Critical Consent Curriculum
Towards Ethical Self-Empowerment in Schools

BONI WOZOLEK
Penn State University, Abington College

I WANT TO PROPOSE THAT OBTAINING CONSENT should not only be reserved for things like sex, research, or healthcare. It is enmeshed in and across such ideas and their related power structures; constantly moved by and moving sociopolitical and cultural economies. Although sexual violence[1] is, for example, one possible expression of non-consenting relationships and intra-actions (Barad, 2007), consent should ext across relations and relationships. When consent is compartmentalized, it renders one's ability to choose as something that can be ignored for what is perceived as progress, overlooked for another's sense of desire, or discounted for what is often discussed as the "greater good." Perhaps people hold onto consent as an idea that can be sorted and labeled (e.g., sexual consent, legal consent, consent for medical treatment) because the alternative is inherently messy. Even in research communities, for example, debates that focus on the age a young person can fully participate in informed consent has garnered necessary and longstanding dialogues across literatures (e.g., Miller & Burton, 2007; Taylor et al., 2018).

Although there are many reasons to engage with these complexities, this paper explores them because, on one hand, as a teacher educator, I have a deep desire to shift the norms around consent conversations (or, frequently, the lack thereof) in teacher preparation programs and in schools. On the other, as a parent watching a budding teenager and a curious first grader negotiate school, a commitment to critically considering consent seems more pressing than ever. To this end, I find myself concerned that my babies will not be raised in a more kind, conscious, and socially just world than what I experienced as a queer woman of color. I do not want them or any other child to endure the many forms of violence I experienced as a young person, where non-consensual acts were perpetrated in all-too-common ways on my body, emotions, and ways of being, knowing, and doing.

Speaking from the intersections of curriculum theory and sound studies, the purpose of this paper is to think critically about the sociohistorical, political, and cultural assemblages that form and inform what I am calling a "critical consent curriculum." This is at once a call for curriculum theorizing to become central to all teacher education programs in terms of how consent is discussed in schools and across systems of schooling, while thinking about the many ways that consent (and, relatedly, refusal) are enmeshed with one's relations and relationships (Gilbert, 2018; Gilbert et al., 2011; Glissant, 1990; Hunter & Cowan, 2007). Imbricating teacher education programs with curriculum theorizing that is enmeshed with a critical consent curriculum—or curricula, as I recognize the importance of polyvocality in theory and practice— is significant for at least the following reasons. First, by the time I have finished writing this paper, approximately 4,240 people

across the United States will have been sexually assaulted.[2] While indelible and upsetting, this number is not shocking to those who attend to the sociocultural and political contexts that normalize sexual violence. This is important because sexual violence does not happen in isolation. As I have discussed elsewhere (e.g., Wozolek, 2021), these events become a kind of curriculum that are affectively entangled across contexts, moved by, and moving, cultural values. This is because, as other scholars have argued, violence is in consistent circulation between schools and communities (e.g., Jackson, 1968; Love, 2019; Nespor, 1997; Pinar, 2012; Watts & Erevelles, 2004; Willis, 1978; Woodson, 1933). Perhaps it is no surprise then that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) conservatively reports that over 1,000 cases of rape or attempted rape and 7,000 cases of sexual assault other than rape happen annually in K-12 public schools (GAO, 2021).

Second, while the focus above is sexual assault and rape as they are enmeshed across contexts, it is important to define consent broadly, as this paper will do through the narratives presented below. When consent dialogues are narrowly focused, it becomes easier to write consent out of the curriculum because topics like assault and sexualities are often considered to be developmentally inappropriate topics for young people to learn about in schools (Wurtele & Kenny, 2011). What is often missing in these dialogues is how consent can be central to all intra-actions, from how materials are chosen in schools to how educators expect young people to address each other. What is argued here is how broadening one's understandings of consent in classrooms can allow a critical consent curriculum to happen early and consistently. What I am calling for here is an understanding of the intra-connected ways that one can consent, refuse, resist, and, relatedly, be dehumanized through the inability to choose. What is central to my argument is the necessity for dedicated time in schools and teacher education programs to think about how a critical consent curriculum might be crucial to interrupting violence that occurs between schools and communities.

Third, colleges and universities confer a little more than 85,000 education degrees across the United States annually (Schaeffer, 2022). Although this statistic shows dwindling numbers compared to past decades (Schaeffer, 2022), my concern is the more than 85,000 teachers who are graduating with little to no background in curriculum theory or critical theories focused on consent (Pugach et al., 2020). The tools made available at the intersections of curriculum theorizing and critical theories of consent are, therefore, often missing from the cultural toolkit (Swidler, 1986) given to teacher candidates and used by K-12 teachers. By cultural toolkit, I am referring to the beliefs, ideologies, and practices people—in this case educators—use to shape their interactions and behaviors. This absence is often reified when teacher educators—whose teacher training initially came from universities where dialogues on curriculum theory and consent might have been similarly absent—begin their work in higher education without these tools. This means that an understanding about how consent can be expressed across the forms of curriculum—formal, enacted, hidden, and null—is often absent from how teachers make sense of the sociopolitical and cultural contexts of schools and communities and, over time, justify how and what[3] they teach.

