the course of the 1-year case study in which I developed a research partnership with Emma (a 40-year-old Health teacher) and 16- and 17-year-old Year 12 Health students to explore what it means to draw on queer and critical poststructural approaches to interrogate and explore understandings of sexual and gender diversity within a high school Year 12 Health classroom (Quinlivan 2006). The Health class was a Year 12 option in a state coeducational school situated in a small satellite town near an urban center in New Zealand.

Informed ethical consent was gained from the six male and ten female students and the teacher. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the confidentiality of the students, teacher, and school. Participants had the option of discontinuing their participation in

the project at any point, but none chose to do so. The teacher and, where possible, the students have had the opportunity to view and provide feedback on the initial data analysis, and are informed, as much as is possible, when project data are presented and published.

Five sets of qualitative data were collected over the course of the case study. Initially, face-to-face semistructured tape-recorded interviews were conducted in four self-selected focus student friendship groups and one individual interview with Emma. During the course of the project, I regularly wrote participant observations and field notes, and Emma kept a research journal. In response to the extensive data I observed emerging from the students' informal peer interactions in the classrooms, eight classroom sessions over 3 months in the middle of the project were audiotaped using a portable multidirectional recorder, which I positioned in different parts of the room during the classroom sessions to capture differing student groups' conversations. Six follow-up face-to-face semistructured tape-recorded interviews were conducted at the end of the year in self-selected focus student friendship group interviews, and two follow-up individual interviews were undertaken with Emma. I draw on Hollway's (2009) work to capture the emotional terrain of the interview transcripts, and my own and the teacher's field notes, by describing the affective tenor of the ways in which the words were spoken.

The classroom work we undertook was part of a wider compulsory unit of work on Sexuality and Gender within the Year 12 Health curriculum, intended to encourage students to understand and reflect on ways in which socially constructed understandings of gender and sexuality were in a constant state of production and contestation and could be actively engaged within a range of ways by students. At the request of the students, Emma (the Health teacher) and I introduced a range of cultural texts to understand and critically engage with sexual and gender differences. Next, I revisit my analysis (Nairn et al. 2005; Roseneil 2011; Youdell 2010) to retrospectively consider the performative silences and speculate (Browne and Nash 2010) about some possible readings of these silences.

2.5   Affective Silences and Talk: The Classroom Incident Reconsidered

In this section, I provide some background for the classroom incident and then move beyond the spoken words exchanged in the encounter to consider, in retrospect, the performative possibilities and meanings of affective silences (Jackson and Mazzei 2009; Mazzei 2007; MacLure et al. 2010) among Guy and his friends, in ways that confound my initial reading of the data. Attending to the silences and the talk in Guy's group, I suggest their silences may have been assertive and even quite defiant, reflective of the past and the future, as much as they are of the present situation. I show the ways in which Guy and his friends subvert my subconscious normative desires to marginalize and recuperate them. Despite my desire to undertake queer pedagogical work, their responses highlight the fact that it proved challenging

for me to undo my need for a linear salvationist narrative of the project which, ironically, reinscribed many of the binaries that Emma and I intended to undo.

The classroom incident arose in response to an exercise when, at several young women's suggestion, analyses of gender and sexuality representations through magazine advertisements of male models selling underwear were being undertaken in the class (Quinlivan 2009, 2011, 2012). In the context of discussions surrounding heteronormativity, and intertwined representations of masculinity and sexuality, several of the male students seemed to feel uncomfortable looking at images of desirable men in the advertisements and to engage with the extent to which representations of masculinity and sexuality were drawn on to sell underwear. Justin, a male student in the class who constantly overtly displayed his heterosexuality in class, turned around to Guy, a student who did not appear to exercise Justin's heterosexual status, pointed to the advertisement, and remarked in a low and suggestive voice; "Oh, I bet you think he's really hot!" Guy ignored Justin's remark and chose to remain silent, as did the group of friends he sat with.

