Listening to the Sounds of Healing

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DURING THE SUMMER OF 2022, a multigenerational group of researchers consisting of five middle and high school students and five adults gathered to spend two weeks writing together. We posed and explored questions about communities, generational differences, historical ghosts, immigration experiences, racialized healthcare bias, and more. Our community writing group was born out of a multi-year research-practice partnership that sought to identify and sustain community languages and literacy practices. As an intergenerational collection of educators, educational researchers, and community members, we did not frame our collaborative work looking for trauma—the wound that doesn't heal, the voice that emerges from it (Caruth, 1996). Yet, as we sat together in community, what we shared became heard through traumatic resonances (Gershon, 2020), echoes and intensities (Massumi, 2002) that reverberated as youth recalled assemblages of violence (Wozolek, 2021) that were entangled with the sonic color line within their schools and communities, shaping how their language is listened to and heard (Alvarez, 2020; Rosa & Flores, 2017; Stoever, 2016). As often happens, the refrains scored in these dialogues reverberated from the theoretical to the material in soundscapes, impacting bodies in real and historical time (Coffee et al., 2017; Dodds & Cook, 2012; McKittrick, 2021; Robinson, 2020; Wargo, 2017). Sounds were a significant connection between how language was heard and the material was felt, both within our created community and in spaces youth described as *false communities*: spaces, institutions, and groups that coerce allegiance through specious promises of care (Etzioni, 1994; Pirkey, 2015). Youth reflected on their internalization of these traumas and "the messy dynamics of attachment" (Berlant, 2011, p. 15) that shaped their understandings of community and schooling. We heard youth wrestle with the internalized, and often racialized, trauma from false community spaces against layers of sound that co-constructed our multigenerational place—a place where listening turned from naming wounds to healing wounds (Lamont-Hill, 2009; Wozolek, 2021, 2023).

An assemblage of audible and inaudible "objects, utterances, institutions, bodies, and fragments" (MacLure, 2013, p. 165) populates the recordings of our time together as a writing group, capturing the sounds of care that blossom in the background (Ahmed, 2021): an offer of tea from the kettle brought from home, an inquiry about the health of someone struck with Covid, excitement about hairstyles for a sister's upcoming wedding. As we listened to and "attuned

towards intra-activity" between the aural backdrop and the content of the interviews themselves, both sound planes revealed the social relations and affective knowledge that constructed our community of care (Wargo, 2017, p. 394). Through listening across spaces that actively wound (J. E. K. Parker, 2019) and spaces that actively heal, youth co-constructed, facilitated, and *earwitnessed* (Schafer, 1977/1994) wounded healing through a linguistic justice practice: listening to others in our entangled, co-constructed community to heal internalized oppression from external false communities.

In this paper, we explore how listening has been understood and described in English education research and the limitations that caused us to reconsider our own ways of thinking about youth listening. We then draw from educational scholarship in sound studies to extend research on listening literacies to attend to youth practices that foster agency through meaningful relationships. From there, we describe our experiences as co-researchers alongside youth to envision deep listening (Oliveros, 2005) as a place-making literacy practice that supports healing in the spaces where we work as literacy and English education scholars and teachers.

Listening in English Curriculum

Listening within English education has been theorized in a myriad of ways. Early literacy development conceptualizes listening and oral literacy as a prerequisite to language learning, reading, and writing (Nash et al., 2022; Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016) and a developmental process deeply intertwined with social and cultural experiences (Moje & Lewis, 2020). For middle and high school curricularizing, listening is a prerequisite for teaching and learning (e.g., Gershon, 2013b, 2019; Rohde, 2015; Wozolek, 2023), yet within the compartmentalized, departmentalized, and siloed secondary spaces and ways of knowing, listening within English education is relegated to relatively few standards (Alford, 2020) and under-researched compared to other strands of literacy such as reading, viewing, speaking, and writing (Fraver, 2021).