Finally, questions of consent are largely missing from national curricular conversations. For example, the National Health Education Standards that are promoted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and written in collaboration with the American Public Health Association, the American School Health Association, and the American Association for Health Education, promise to "reinforce the positive growth of health education and to challenge schools and communities to continue efforts toward excellence in health education" (Centers for Disease Control, 2022, n.p.). Despite a rather comprehensive document that includes eight standards and several secondary-standards for K-12 youth, "consent" was not mentioned once at the time this

paper was written. Even within the National Sexuality Education Standards, which provide "age-appropriate standards [that] … address the inconsistent implementation of sexuality education nationwide and the limited time allocated to teaching the topic" (FoSE, 2011, p. 6), consent is described only as a 12th grade standard and is not explicitly addressed in the standards that act as building blocks prior to this grade. Similarly, the curriculum described by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), which purports to "promote civic competence—the knowledge, intellectual processes, and demographic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life" (NCSS, 2023, para. 4), currently has no standards that explicitly address consent as a part of developing "civic competence." This is not to say that these or other related curricula are not filled with significant information; they certainly are. This is to note the absence of this critical conversation across PreK-12 curricula and schooling in the United States and to argue that including consent is vital to interrupting future violent events that stem from non-consensual ways of being, knowing, and doing.

In sum, the United States lacks normalized conversations about consent in schools and communities. Without this frequent dialogue, it is difficult for people to imagine how consent might move beyond talk and into action. Further, consent is rarely considered a tool that people can use to disrupt sociopolitical and cultural violence when a person or a community's ability to consent is removed or disregarded as significant. Like all forms of oppression, the inability to consent is disproportionately harmful for minoritized populations. For example, I'm writing this at a time when people are still not permitted in several states to have their gender identities reflected in legal documents without gender affirming surgery (Movement Advancement Project, 2024). This is a moment in U.S. history when conversion therapy, which has been known to include deliberate emotional violence (Galop, 2022; Haldeman, 1994), is still legal in many states.

Additionally, although deemphasized by rhetoric around events in South Africa, corrective rape remains an issue in the United States that disproportionately impacts queer youth (Doan-Minh, 2019), often through conversion therapy. I am writing this at a time when Indigenous, Black, asylum-seeking, and undocumented women are far more likely to endure sexual assault and rape during their lifetime than their white peers who are documented citizens (Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2022; Samra et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Justice, 2022).

This is a time when Roe v Wade—a landmark 1973 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court that guaranteed a person, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, bodily autonomy to choose abortion—was struck down by the 2022 Supreme Court case, Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization. This means that people who become pregnant, regardless of the intersections of race, genders, sexual orientations, and other facets of one's identity, may be forced to carry a pregnancy to term. This edict was given with complete disregard to how the person became pregnant, their health conditions, financial status, religious beliefs, or overall desire to remain pregnant. This is a time when book bans are on the rise, meaning that media specialists in schools and teachers cannot consent to make these materials available in their libraries or classrooms due to pressure from groups that have little to no training in library science or education. The removal of these books from libraries means that parents cannot help their children make an informed decision about what books their children can check out and read. In sum, the battle is over more than just books and their related material; it is about who has the right to consent to an engagement, or lack thereof, with certain ideas.

Finally, this is a time when the mayor of New York City has recently announced a plan that mirrors the Ugly Laws of the late-1800s to mid-1900s, in that law enforcement will have the power to forcibly hospitalize people struggling with mental illness (Rascoe & Lewis, 2022).[4] The removal

of various forms of autonomy—from the ability to consent to how one's gender identity is legally recognized, to the ability to read certain books, to the capacity to deny or consent to medical treatment—continues to impact people and communities across the United States.

The result of these multiple and ongoing forms of violence creates barriers to various forms of autonomy without fear of coercion or aggression while allowing many with privilege and power to continue their lives relatively unaffected. One only needs to consider cases where politicians and professional athletes were involved in sexual violence and, despite public scrutiny under the #MeToo movement, have been minimally impacted by their actions (Springora, 2021). Returning to the example of Dobbs v Jackson, although all people with uteruses who need to terminate a pregnancy are impacted by this decision, those who lack the privilege to travel to states where they can safely and legally obtain medical assistance are disproportionately impacted compared to their peers who have additional forms of financial and cultural capital.

It is important to note that there are many methodological inroads to conceptualizing a critical consent curriculum. Before turning toward participant voices, perspectives, and stories, I will now outline the methodological framework used across the studies from which these narratives emerged. This is important because the methodological and theoretical frameworks from these studies are enmeshed with questions of agency, transparency, attunement, and voice; some of the very concerns raised when thinking about the current sociopolitical moment and consent in general. That is: How do we listen to, sit with, and be in conversation with consent as it is situated in and across sociopolitical and cultural contexts? How do we normalize affective attunements that create and maintain consensual relations across affective spaces and bodies?