At the time, Emma (the teacher) and I felt that Justin, with support from his friend, was establishing his normative heterosexual masculinity through subtly calling into question Guy's heterosexuality. Talking with two other groups of young women in the class who represented students with a deep investment in high-status femininities and those with more of an outsider status, respectively, they concurred, noting Justin's investment in normative masculinities would mean Guy and his outsider friends would be easy pickings (Quinlivan 2009, 2012). In retrospect, I understand that Justin's reaction is an almost inevitable affective reaction to the provocation of a research project developed to widen understandings of gender, sexuality, and difference. However, at the time Emma and I had strong emotional reactions to what had happened. In addition to our understandably protective concern for Guy and his friends' well-being, Justin's subterfuge also challenged the intentions of a project that subconsciously Emma and I had a deep investment in being successful.

Despite strenuous disagreement from the girls who supported Justin in the class, and acknowledging the way that the incident raised relevant issues for the project, Emma's research journal entry indicates that the traditional norm of punishing bullying and harassment by exclusion that strongly characterizes classroom and schooling cultures shaped the ways in which Justin was punished and pathologized:

> Felt upset with the fact that Justin has been putting other kids in the class down. So spoke to him about the learning culture of the classroom. He was on the defensive and attacked back with backing from Jordan and Michael.—Some class members defended the fact that I shouldn't be talking to Justin in front of the class.—My comment was I have already talked to him personally and he has been warned. They accepted that. I also said I was addressing it in front of the class & this was part of the issue we are wanting to address in Health classes, i.e. gender bullying. The talk—as it wasn't a discussion! like I had anticipated, stirred the class—Ryan, Guy etc. were silent the whole way thru. Also found out during the lesson that Guy has been bullied by Jordan. Jordan was taken out of class & talked to by [the deputy principal]. (Emma, Research journal, May 21, 2004)

Despite my response being couched initially in more academic language, my field notes indicate a similar intention to challenge, punish, and pathologize Justin for his misdemeanors. In the heat of the moment, our desire to protect and recuperate what Emma and I saw to be a marginalized group of students appeared to be only largely understood by me within schooling and classroom norms and systems that punished the perpetrator and ironically had the effects of remarginalizing the affected victims:

> It is really interesting how we have been doing all this work around dominant masculinities & how they have been the basis for the kind of heteronormative harassment of male students who don't fit into desirable forms of masculinity. The good aspect of it is that Guy and Peter too—have made official complaints so perhaps the talk about understanding why & how people harass has encouraged them to think that this isn't actually them and that it says more about insecurity of the people who are doing the harassment. Emma really barrelled Justin publicly in front of the rest of the class and interrogated him about why/how he might have behaved in that way. (Kathleen, Field notes, May 21, 2004)

At the time of the incident, dominant classroom and school norms and the high levels of affect generated in the classroom made it challenging to move beyond understanding the silence of Guy and his friends as reflective of their victimized and marginalized minority status. I did, however, want to understand how Guy and his friends understood what had happened and had the opportunity to do this in a focus group interview at the end of the project. At the time, I remember feeling I had gained few insights from Guy and his friends, but revisiting the interview transcript with a renewed interest in gaining some understandings about their classroom silences challenged my normative assumptions. Guy and his friends confounded my assumptions that the actions Emma took in excluding Justin from the classroom would have had any effect in either altering his behavior or in supporting or validating their group. In response to my asking them whether they thought anything in the classroom had changed once Emma had challenged Justin's behavior and he had been exiled from the class, they responded:

> Peter: Yeah, she got more grumpy. (ironically)
>   Kathleen: She got more grumpy? (quizzically)
>   Angela: I think that was on Justin's behalf!
>   Peter: Yeah
>   Guy: Yeah, exactly.
>   Angela: Justin pissed her off. (emphatically)
>   Kathleen: Yeah, she was pretty wound up about that. We didn't know what to do about that situation, actually … (resignedly)
>   Guy: Yeah.
>   Angela: That's why …
>   Kathleen: Do you think we should have acted quicker on that than did actually happen? (decisively)
>   Angela: Yeah.
>   Kathleen: … than actually happened, you do? (enquiringly)
>   Peter: Yeah.
>   Angela: She just kicked him out. He'll just go and do it again. (pragmatically)
>   Kathleen: Yeah. I know. (resignedly)
>   Guy: But Justin might change this time after … (optimistically)
>   Angela: Doubt it! (definitively)
>   Peter: You can't change people. (emphatically)