The present day focus on casual and semantic listening (Chion, 2012) within literacy and English education comes from its initial introduction into the field and subsequent work. Early scholarship in English education in the 1960s and 1970s positioned listening as either a means or an outcome of youth compliance, a predetermined requirement for classroom learning (Burns, 1975; Devine, 1978; Taylor, 1964). Throughout the late 20th century, listening was considered a discrete set of learnable, cognitive skills (Weaver, 1972; White & Evans, 2005), while in the 21st century, listening was understood as a prerequisite for maintaining a democratic society (W. Parker, 2010). Emerging theories foreground the critical (Baker-Bell, 2020; Devereaux, 2014), agentive (Gardner, 2013), ideological (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Seltzer & de los Ríos, 2018), and material turns in listening (Toohey, 2019; Toohey et al., 2020). While this move towards critical conceptions opens fractures for postfoundational inquiry of the sonic in relation to assemblages of violence within schools and schooling (Wozolek, 2021), critical framings cannot fully affectively attune to the sounding of sites of violence (and refusals of violence) that occur within a sonic (Ahmed, 2021).

In classrooms, listening is often associated with youth compliance, to improve classroom management, and to control student attentiveness to teacher instruction or communicate expected behaviors attuned to school-sanctioned sounds (bells, chimes, announcements, intercom instructions) (Dixon, 2011; Gershon, 2011; Jacknick, 2021; Jackson, 1968; Mehan, 1979; J. E. K. Parker, 2019; Stoever, 2016). In this framework, teachers are tasked with "providing a purpose for

listening" because youth "should not be asked to listen *to* an oral presentation but should be directed what to listen *for*" (Funk & Funk, 1989, p. 660). Indeed, "If children are to develop good listening habits, they must perceive that the teacher expects them to listen" (Funk & Funk, 1989, p. 661). Listening is on one plane within the classroom: the desired producer of sound and the learner within a hierarchical relationship, everything else is positioned as "noise pollution" (Lundsteen, 1979, p. 12).

Noise refers to anything determined to not be meaningful or valued; once meaning is assigned and valued, "it ceases to be noise" (Cullen Rath, 2018, p. 73). In schooling, noise production is racialized within the hierarchical relationship of sound production and listening (Gershon, 2013a; Wozolek, 2023) through auditory stereotypes where some gendered and raced bodies are loud and others quiet no matter their sonic productions (Lei, 2003). Also, in how certain racialized soundscapes become part of the null and hidden curricula, such as the U.S. Mexico border where folklore, music, and Spanish are deemed noise because they are not "'legible' to white listening subjects" (de los Ríos, 2022, p. 386) or the labeling of a Black boy's singing and dancing during Reader's Workshop as getting in the way of silence—while street sounds and sirens leaked through the urban classroom's thin windows (Dernikos & Lesko, 2024).

In English education listening has also been theorized as a discrete set of learnable behaviors and cognitive skills that are legible to teachers. It is not uncommon for us (Hannah and Leah) to walk into an English classroom and find a ubiquitous "SLANT" poster with the following acronym: S: Sit up straight. L: Lean your body toward the speaker. A: Ask and answer questions. N: Nod your head T: Track the speaker with your eyes. Made popular through active listening strategies like those adopted in Lemov's (2010) original bestseller, *Teach Like a Champion*, now updated to a similar STAR process (Lemov, 2021), SLANT reduces listening practices to automatic reactions to sounds (how to sit, where your eyes are, how your body and head move) and uniform cognitive responses (nodding your head "yes" or "no," asking and answering questions) irrelevant of cultural and social differences. Listening and responses to sound are essentialized into discrete literacy skills. More narrowly "good listeners" can be seen in the bodies: those whose bodies are neatly managed and disciplined (as part of larger structures of bio-power) are good, docile listeners (Dixon, 2011).