Attunement, Method, and Consent

The stories re-counted and re-membered (Dillard, 2012) in this paper come from several contexts that predominately used sonic ethnography as a methodological framework. Sonic ethnography is understood to emerge at the intersection of sensuous ethnographic methodologies (e.g., Behar, 1996; Rosaldo, 1993; Stoller, 1997) and sound studies (e.g., Erlman, 2004; Steingo & Sykes, 2019; Sterne, 2012; Stoever, 2016). While there are several scholars and artists who present their understandings of sonic ethnography, this particular methodological expression is aligned with the work of Walter Gershon, who in many ways brought this possibility to education at large (e.g., Gershon, 2017) and sonic possibilities to curriculum studies in specific (e.g., Gershon, 2011). As one might imagine, sonic ethnography attends to the messy, intra- related sound politics that often dictate who, when, where, and which bodies are heard (Gilbert & Pearson, 2002; Waitt et al., 2014). Methodologically and ethically speaking, sonic ethnographic work also calls for an engagement in and with deep listening practices (Oliveros, 2005) as a reflexive practice of data collection and analysis. Aligned with the field of sound studies more broadly and sensuous ethnographic methodologies, sonic ethnographers listen deeply to both participant narratives and the ideas that emerge from their stories by thinking about how participants can be (mis)heard, how their narratives reverberate, and how they are re-active (Gershon, 2011; Sterne, 2012; Stoller 1997). For example, consider the art of playing music, or sound engineering for different forms of media. In the former example, musicians are generally attuned to their partners, and, in the latter, sound engineers must be attuned to and reflective about the images with which they work in post-production. Deep listening and sonic engagements are always already a question of reflexive and affective attunements (Gershon, 2020; Lipari, 2015; Steingo, 2019). Although there are several

inroads to reflexive research ethics, sonic ethnography is used here to listen deeply to the many ways that consent reverberates and is dampened across educational contexts.

As this paper traces the contours created as consent theory moves across educational contexts, it is important to note that I have taken up my work on pathology as method of analysis (Wozolek, 2021) alongside the sonic ethnographic data presented below. Pathology as a method of analysis is significant because it provides one way to trace previous pathways after the study has been completed. This allows the researcher to better understand how bodies moved and the impact of intra-actions as people and things were in flux through events. To be clear, much of this methodological approach is central to processes of qualitative research and sonic ethnographic data. However, pathology as method of analysis specifically conceptualizes how the margins are created and, when necessary, foregrounds questions of resistance, refusal, and interruption. As is the case with medical uses of the term, pathology is meant as the process for conceptualizing trajectories as they are in rhizomatic relation, rather than how it is often used in common discourse as a word that has a negative connotation with regard to finding an illness or a problem. Used here, pathology of method of analysis is one way to explicitly set aside one aspect of the polyvocal (Bakhtin, 1981; Gershon, 2022) contexts and narratives from these studies and think about how each sample speaks to others—a cacophony into themselves across times, spaces, and places—before folding them back into their original data sets. Finally, these samples are a reminder that all forms of subjugation and their multiple ways of being, knowing, and doing do not exist in isolation (Hartman, 1997; Puar, 2017).

Thinking about the entwined nature of events and bodies, I have chosen these four samples for several reasons. First, three of the narratives below were given by students who identify as marginalized across questions of gender identity, race, or intersections therein. These first three narratives came from students whose ways of being, knowing, and doing defined the margins of their schools and systems of schooling in general. The final narrative emerged during a professional development session where the lives and well-being of minoritized students were discussed at length. This final sample explicates how some educators' malignant actions reinforce the margins. As I have argued elsewhere (Wozolek, 2021), related to pathology as method of analysis, the margins are re-cast here as positive, despite the oppressions these students endured as they were pushed out (Morris, 2016) of schooling.

The purpose is to hear these narratives as they exist at the intersections of the margins and to engage in the practice of deep listening to these stories. Oliveros (2005) discusses deep listening as an "active engagement with attention" (p. xxi). Oliveros continues to explain that deep listening is a voluntary act where one encounters "complexity and boundaries, or edges beyond ordinary or habitual understandings" (p. xxiii). Deep listening to the margins, and the bodies that create and reinforce them, is, therefore, an attention to the immense vastness of sounds and ideas while engaging with the subtle notes that contribute to the complex nature of any-thing that is heard. It is an act of critical care to be attuned to and with the many pathways through which sociopolitical norms continuously invade spaces, places, and bodies in and across the margins. It is, for example, hearing the roundness of Art Tatum's "Yesterdays" while feeling the notes that undergird each sensation of listening.

The inclusion of these samples allows the listener to hear these stories as reverberations of oppressions, rather than echoes. The delineation between an echo and a reverberation is important for several reasons. An echo can be understood as a reflection of sound waves. Echoes tend to have well-defined sonic edges and occur after the original sound has stopped. They are also thought of as singular—one sound reflected off surfaces until the context dampens them completely.

Reverberations, however, can be perceived as continuous sound. Reverberations are the "messy, mobile [sounds] … that can be enhanced, dampened, sneaked through the cracks of oppression, or arrived in a torrent … and carry sets of norms, values, possibilities, and problems" (Gershon, 2013, p. 1164). The reverberations of violence, what I have called echo chambers of oppression (Wozolek, 2023), are presented here for listeners to hear cacophonies of silence; the consensual absences in schools that disproportionately impact students whose be-ing exists in the margins.