(Follow-up audio-taped interview with Guy, 16; Ryan, 16; Peter, 16; and Angela, 15, June 29, 2004)

Despite my ongoing attempts in the extract to frame the silenced group as marginalized and in need of recuperation by Emma and me, their largely pragmatic and ironic talk indicates wisdom about the peer group power dynamics within the school that positions them as far less passive. In revisiting the data, what is also interesting, and rather embarrassing, is the extent to which my subconsciously deep investment in the rationally linear success of the project seems to be undermined by notions of failure surrounding the classroom incident. Although rationally I frequently trouble the positivist desire for salvation narratives in research (Lather 2007), it is salutary to see the extent to which modernist authorial narratives of school and research cultures subconsciously shape my responses as a researcher.

On rereading the data, the group's perception of Justin also appeared to challenge the trajectory that Emma and I were invested in during the course of the research project, one that is sustained by the cultural norms and rituals of the classroom and the school. On the contrary, despite my constant attempts to position the group as marginalized, they were able to dig down underneath the classroom incident to raise some complex questions that perhaps never can be or even should be acknowledged within traditional classroom norms:

Angela: I think Justin's had something happen to him that he doesn't particularly like. It's kind of, like, upset him a bit . . . 'Cos when I was in his class in Year 9 he just, like, always hassled people. And if he didn't get his own way he'd just go absolutely psycho and stuff. … I think something's happened to him … (reflectively)

Kathleen: … Your group was on the receiving end of what he was doing … (matter-of-factly)

Angela: 'Cos he doesn't like us. (perfunctorily)

Peter: Yeah … he's an idiot. (assertively)

Kathleen: … What's your take on that? You know, what do you think was going on there? (inquiringly)

Ryan: I don't know. He just like he changes. Like at one point he can be really nice to you—like talk … And then, like, he just goes ape-o at me because I do something different … he starts teasing us because we do that kind of stuff. I don't know why, but he just does. (incredulously)

Angela: He's just insecure … (perfunctorily)

Ryan: Maybe he's afraid that he's different and he's trying not to be different? (thoughtfully)

(Follow up audio-taped interview with Guy, 16; Ryan, 16; Peter, 16; and Angela, 15, June 29, 2004)

The misread silences of Guy and his friends that characterized Emma's and my understandings of the classroom incident are firmly repudiated. The students shrug off any sense of themselves as marginalized victims, instead also reinscribing school-based individual pathologizing discourses by suggesting that Justin himself is the problem. More interestingly, they dig more deeply than the dominant discourses we all drew on in framing the classroom incident to indicate that there is a deeply held history to the interactions that occurred in the classroom, which, while unacknowledged at the time, needs to be attended to (Todd 2012). The students speculate about why the incident occurred, drawing attention to the deeply inter-subjective relational

politics that are called upon in shaping a sense of who we are and how we want to be seen (Todd 2012). Ironically, the students' insights deeply echo the intentions of the research project that class members, Emma, and I were embarked on.

A follow-up interview with Justin and his friend alluded to many of the issues and explanations articulated by Guy and his friendship group. Although the rational part of Justin wants to dismiss the extent to which the shared affective historical relationships of the group going back to primary school shape what is possible in terms of present social interactions in the Health classroom, he acknowledges their current importance:

> Justin: Things have happened between like people in the class sort of bringing them … into [the] relationships [of] the Health classroom environment. (quietly)
>   Michael: Yeah.
>   Justin: … And it affects you … We'll start with primary school. Me and Peter have never got on … And I think that affects the classroom environment for me and him. That also affects like we can't completely open ourselves up completely when one another's in the class I suppose. That's probably what he'll feel. (thoughtfully)
>   Kathleen: Do you feel like that yourself? (sympathetically)
>   Justin: Sort of yes and no but not really. 'Cos that's six years ago, five years ago. (matter-of-factly)
>   Kathleen: That's something that you're aware of, Justin? (probingly)
>   Justin: Yep. (matter-of-factly)
>   Kathleen: Yeah. Do you think that's something that would have changed over time if you'd been able to work that out. Do you know what I mean? (sympathetically)
>   Justin: Yep. Oh, no not really.
>   Kathleen: And why does that kind of conflict occur? (sympathetically)
>   Justin: A lot of stuff happened at primary school eh. (reflectively)
>   Michael: Yeah.
>   Kathleen: Was it to do with the fact that he was harassed and bullied because he's big and stuff like that? Did he get a hard time? (questioningly)
>   Michael: More when he came to high school recently. (matter-of-factly)
>   Justin: More—he got more shit when he come to high school. But at primary school it was more the way he acted towards people. (convincingly)
>   Kathleen: 'Cos I noticed in class that he never said very much. You know like he was very quiet and stuff like that. (reflectively)
>   Justin: Closed up. (matter-of-factly)
>   Kathleen: Yeah, you noticed that as well.
>   Justin: He's always been like that. (matter-of-factly)
>   Kathleen: Is that because you don't think he feels safe in the class? (questioningly)
>   Justin: Yeah. Don't you reckon? (questioningly to Michael)
>   Michael: Mmm.
>   Kathleen: Is that because people hassle him and stuff like that? (questioningly)
>   Justin: Yeah, hassle. (matter-of-factly)
>   Michael: Yeah, and it's also because, like, there's seven people in this class that used to go to Kiwi Primary. (explanatorily)
>   Kathleen: Okay, so there's a bit of past history here. (reflectively)
>   (Kathleen, Justin, 16, and Michael, 16, first follow-up audio-taped interview, June 30, 2004)

Rereading the text of the transcript, it is interesting to see the silence around Justin's own role in contributing to the incident and the extent to which the conversation from all of our perspectives revolve around pathologizing discourses of Peter,

framing he and his friends as having a problem. Despite such silences, he in particular is open and willing to talk thoughtfully at length about what may have lain behind the incident (requesting another interview to elaborate further). Later, Justin made himself vulnerable by reflecting at length not only about his behavior but also about life circumstances that he thought contributed to him acting in those ways. The thoughtful insights he displayed during the course of both follow-up interviews were also often apparent in (less personal) classroom discussions during the course of the project, when I had frequently thanked him for the pedagogical value they offered to the research project (Quinlivan 2009, 2012).

I do not want to minimize the mutually useful role the interviews played for Justin and me as a researcher in wanting to understand Justin's and Michael's perspectives of the classroom incident. However, a little disconcertingly, my role in the conversation also appears to subconsciously reflect that of a concerned counselor, another way of being that is strongly sanctioned and available as a modus operandi within the culture of the school. The unspoken assumptions sitting behind what I say and my counselor-speak verbal expression could be seen to repathologize Justin and his friend Michael, as much as they do Guy and his friends.

Because (however subconsciously) I read the silence of Guy and his friends as powerlessness, I assumed that, since they were a "nerdy" and marginalized group, coming to their defense as part of participating in the project would make them feel more valued. However, a rereading of the interview transcript shows that the group of students largely confounded my desire to marginalize and recuperate them:

> Kathleen: Has the project changed ways that you think about differences? (enquiringly)
>   Guy: It hasn't made me feel stronger really. It's just … (reflectively)
>   Peter: It hasn't really changed anything for me. I'm still—I still think of people the way I thought of them before. There's no changes or anything the way I think about. (forthrightly)
>   Guy: It's just given me more information about, you know. The things that people believe in and stuff like that. (pragmatically)
>   Angela: Yeah.
>   Kathleen: Do you think it's helped for you to see yourself as less of an outsider? (sympathetically)
>   Peter: I don't know. I actually quite like being an outsider. (challengingly)
>   Kathleen: Oh, you're just a rugged individual, you're a rebel really, aren't you, Peter? (humorously)
>   Peter: Yeah, completely a rebel! (ironically laughing)
>   (Follow-up audio-taped interview with Guy, 16; Ryan, 16; Peter, 16; and Angela, 15, June 29, 2004)