These attempts to define "good listeners" through isolated discrete skills are explicitly taught in literacy and English education in ways that echo the bodily control of SLANT. For example, Alford (2020) outlines the skills of "good listeners" as the ability to 1) summarize, 2) make connections to self, prior learning, and texts, and 3) visualize what they are hearing. Access to the skills needed to be a "good listener" are through teachers as gatekeepers to cultural resources "not equally available to all persons" and "are heavily laden with social currencies" (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 20).

In this framework, youth are expected to internalize their teachers' desires and instructions for their listening practices; the teacher is expected to assimilate learners into those practices until they are able to perform those listening practices as their own. Given the dominance of White educators and whiteness within American education (Picower, 2021), the perception of youth listening practices is more often than not through the perceptions of a White observer and racialized assumptions of standard and nonstandard language sounds (Kutlu et al., 2022). In other words, listening and its relation to the body is framed here through white expectations, ideas, and ideals. Stoever (2016) offers the term *sonic color line* to describe the "entanglement between white supremacy and listening" where

> white authority figures continue to expect black people to perform more visible, overt, and extreme forms of compliance—through speech, vocal tone, eye contact, and physical behavior—than they ask of white subjects. (p. 2)

Similarly, Robinson (2020) critiques assimilative and colonizing habits of listening that perpetuate epistemic violence by excluding Indigenous ways of knowing. Even in silences there is no redress: the use of Indigenous languages resulting in physical discipline within boarding schools and the inability to use Indigenous language resulting in affectual fissures to family, community, culture, law, history. Collectively demonstrating Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are not protected from having their sounds, silences, and listening controlled, particularly in schooling spaces.

Furthermore, when listening is positioned as discrete cognitive skills associated with youth compliance, English educators' explicit teaching of listening becomes a valuable investment in anticipated capitalist contexts: Compliant listening is a marketable trait for children-as-future-laborers (White & Evans, 2005). In her work on how youth employ embodied resistance to participating in school-sanctioned listening practices, Jacknick (2021) found that the "presentation of self as student" was difficult for adolescents to sustain over time, and so "even students wishing to be 'good' students have peaks and valleys in their engagement over the course of a class," and that others "seem uninterested in this performance" (p. 165).

The equation of goodness with the performance of listening—and its accompanying bodily expectations for stillness and uniformity—is inseparable from the hidden curriculum of schooling as a performance of compliance and a reproduction of power relations between young people and the adults they are expected to listen to (Giroux & Penna, 1979; Jackson, 1968; Mehan, 1979; Shor, 1992). Listening is not passive (Gershon, 2011) and is always part of a reciprocal, spiraling, discursive process (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017) or soundscapes (Shafer, 1994) that are both material and have material consequences. Reciprocal discursive responses from learners—vibrations, rhythms, and frequencies—that do not comply with adult demands can be marginalized and racialized in educational spaces, "perceptually coded out of legibility by those who read/see/hear the world through whiteness" (Dernikos, 2020, p. 417). Sound, as it is socially and historically produced by youth positioned as compliant listeners and not sound creators, "produces students as un/successful readers and in/human subjects" that students may internalize or reject as an ontoepistemology of white heteropatriarchy embedded within the curriculum (Dernikos, 2020, p. 417).

In contrast to listening-as-compliance, teaching listening is also theorized as preparation for youth "civic participation in democracy" (Schieble et al., 2021, p. 71) as part of a recent turn in critical English education scholarship theorizing listening as an interconnected set of agentive and resistant processes that emerge over time (Fraver, 2021;Worthington & Fitch-Hauser, 2018). This work makes explicit how social and political power relations shape listening in classroom dynamics (Gershon, 2013a, 2017; Wargo, 2018, 2021; Wozolek, 2023) and urges educators and scholars to think about listening not as a discreet classroom task, but as a set of social, cognitive, and relational practices that are both voiced and unvoiced, seen and unseen, sounded and embodied (San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017; Schieble et al., 2021; Worthington & Fitch-Hauser, 2018). Within English education, listening is understood as an emergent process wherein listeners' and speakers' intra-actions co-create meaning within and beyond the discourse of voiced language (Worthington & Fitch-Hauser, 2018), such as non-performative speech (Ahmed, 2012), the impossibility of silence (Cullen Rath, 2018), facial expressions and gestures (Schieble et al., 2021), technology (Cecchetto, 2013), and material (Barad, 2007).