Much like scholars' attention to the inherent movement in silence (e.g., Heller, 2015; Moten, 2003; Wozolek, 2023), dialogues about the agency of things like racism (e.g., Rosiek, 2018), or affect theorists' work on the movement of everyday affects (e.g., Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Stewart, 2007), here I am examining how an absence of consent theory and its related dialogues shift, shape, and reinforce sociopolitical understandings. Finally, one could argue that pulling samples across contexts falsely presents a narrative about the larger symphony that is schooling and the communities with which schools are knotted (Nespor, 1997). However, as Agar (1996) reminds us, even in the case of one student, some information will inevitably be left out of the final scholarly work. Though, in a conversation about consent, it is worth pausing to consider if participants can fully consent to the researcher's body/bodies of scholarship. Here I am attending to which stories are included and which are absent from scholarly presentations, papers, and books. Although researchers often engage in member checks of participant narratives, I wonder: Can participants ever fully consent to the final drafts of one's scholarship, discussions at conferences about participant's experiences, or other parts that are ultimately central to the body of a scholar's work? I wrestled with this notion extensively while writing this paper.

Working in service toward and with ethical lines of care and consent, I worked to ensure that although these samples are borrowed from the lives to which they ultimately belong, it is also crucial to note that these samples are massively overdetermined (Agar, 1996). By this I mean that the themes related to these samples were recurrent in their contexts and, one can easily argue, are iterations that occur across sociocultural contexts. In sum, these are samples that exist as reverberations within echo chambers of oppression. They stand with other stories that ultimately encourage and maintain the absence of a critical consent curriculum. With these layered narratives and their broader contexts in mind, this paper will now turn to participant "samples" before tracing the contours of curriculum theory and a critical consent curriculum.

Samples

Sample 1: The Call

Sam[5] was a 21-year-old White trans person who, at the time, was a participant in a longitudinal study on school violence that I was conducting in the Midwest.[6] They called me at 8:21am and revealed that they had been raped at a party the night before. They noted that they did not seek medical attention or file a police report because, after multiple negative experiences with both doctors and the police, they feared that they would not receive the necessary services while potentially enduring further emotional trauma from professionals. Sam explicated that because the assault began while they were sleeping and because they did not say, "No," once they woke up, that it would not be considered rape. It is important to note that Sam survived multiple incidents of sexual assault as a minor and that, in this conversation, they compared their reactions across contexts. They said, "I just let him finish. It's not rape if you know what's going on and you just

lay there quietly. I waited for him to be done and tried not to cry too much."

When I talked to him about it after, he said the same thing—that "he thought I was okay with it because I didn't say no, because I didn't push him away. He's right, I didn't say no. I didn't push him. I didn't say no. My body did not say no, even though I was thinking it the whole time."

Sample 2: Friends Don't Bite

Leticia was 12 years old at the time this sample was collected. She identified as biracial, attended a city school on the East coast and, although she was petite compared to her peers, she spoke with a round, booming voice that carried across a classroom. Although we shared many conversations during our time together, in this sample I will foreground a moment when she recounted the complexity of relationships in school, including young students who are often dismissed for experiencing far more "simple" relationships than older children in middle or high school. Leticia explained that this is often compounded by teacher-imposed rules and classroom cultures. She gave an example from her early childhood experiences when a teacher encouraged students to call each other "friend," regardless of the relationship between children. Leticia explained that she remembered that the teacher said they [the class] needed to do this to "build the school family." This language was notably difficult for Leticia, who struggled with both notions of family and friendship. These feelings culminated when a classmate bit Leticia several times over the course of two weeks. Leticia remarked,

> Jake was not my friend. Friends don't bite. But he bit me. A lot! When I told Ms. G, she said that he was still a friend. That we're all friends. We just need to learn to be nice to our friends. I hope he eventually learned to be nice because I didn't want him to be my friend. I didn't want to be forced to be friends with people. That's the kind of thing teachers do, they force you to pretend. We pretend to like learning the way they want us to learn. We pretend to have a "family" of classmates. That [forced] pretending? That part never ends.

Sample 3: Real Books Defined

Byron was an eighth grade student who identified as Black and, at the time, was questioning his sexual orientation. Byron was average height and weight but appeared rather broad as he moved through the doorway of the classroom after school. He was upset because his English Language Arts teacher told the class that they needed to pick a fiction book for the upcoming unit. Before the class was dismissed, the teacher, who was in the throes of her first-year as an educator, neglected to tell students that she had constructed a list of books that she deemed appropriate for this unit. That weekend, Byron's mother took her son to the local library to explore his options. On Monday, Bryon came to school with a graphic novel that he had chosen with his mother. The teacher explained that graphic novels were not accepted materials and that he would need to read a "real book" that was "not a comic book." Byron looked defeated when he came to speak with me. He expressed frustration and said,

> Teachers … they just … they just fake democracy all the damn time. Not like we have a choice. Why not just tell us what to do and not pretend like we matter? Why pretend that

> they wanna make us feel like we matter? Clearly, I don't matter to her … I don't matter here.