Despite my attempts, Peter and Angela in particular strongly reject any notions constructing him as a powerless minority. These and later comments from Guy and his friends indicate that to the contrary they have embraced their outsider status. They indicate that this positionality, rather than my rather naive assumptions related to participating in the research project, enables them to successfully use the harassment policies provided by the school to call students who harass to account, but also to stand up to their peers:

> Kathleen: … Over the course of doing this unit of work, have your ideas about sexuality changed at all? (inquiringly)

Guy: I already knew all this stuff, I just didn't know in depth about it. You know. But, yeah, I've always accepted people for who they are. (pragmatically)

Angela: Exactly what I was going to say. (assertively)

Kathleen: You feel that way, too, Astrid. Yeah. So being exposed to all the ideas that we've talked about have worked to, kind of, just confirm what you already thought? (thoughtfully)

Guy and Astrid: Yeah.

Peter: Yeah, it's like it's you accept people for who they are not what they are eh. You just do it automatic—well, I do it automatically. So I already knew most of the stuff. (assertively)

Kathleen: Do you feel like that because of your own experiences, Peter or, you know, is it like?... (tentatively)

Peter: Yeah, it'd be that way … because with me being the size I am I get quite a bit of harassment, but that makes me different to other people so I tend to accept different people easier than other people do. (thoughtfully)

Kathleen: Okay, yeah because you've got the experience of what it feels like to be on the outside sometimes from people. (sympathetically)

Peter: Mmm. (vaguely)

Angela: Same for me … People just being racist and stuff. So, it's a bit like, yeah, you can relate to other people that are, like, not very socially accepted … (thoughtfully)

Guy: Oh, sometimes people tease you and stuff but you just have to, like, well what I do is I just ignore it or I just tell them that: far out if you're just going to keep doing it it's just pathetic and stuff like that. I just don't really listen. (pragmatically)

Kathleen: … I wonder if any of you have, actually, taken any action against being harassed. (inquiringly)

Peter: Yeah, I have … I don't know. I just got sick of it … my teacher I go and see she usually—she always reacts—she always takes action. Which is why, yeah, the other day some boys were insulting me about my girlfriend and so I went and saw the teacher and she's going to talk to them on Wednesday. Yeah. So that's good … I went to see her in the third form about something and it got sorted out so I just go and see her now … The person never did it again. (perfunctorily)

Kathleen: Oh, really. Okay. So did you feel after doing this work on the gender and sexuality stuff did you feel stronger to be able to do things like that? Did it help in any way? (inquiringly)

Peter: No, I didn't find it helped in any way. (definitively)

(Follow-up audio-taped interview with Guy, 16; Ryan, 16; Peter, 16; and Angela, 15, June 29, 2004)

Finally, I want to speculate on some of the conceptual and methodological implications that my rereading of the data suggests.

2.6 Some Speculative Conceptual and Methodological Implications

In this chapter, I have suggested that engaging with queer pedagogical possibilities in education involves interrogating normative assumptions that privilege the affective spoken word over affective silences (Jackson and Mazzei 2009; Mazzei 2007). Drawing on Lesko's (2010) suggestion of exploring the emotions and social relations knowledges in learning help construct and direct us toward, I revisit a