Within this critical and material turn, listening is dependent upon sounds and the absence of sounds that move beyond static conceptions of text and demand entanglements beyond static listening practices. Sounds are "forms of embodied knowledge" (Gershon, 2017, p. 26) that are "both literal, embodied experiences that resonate in our bodies and, simultaneously, echo meanings, socioculturally constructed ideas, and ideals" (Gershon, 2013b, p. 365).

Within English education's dependence on sounds-as-texts within its history, its pedagogies, its whiteness, and its ever constraining standards, we (Hannah and Leah) have been trained into positioning sounds as multimodal texts (New London Group, 1996) with human sources or human created structures (e.g., language, semiotics) for understanding those sources—what Cope and Kalantis (2023) refer to as multi-situational "lifeworlds" representing the symbolic, embodied, and material differences that influence how the form is composed and consumed by the listening subject. It was within this tension where this study exists: how we conceptualized sound as multimodal text to understand the formal, hidden, and enacted curriculum at play as assembled "texts of talk and music" (Gershon, 2011, p. 67) while acknowledging the limits of sound-as-text and listening-as-literacies that limit the possibilities sound and attention to sound offer literacy educators for meaningfully attending to violence and trauma (Gershon, 2017). This is a critique not just of us, but of the literacy field where we (Hannah and Leah) are deeply rooted from our teacher education training to work experience to higher education programs. Literacy and English education scholars, researchers, and practitioners who are routinely tasked with essentializing literacy into measurable units of knowledge or discreet skills yearn to make listening a legible, measurable, and easily identifiable unit (e.g., Gershon & Helfenbein, 2023). Revisiting the data from our summer writing project, we experienced this tension within our field notes: sounds were noted as material and embodied modes of text rather than emerging from a rhizomatic assemblage of human and non-human actors. Sounds were narrowly considered as *sounded* by human actors, and we sought ways to reinforce and replicate some sounds across *sounders*. Thus, we seek to reexamine these moments to understand and potentially disrupt the more-than-listening practices that reassert audial hierarchies and racialization of sound in relation to the multisituational "places" where the sound is composed and consumed. This means attention to how our listening was rooted in symbolic, embodied, and material assumptions about sociocultural identities and communities that created and produced the sound. Thinking about listening as *sounded* helped us and constrained us from more fully analyzing the multidirectional vibrations of sound and the multiple ways those vibrations resonate with listeners, speakers, audiences, genres, purposes, and spaces.

Listening to the Sounds of Healing

Sound scholarship in education urges educators and researchers to encounter sound as embodied knowledge (Gershon, 2017) that travels through spacetime in waves (Gershon, 2020). How the listener encounters sound is always political, because our listening choices are the result of attention as we filter out certain sounds to focus on a select few (Gershon, 2020), consider the human producer of sound through gendered, classist, and racialized assumptions (Baker-Bell, 2020; Gershon, 2019; Stoever, 2016), and how the listener's attention is shaped by linguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015). The attachments/rejections/disavowals/bids for power, privilege, epistemologies, and ontologies shape what a teacher might hear as *sound* vs. what they hear as *noise* (Cullen & Rath, 2018; Kane, 2015; Lei, 2003). By attuning to sound, scholars and

researchers can hear how place is shaped by a concert of resonances, relationships, interactions within listening practices (Gershon, 2017; James, 2018).