Sample 4: Rejecting Identities

One afternoon, I was running a professional development session for K-12 educators in a small, rural school district in the Midwest. The session focused on affirming students' identities, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race, and the like. Ms. Bucks, a veteran teacher who identified as a White woman, sat with a notably resistant posture, periodically giving heavy sighs, which made her position on the topic painfully clear within the first 10 minutes of the two-hour mandatory session. Finally, she raised her hand and asked,

> So what? I'm just supposed to call people whatever they want to be called? Is that what you want? You want me to call a boy "Susan" or some shit like that? We just ignore their legal name in the roster? And then what do you want me to call them when I have a parent-teacher conference and their parents don't know about it? I can't do that. I refuse to do that, deceive parents that way.

There was silence as her colleagues waited for my response. While I gave tips on how one might talk about someone without directly using a name (e.g., "your child"), she grew increasingly restless. After a moment, she said, "Look. I teach science. This stuff isn't supposed to be the focus of my teaching anyway." Finally, a colleague spoke up and said,

> Look. My name is Richard, but everyone calls me "Bob." I was even able to request that it says "Bob" on the school webpage and on my email. I hate the name "Richard," and I really don't want people to call me "Dick." I've never heard you have a problem with calling me "Bob." We call kids by their nicknames all the time. Why are we not giving blanket respect to people who change their name, regardless of the reason?

Curricular Cacophonies

Curriculum theorizing has a history of foregrounding what William Pinar (2005) once described as complicated conversations. These conversations are always already polyvocal and are endemic to the field and the curricular expressions that are central to this kind of scholarship (Gershon & Helfenbein, 2023; Ohito & Coles, 2020). Much like the overlapping sounds in a busy school cafeteria, the forms of curriculum—formal, enacted, hidden, and null—move with, cut against, and blend together. Despite the enmeshed nature of curricula, teacher education programs tend to focus solely on the formal curriculum, or the "official" knowledge that teachers intend to give students, which are imbricated with local and less local sociopolitical norms and values (Apple, 1993; Jackson, 1968). Often absent from teacher education programs is the null curriculum—or what is (un)intentionally not taught (Eisner, 1985)—the enacted curriculum—or what is learned through the intra-actions of human and nonhuman bodies (Page, 1991)—and the hidden curriculum—or the lessons learned across layers of scale in a school that are often hidden to those participating in the culture (Anyon, 2000; Giroux & Penna, 1983). What is proposed here

is a critical consent curriculum that attends to all forms of curriculum, how they move between schools and communities, and how they shape (non)consensual relations and relationships.

In other words, the absence of an early and explicit formal curriculum focused on consent taught through organizations like the CDC and NCSS has impacted the implicit and explicit messages learned through the null, enacted, and hidden curricula. These absences can be heard through the samples above and felt as they spill across policies and political movements—from broad questions of bodily autonomy through Dobbs v Jackson to Leticia's narrative on how friendship is defined in school. It is, perhaps, no surprise that Sam's sample is located amid consistently high numbers of sexual assault that occur both in and out of school contexts. From these intra-connected contexts, one might ask: How is Byron's experience with what he deemed "fake democracy" and narrow definition of what counts as a "real" book mirrored in a milieu of book bans? Or, one might ask: How is Ms. Buck's dialogue on how educators can affirm students' gender identities felt in bathroom bills and policies that exclude transgender athletes?

Additionally, how are these samples woven through local and less local hidden curricula? One might argue that the formal curriculum is always nonconsensual at their core, both in how it is written and how it is carried out in schools. This is because students' voices, understandings, and interests are often pushed out of curricular goals and objectives in lieu of continuing a curriculum and related pedagogies that are driven by an emphasis on testing (Au, 2010; Taubman, 2010). Furthermore, consent remains absent from the teaching profession's expectations for educators. For example, the standards set by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) that are recognized across states, various organizations, and by the U.S. Department of Education establish educators as experts when they are able to commit to teaching all students, have a depth of subject matter knowledge and how to pedagogically guide students through subject material, are able to effectively monitor learning, are able to learn from their own practice, and are connected to learning communities. These standards prioritize pedagogy and content knowledge over student voice. Although critical conversations across fields of education have longstanding histories that call for student agency and perspective to be centered in schools (Love, 2019), educators often do not find the time or the support to put this into practice during daily classroom instruction. From this perspective, the narratives above are aligned with a formal curriculum that discourages consent as a part of everyday pedagogical practices and policies.

When curricula are written and conceived as information to be delivered to students, then the stated, if not implied, importance of knowledge and its contours reside not with children who receive the knowledge but at the top with those who design it. Further, questions of consent are negligible, if at all present, in such curricular constructions, all but ensuring that students' consent to any aspect of their everyday classroom lives is not only unnecessary but so unimportant as to not be considered in the first place. The notion that young people can only give their permission to the things their parents approve has its shortcoming in important everyday life decisions in safety and knowledge. Children must also be able to give, or be asked for their consent, in important personal decisions in the flow of everyday life. This does not, however, mean that questions of a child's safety, care, and understanding should not also be beholden to guardians' questions about consent. This is because, for example, while young people should be able to make decisions about going into the bathroom with a person they have never met, their parents should also be able to tell them that the small cut on their finger does not mean they have to come home from school. In short, critical consent curricula are always already complex.