previous analysis of silences that occurred in a research project developed to work toward destabilizing normative understandings of gender and sexuality. Considering some possible rereadings of silences as affective has provided me as a queer researcher, with some productive, if rather humbling, conceptual, and methodological issues to ponder. In terms of more fully engaging with conceptualizing queer affective silences, my rereading challenges the extent to which the normative spoken word is privileged in analysis, and silences. Because silences leave no record, as Cvetkovich (2003) suggests, they can remain unattended to, and forgotten. Attending ethnographically to the messy, paradoxical affective lived everyday within schools (Browne and Nash 2010), my reanalysis draws attention to silences as meaningful, affective (Jackson and Mazzei 2009; Mazzei 2007; MacLure et al. 2010), and performative social relations (Colum 2011). The reanalysis queerly confounds my own problematic normative assumptions that not only sought to marginalize and recuperate the group of students who were policed by Justin, assuming their silence reflected their victimhood, but also positioned Justin as a triumphant yet troubled bully. The troubling implications of this reading of emotions and social relations (Lesko 2010), despite Emma's and my best intentions at the time, made it challenging to move beyond the limited individual pathologizing discourses that framed Justin, and Guy and his friends alike. In addition, it prevented a more nuanced and political analysis that could have ironically been of use to the project we were embarked upon. Given these limitations, however, my rereading showed Guy and his friends as agentic outsiders who astutely negotiated the normative peer cultures they were situated in, and ably used formal schooling systems to challenge normativity, and shore up a sense of themselves as valued individuals. Despite my inability to harness the expertise of Guy and his friends at the time, in retrospect I have been able to understand and appreciate their expertise.

As a queer researcher, I have certainly been up for exploring the ways in which failure, especially in schooling contexts it seems, appears to characterize many of the queer endeavors I have embarked upon. However, looking back at the extent of my (very unqueer) investment in the research project as a linear and affirmative action success story (Talburt and Rasmussen 2010) has proved particularly telling. At the same time, it seems critical reflexivity, and an openness to explore such paradoxical aporias (Derrida 1992), is an important disposition for a queer researcher to cultivate. It is a visceral reminder of the fact that what is possible occurs within contexts, which, despite our best intentions, shape and mold our subjectivities in particularly subtle ways. Perhaps because of such constraints, I am getting rather tired of hearing empirical queer scholarship being chastised as (rather inevitably, I would suggest) never being queer enough (Talburt and Rasmussen 2010). I take heart from Muñoz's (2009) insistence that disappointment is an integral condition of hoping queerly, but that disappointment shouldn't be a reason to cease hoping. I see this chapter as contributing in a small way toward providing a productive anatomy of a very hopefully queer kind of failure.

References

Ahmed, S. (2004). *The cultural politics of emotion*. New York: Routledge.

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. London: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2008). Sociable happiness. *Emotion, Space, and Society, 1*, 10–13.

Alexander, M. J. (2005). *Pedagogies of crossing*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Boler, M. (1999). *Feeling power*. New York: Routledge.

Boler, M., & Zembylas, N. (2003). Discomforting truths: The emotional terrain of understanding difference. In P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social change* (pp. 110–136). New York: Routledge Falmer.

Britzman, D. (2009). *The very thought of education: Psychoanalysis and the impossible professions*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Britzman, D. (2010). Teachers and Eros. *Sex Education, 10*(3), 325–330.

Britzman, D., & Gilbert, J. (2004). What will have been said about gayness in teacher education. *Teaching Education, 15*(1), 81–96.

Browne, K., & Nash, C. J. (2010). Introduction. In K. Browne & J. C. Nash (Eds.), *Queer methods and methodologies: Intersecting queer theories and social science research* (pp. 1–23). London: Ashgate.

Clough, P. (2010). The affective turn: Political economy, biomedia, and bodies. In M. Gregg & G. Seigworth (Eds.), *The affect theory reader* (pp. 1–25). Durham: Duke University Press.

Colum, K. (2011). *The power of silence: Silent communication in everyday life*. London: Karnac.

Cvetkovich, A. (2003). *An archive of feelings: Trauma, sexuality and lesbian public cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Derrida, J. (1992). Force of law: The mystical foundations of authority (M. Quaintance, trans.). In D. Cornell, M. Rosenfield, & D. Carlson (Eds.), *Deconstruction and the possibility of justice* (pp. 3–67). New York: Routledge.

Gilbert, J. (2010). Ambivalence only? Sex education in the age of abstinence. *Sex Education, 10*(3), 233–237.

Gilbert, J. (2014). *Sexuality in school: The limits of education*. Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press.

Hollway, W. (2009). Applying the "experience near" principle to research: Psychoanalytically informed methods. *Journal of Social Work Practice, 23*(4), 461–474.

