Britina Cheng and Hunter Kane Kane Final Reflexive Statement

Initially, we had set specific goals for our film ethnography. Since we are both passionate about social injustice, we wanted to shed light on the racial injustices within the social structure of Greek life. Our main goal of this film was to provide an objective portrayal of people’s experiences in Greek life for an audience to interpret the video content for themselves. We also wanted the participants and the film to speak for itself without the director’s manipulative hand in structuring. As the filmmakers, we wanted to stay as out of the film as possible in order to not give a “Voice of God narration (Acciaioli 2004: 129)” that explains the film, pushing forward our own personal agendas, instead of allowing the film to be as it is. We prefaced this in the outline in our wiki space for our preliminary research.

We feel like we were successful in this aspect of our ethnography, as we removed ourselves visually and audibly from the film. In times when our participants did not rephrase our question fully enough to be clear what they were responding to, we provided visual texts of our question. We thought even the sound of our voice might impact the audience’s perception of the film, as we discussed after we watched Housing Problems from 1935. The English accent of the narrator of the film instilled an air of confidence and knowledge, suggesting he may know best. However, we did not want to suggest this kind of authority. Ultimately, we still feel like we provoked questions, thoughts, and self-reflections concerning people of color (PoC) in Greek life after we screened the ethnography.

Our film relied heavily on testimony from PoCs in SUNY Genesee Greek Organizations. We initially sent out emails to Greek organizations that might be interested in participating in our film. We tried to find a variety of Greek organizations with a relatively diverse group of members, racially and ethnically, but we received minimal responses from various organizations. With that roadblock, we decided to consult our friends on a personal basis, instead of contacting organizations as a whole and found that approach to be more effective. Of our selected informants, we garnered two black men, one Latina, and one Chinese-American man, two of whom were members from the same organization. We were wary to use the testimonies from both informants because we thought this would be limiting the diversity of our informants. We were especially concerned because we had a strict fourteen minute time limit which already narrows the depth in which the film could delve into. However, the two participants from the same organization come from different backgrounds, sharing insightful and personal information to the ethnography. Their interest in participating was clear, showing us that this was something they wanted to speak about. From other interviews we conducted that we did not include, it seemed as if theirs were the most astute and honest.

Our film opens with a public testimony from Geneseo’s Walk Out featuring Daniel Alohan, who shared that he was from a Greek fraternity. He recalls a story of the racial tension he experienced at a Greek-sanctioned off campus party. Daniel Alohan’s testimony contributed a particularly special part of our film because, returning to our prefacing outline for our ethnography, we were highly conscious of pushing our personal agendas. However, Alohan’s testimony had no influence by our film. Even with our other participants, we had each of them sign consent forms prior to filming, debriefed them on our project and our course. Alohan, on the other hand, shared an honest and personal experience, only consenting to our usage of his footage after the fact.

In his testimony, he describes how his white female friend could have used her ‘white privilege’ to respond to his assailant, who used the n-word to him. Her inability to do so subsequently hurt him and made him consider how people can improve the community by speaking up. Mills (2007) defines this sort of “bystander effect” as “white ignorance”, a product of the hegemonic epistemology of white, cis-gender, males and excludes the thoughts and experiences of PoC. Interestingly, Mills considers those to have white ignorance to not just be white and male. He states that women and PoC can also experience white ignorance because they have been indoctrinated into that epistemology. He writes, “…it will often be shared by nonwhites to a greater or lesser extent because of the power relations and patterns of ideological hegemony involved (Mills 2007:22).” What our informant insists is for white people to speak up and use their “white privilege” in the face of prejudicial tension, which seems to be a common theme with all our informants. However, we wonder how much the white hegemony has also affected our participants, as we later reflected on their responses. One of our participants stated that he didn’t think people of color’s voices are really heard in his organization, but “that’s ok”. We wonder if a level of complacency has been necessary in a white-populated university in order to survive. good discussion, rubric below.

Works cited

Acciaioli, Greg


Mills, Charles W.


ANTH 229 Final Reflexive statement rubric (from syllabus):

Evaluates your video in relation to your written wiki space and the course readings, with explicit references to both.

Strong  good  adequate  weak  unacceptable

Explicitly reference the course readings (and other resources if you wish)

Strong  good  adequate  weak  unacceptable