Engaging with such complexities, a critical consent curriculum recognizes at least three overarching categories that pertain to questions of consent and everyday schooling. The first is

centered on local actors who believe that their work interrupts norms and values, but the method of interrupting such ideas and ideals are harmful. This is expressed in Leticia's narrative, when the teacher's attempt to build community by demanding students address each other as "friends" was ultimately harmful to students' ability to develop a strong understanding of healthy relationships. A second category are local actors who do not see a critical consent curriculum as a part of their work as educators. For example, it is not uncommon for teachers to dismiss curricula that foreground equity and access—like a critical consent curriculum—as "not their business" because of their discipline, as heard from the sample where Ms. Bucks explicated that taking the time to learn about how she might affirm students' gender identity was outside of the scope of teaching science. Finally, one might argue that there is a group of local actors who are intentionally harmful, as is the case for educators like Ms. Bucks, whose refusal to recognize trans and gender nonconforming students, even in light of evidence that affirming their gender identities can lower rates of depression, self-harm, and suicide (Russell et al., 2018), still resist and refuse any affirming care in the classroom.

Finally, I recognize that suggesting what some might feel to be an imposition of curricular understandings of consent is at best an irony and at worst an inversion of care. However, given the appalling lack of attention to questions of consent in schooling that tend to, at best, operate according to teachers' pedagogical and curricular needs, something indeed must be done to begin this much needed conversation around questions of dignity, care, and unnecessary harm. This does not mean that discussions of care or consent cannot be weaponized in ways that utilize the language and literacies of caring and consent to do harm. For example, it is not uncommon for teachers to say they hate standardized tests. Yet many spend all year insisting students take them. A critical consent curriculum engages reflexive practices of affective attunements. That is, developing understandings of students' needs and knowledges of care, including how that care might be enacted.

Conclusion: Consensual Attunements

A critical consent curriculum is a necessary next step in interrupting both harm due to lack of consent in everyday schooling and presents positive pathways for addressing often complex and triggering experiences in ways that promote change for the betterment of children. Therefore, working towards a critical theory of consent in curriculum should attend to the following attunements: questions of voice and power, questions of positionality and care, questions about attentions and intentions, and an emphasis on how care is expressed and for whom care is done.

It is my hope that this paper stands as an invitation for teachers, regardless of their time in the profession, and teacher education programs to learn, teach, and commit to critical consent curricula as they are enmeshed with curriculum theory. In the end, engaging in schooling that foregrounds critical consent is a call for affective attunement across layers of scale (Gershon, 2013; Trondalen & Skårderud, 2007). Practically, this means paying attention to people's feelings in a way that matters and giving them the dignity to take them seriously. It also means developing and normalizing a cultural toolkit for educators around ideas and ideals of critical consent and curriculum theory. This does not mean that dissensus is absent from such complicated conversations (Rancière, 2011). Rather, this is a call to engage in the messy nature of any kind of work that is critically constructive. In this case, it is a call to build a critical consent curriculum with an ethical commitment to questions of intuition, transparency, and care.

Notes

1. The content of this paper might be triggering for many people, especially those who are surviving and/or have survived sexual violence. Regardless of if you are in, out, or between moments of violence, I want to remind you that you are not alone and to urge you to consider seeking help through various agencies like RAINN's National Sexual Assault hotline (1.800.656.4673), which also has an online chat feature (https://hotline.rainn.org/online).
2. This was calculated as I logged the hours I worked on this paper, multiplied using RAINN's (2022) statistic that roughly every 68 seconds a person in the United States experiences sexual assault, with a child victim experiencing sexual assault every 9 minutes. The scope of this problem includes victims/survivors who are children (60,000/year), people who are incarcerated (80,600/year), military personnel (18,900/year), and the general public (433,648/year).
3. Although standardization has narrowed the ability for teachers to make curricular decisions through the formal curriculum, it is important to note the agency that teachers have in their classrooms in terms of the curriculum and how their perspectives on schools and systems of schooling impact these decisions.
4. To be clear, while I feel that all people should have access to healthcare, I remain concerned about police officers' lack of training at the intersections of policing and mental health, many states' lack of adequate investment in social workers, psychologists, and others whose professions focus on mental health, a lack of funding for state-run hospitals where people struggling with homelessness will likely be sent, the potential for a lack of oversight on who is being relocated, and other such concerns that have not yet been addressed in the documents related to this plan.
5. All proper nouns are pseudonyms.
6. Although Sam was participating in a study that focused on violence, they used the number I gave participants to call to speak about study-related ideas, and they paused at one point in the conversation to ask if these kinds of experiences were resonant to the study and give permission to publish this along with the other data they had offered during the study, I was concerned that they were not in the right state of mind to fully consent to this story being included in a publication. Therefore, I waited 5 years to think with/about this particular data point, and I spoke to Sam to ensure that consent was still being offered with informed and consistent enthusiasm to use this data.

References

Agar, M. H. (1996). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography* (2nd ed.). Academic Press.