Jackson, A., & Mazzei, L. (2009). *Voice in qualitative inquiry: Challenging conventional, interpretive, and critical conceptualisations in qualitative research*. New York: Routledge.

Lather, P. (2007). *Getting lost: Feminist efforts towards a double(d) science*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Lesko, N. (2010). Feeling abstinent, feeling comprehensive? Touching the effects of sexuality curricula. *Sex Education, 10*(3), 281–297.

MacLure, M., Holmes, R., MacRae, C., & Jones, L. (2010). Animating classroom ethnography: Overcoming video-fear. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 23*(5), 543–556.

Mazzei, L. (2007). *Inhabited silence in qualitative research: Putting poststructural theory to work*. New York: Peter Lang.

Miller, J. (2005). *Sounds of silence breaking: Women, autobiography and curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.

Muñoz, J. E. (2009). *Cruising utopia: The then and there of queer futurity*. New York: New York University Press.

Nairn, K., Munro, J., & Smith, A. B. (2005). A counter-narrative of a "failed" interview. *Qualitative Research, 5*(2), 221–244.

Quinlivan, K. (2006). *Building a partnership with students and their teacher to work towards affirming gender and sexual diversity with students and their teacher in a Year 12 Health classroom*. Report to the New Zealand Aids Foundation, Auckland, New Zealand.

Quinlivan, K. (2009). When "everything collides in a big boom." Attending to emotionality and discomfort as sites of learning in the high school health classroom. In K. Quinlivan, R. Boyask, & B. Kaur (Eds.), *Educational enactments in a globalised world: Intercultural conversations* (pp. 77–90). Rotterdam: Sense.

Quinlivan, K. (2011). Emotional provocations: Attending to the materiality of queer pedagogies in a high school classroom. *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society and Learning*. Retrieved December 14, 2011, from http://www.tandfonline.com.ezproxy.canterbury.ac.nz/doi/abs/10.1080/146818 11.2011.627728 this was printed online

Quinlivan, K. (2012). Learning the hard way: The emotional labour of destabilising knowledges in classroom research. In B. Kaur (Ed.), *Understanding teaching and learning: Classroom research revisited* (pp. 291–301). Rotterdam: Sense.

Rasmussen, M. (2006). Play school, melancholia and the politics of recognition. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 27*(4), 473–487.

Rasmussen, M. L., Rofes, E., & Talburt, S. (2004). Introduction. In M. L. Rasmussen, E. Rofes, & S. Talburt (Eds.), *Youth and sexualities: Pleasure, subversion and insubordination in and out of schools* (pp. 17–39). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rooke, A. (2010). Queer in the field: On emotions, temporality and performativity in ethnography. In K. Browne & C. J. Nash (Eds.), *Queer methods and methodologies: Intersecting queer theories and social science research* (pp. 25–39). London: Ashgate.

Roseneil, S. (2011). Criticality, not paranoia. A generative register for feminist social research. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 19*(12), 124–131.

Sandlos, K. (2010). On the aesthetic difficulties of research on sex education: Toward a methodology of affect. *Sex Education, 10*(3), 299–308.

Schultz, K. (2009). *Rethinking classroom participation. Listening to silent voices*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Sedgwick, E. (2003). *Touching feeling*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Seigworth, G., & Gregg, M. (2010). An inventory of shimmers. In M. Gregg & G. Seigworth (Eds.), *The affect theory reader* (pp. 1–25). Durham: Duke University Press.

Skattebol, J. (2010). Affect: A tool to support pedagogical change. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 31*(1), 75–91.

Talburt, S., & Rasmussen, M. (2010). "After queer" tendencies in queer research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 23*(1), 1–14.

Todd, S. (2012, February). *Standing at the crossroads of the ethical and political: Education, feminisms and narrativity*. Presentation at the University of Oulu, Finland.

Tomkins, S. (1995). What are affects? In E. K. Sedgewick & A. Frank (Eds.), *Shame and its sisters: A Silvan Tomkins reader* (pp. 33–74). Durham: Duke University Press.

Youdell, D. (2010). Queer outings: Uncomfortable stories about the subjects of post-structural school ethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 23*(1), 87–100.