Anyon, J. (2000). Social class and hidden curriculum of work. In S. J. Ball (Ed.), *Sociology of education* (Vol. 2., pp. 1250–1275). Routledge.

Apple, M. W. (1993). The politics of official knowledge: Does a national curriculum make sense? *Teachers College Record*, *95(2)*, 222–241. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819309500206

Au, W. (2010). *Unequal by design: High-stakes testing and the standardization of inequality.* Routledge.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. (C. Emerson & M. Holquist, Trans.). University of Texas Press.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke University Press.

Behar, R. (1996). *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Beacon Press.

Centers for Disease Control (2022). *Standards for Health Education.* Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm

Dillard, C. (2012). *Learning to (re)member the things we've learned to forget: Endarkened feminisms, spirituality, and the sacred nature of research and teaching.* Peter Lang.

Doan-Minh, S. (2019). Corrective rape: An extreme manifestation of discrimination and the state's complicity in sexual violence. *Hastings Journal on Gender and the Law*, *30*(1), 167–168. https://repository.uclawsf.edu/hwlj/vol30/iss1/8/

Eisner, E. (1985). *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs* (2nd ed.). Macmillan.

Erlmann, V. (Ed.). (2004). *Hearing cultures: Essays on sound, listening and modernity*. Routledge.

Future of Sex Education. (FoSE). (2011). *National sexuality education standards: Core content and skills, K-12*. https://answer.rutgers.edu/file/national-sexuality-education-standards.pdf

GALOP. (2022). *The use of sexual violence as an attempt to convert of punish LGBT+ people in the UK*. https://galop.org.uk/resource/the-use-of-sexual-violence-as-an-attempt-to-convert-or-punish-lgbt-people-in-the-uk/

Gershon, W. S. (2011). Embodied knowledge: Sounds as educational systems. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, *27*(2), 66–81. https://journal.jctonline.org/index.php/jct/article/view/348

Gershon, W. S. (2013). Vibrational affect: Sound theory and practice in qualitative research. *Cultural Studies<>Critical Methodologies*, *13*(4), 257–262. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708613488067

Gershon, W. S. (2017). *Sound curriculum: Sonic studies in educational theory, method, & practice*. Routledge.

Gershon, W. S. (2020). Reverberations and reverb: Sound possibilities for narrative, creativity, and critique. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *26*(10), 1163–1173. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800418807254

Gershon, W. S. (2022). Educational sound studies: Scales and modes, neoliberalism as eugenics, and possibilities for the sonic as postdigital tools for critique. *Postdigital Science and Education*, *4*(3), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-022-00351-y

Gershon, W. S., & Helfenbein, R. J. (2023). Curriculum matters: Educational tools for troubled times. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *55*(3), 251–269. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2023.2218466

Gilbert, J. (2018). Contesting consent in sex education. *Sex Education*, *18*(3), 268–279. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2017.1393407

Gilbert, J., Casemore, B., & Sandlos, K. (2011). On taking an interpretive risk in sex education. *Teachers College Record*.

Gilbert, J., & Pearson, E. (2002). *Discographies: Dance, music, culture and the politics of sound*. Routledge.

Giroux, H., & Penna, A. (1983). *The hidden curriculum and moral education.* McCutchan.

Glissant, E. (1990). *Poetics of relation.* University of Michigan Press.

Government Accountability Office (GAO). (2021). *K-12 education: Students' experiences with bullying, hate speech, hate crimes, and victimization in schools.* https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-104341.pdf

Gregg, M., & Seigworth, G. J. (Eds.). (2010). *The affect theory reader*. Duke University Press.

Haldeman, D. C. (1994). The practice and ethics of sexual orientation conversion therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *62*(2), 221–227. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-006X.62.2.221

Hartman, S. V. (1997). *Scenes of subjection: Terror, slavery, and self-making in nineteenth-century America*. Oxford University Press.

Heller, M. C. (2015). Between silence and pain: Loudness and the affective encounter. *Sound Studies, 1*(1), 40–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2015.1079071

Hunter, R., & Cowan, S. (Eds.). (2007). *Choice and consent: Feminist engagements with law and subjectivity.* Routledge.

Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. Teachers College Press.

Lipari, L. (2015). *Listening, thinking, being: Toward an ethics of attunement*. Penn State Press.

Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom.* Beacon Press.

Miller, T., & Boulton, M. (2007). Changing constructions of informed consent: Qualitative research and complex social worlds. *Social Science & Medicine*, *65*(11), 2199–2211. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.08.009

Morris, M. (2016). *Pushout: The criminalization of Black girls in schools*. The New Press.

Moten, F. (2003). *In the break: The aesthetics of the black radical tradition*. University of Minnesota Press.

Movement Advancement Project. (2024). *Identity document laws and policies*. https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/identity_document_laws

Murphy-Oikonen, J., Chambers, L., McQueen, K., Hiebert, A., & Miller, A. (2022). Sexual assault: Indigenous women's experiences of not being believed by the police. *Violence Against Women, 28*(5), 1237–1258. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012211013903

National Council for the Social Studies. (2023). *National curriculum standards for social studies*. https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/national-curriculum-standards-social-studies-introduction

Nespor, J. (1997). *Tangled up in school: Politics, space, bodies, and signs in the educational process*. Routledge.

Ohito, E. O., & Coles, J. A. (2020). Storytellin' by the light of the lantern: A polyvocal dialogue turnin' towards critical Black curriculum studies. *Curriculum Inquiry, 51*(1), 15–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2020.1862568

Oliveros, P. (2005). *Deep listening: A composer's sound practice*. IUniverse.

Page, R. (1991). *Lower-track classrooms: A curricular and cultural perspective.* Teachers College Press.

Pinar, W. F. (2005). Complicated conversation: Occasions for "intellectual breakthrough" in the internationalization of curriculum studies. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 1*(1), 2–26. https://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/doaj/18165338/2005/00000001/00000001/art00001

Pinar, W. F. (2012). *Queer theory in education*. Routledge.

Puar, J. K. (2017). *The right to maim*. Duke University Press.

Pugach, M. C., Blanton, L. P., Mickelson, A. M., & Boveda, M. (2020). Curriculum theory: The missing perspective in teacher education for inclusion. *Teacher Education and Special Education, 43*(1), 85–103. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406419883665

Rancière, J. (2011). *The thinking of dissensus: Politics and aesthetics*. Continuum.

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN). (2022). *Statistics*. https://www.rainn.org/statistics.

Rascoe, A., & Lewis C. (2022). A new policy in New York City makes it easier for homeless people to be forcibly hospitalized. *National Public Radio*. https://www.npr.org/2022/12/04/1140630177/a-new-policy-in-new-york-city-makes-it-easier-for-homeless-people-to-be-forcibly

Rosaldo, R. (1993). *Culture & truth: The remaking of social analysis.* Beacon Press.

Rosiek, J. L. (2018). Agential realism and educational ethnography. In D. Beach, C. Bagley, & S. Marques da Silva (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of ethnography of education* (pp. 403– 423). John Wiley & Sons.

Russell, S. T., Pollitt, A. M., Li, G., & Grossman, A. H. (2018). Chosen name use is linked to reduced depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and suicidal behavior among transgender youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *63*(4), 503–505. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.02.003

Samra, S., Taira, B. R., Pinheiro, E., Trotzky-Sirr, R., & Schneberk, T. (2019). Undocumented patients in the emergency department: Challenges and opportunities. *Western Journal of Emergency Medicine*, *20*(5), 791–800. https://doi.org/10.5811/westjem.2019.7.41489

Schaeffer, K. (2022). A dwindling number of new U.S. college graduates have a degree in education. *The Pew Research Center.* https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/09/27/a-dwindling-number-of-new-u-s-college-graduates-have-a-degree-in-education/#:~:text=In%202019%2D20%2C%20the%20most,total%20degrees%20issued%20that%20year

Springora, V. (2021). *Consent: A memoir.* HaperAudio.

Steingo, G., & Sykes, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Remapping sound studies.* Duke University Press.

Sterne, J. (Ed.). (2012). *The sound studies reader*. Routledge.

Stewart, K. (2007). *Ordinary affects.* Duke University Press.

Stoever, J. L. (2016). *The sonic color line: Race and the cultural politics of listening*. NYU Press.

Stoller, P. (1997). *Sensuous scholarship*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Swidler, A. (1986). Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review*, *51*(1), 273–86. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095521?origin=JSTOR-pdf

Taubman, P. M. (2010). *Teaching by numbers: Deconstructing the discourse of standards and accountability in education*. Routledge.

Taylor, M. J., Dove, E. S., Laurie, G., & Townend, D. (2018). When can the child speak for herself? The limits of parental consent in data protection law for health research. *Medical law review*, *26*(3), 369–391. https://doi.org/10.1093/medlaw/fwx052

Trondalen, G., & Skårderud, F. (2007). Playing with affects. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, *16*(2), 100–111. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/08098130709478180

U.S. Department of Justice. (2022). Black women and sexual assault. https://www.justice.gov/ovw/sexual-assault

Waitt, G., Ryan, E., & Farbotko, C. (2014). A visceral politics of sound. *Antipode*, *46*(1), 283–300. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12032

Watts, I. E., & Erevelles, N. (2004). These deadly times: Reconceptualizing school violence by using critical race theory and disability studies. *American Educational Research Journal*, *41*(2), 271–299. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312041002271

Willis, P. (1978). *Learning to labour: How working-class kids get working class jobs*. Routledge.

Woodson, C. G. (1933). *Miseducation of the negro.* Tribeca Books.

Wozolek, B. (2021). *Assemblages of violence: Everyday trajectories of oppression.* Routledge.

Wozolek, B. (2023). *Educational necropolitics: A sonic ethnography of everyday racisms in U.S. schools.* Routledge.

Wurtele, S. K., & Kenny, M. C. (2011). Normative sexuality development in childhood: Implications for developmental guidance and prevention of childhood sexual abuse. *Counseling and Human Development*, *43*(9), 1–24. https://www.proquest.com/openview/d0c8e6e82051a1bce9a28a7988211be6/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=48224