As part of the new materialist turn in educational studies, by emphasizing embodied, material, affective, and resonant *sound* in conversation with *listening practices*, we intentionally humanize sources of sound-making and the listener. This is not to suggest that all language is dependent on sound as text (Kane, 2015; Kusters & Lucas, 2022) or that it is dependent on language; rather, it allows us to redirect attention to the multi-situational differences that sustain linguistic ideologies and racialization of sounds, of voices, of language, of bodies, of stories. The conversation of sound and listening practices is an intentional turn to acknowledge and resist linguistic trauma (McKinney, 2018; Porto & Zembylas, 2022; Stoever, 2016).

Sounds carry waves of history "so that the reverberations of resonances come crashing down on individuals, groups, things, and ecologies" (Gershon, 2020, p. 1163). For young people, how sound is heard, interpreted, and produced by adults reproduces uneven power dynamics and historical entanglements with dispossession, oppression, marginalization, and trauma—the past resonating with the present. How sound is heard and made meaningful in learning contexts can be part of an assemblage of violence in education that "invokes intensities across states of being" (Wozolek, 2021, p. 16). For example, resonances of racism reverberate "at various levels of scale," from the systematic to the individual (Gershon, 2020, p. 1164). No one can suspend the way they think about language from the process of interpreting language; this is seen in how we take up the communicative burden of being engaged in conversation. As Lippi-Green (2012) explains:

> When a person rejects a message … he or she is refusing to accept responsibility in the communicative act, and the full burden is put directly on the other. "I can't understand you" may mean, in reality: "You can't make me understand you." (p. 72).

In various moments, our youth collaborators shared ways in which racial and familial traumas resonated in their lives. They also shared how schools and classrooms had been spaces where care was coercive, sound-making was surveilled and disciplined, and linguistic ideologies were infused with racism, sexism, nativism, and exclusion.

Methodology: Listening to the Sounds of Care

Because of ocular supremacy, using sound to theorize and sound as method can help us produce generative interruptions to how we think and do education (Gershon, 2017). Smitherman (2000) similarly argues that a focus on print text and written language at the expense of orality is "a racial bias in favor of Western culture writ large. The argument in capsule form is that alphabetic writing invented by the Greeks made possible the literacy necessary for modern abstract thinking" thus placing literacies on a continuum where speaking and listening is less civilized, less complex cognitive work, and written text is more civilized and more complex (p. 88). San Pedro and Kinloch (2017) describe the dialogic spiral of speaking, listening, and storying as "the convergence of theory and practice, theory and method, which allows us to be invited into relationships where we dialogically listen" (pp. 337–388). The dialogic spiral traces the sound and silence over time: a rhythmic intra-action (Cullen Rath, 2018) that co-creates "the space between" (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2013, p. 30) that is always full of entanglements.

While the larger study drew from community and youth participatory action research (Burke & Hadley, 2018; Mirra & Rogers, 2016) to explore multigenerational writing and composing as community literacies (Sánchez & Honeyford, 2021), we revisited the data from the two-week program to consider the potential of sound as method and deep listening as an ontoepistemological analytic stance. Gershon (2018) explains:

> Deep listening provides an opportunity for often-dampened resonances to be heard, to allow for the inevitable mishearing of reverberations without a need to correct or silence, and for an understanding that what is voiced is of significance to the speaker. (p. 61)

Revisiting the audio recordings, youth created podcasts, photographs, field notes, and analytic memos, we traced the dialogic spirals between listener, sound, and sources of sound, noting what sounds created space (Gershon, 2017), expanded on the sonic, and where responses did not exist, an "invalidation and ignoring" of sounds—voiced and unvoiced—creating the ever-growing dialogic spiral (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2013, p. 30).

Furthermore, youth as co-researchers within this work meant bringing the dialogic spirals back to the youth (Table 1) to listen and respond. Within these interviews, youth provided insights into the deep listening practices they found most meaningful throughout the project and considered how these practices are connected to healing.

Table 1
Youth Co-Researchers and Their Research Questions

Self- Selected Pseudonym	Grade Entering	Age	What they choose to share about their positionalities	Research Question
Nellie	8th	12	Mixed male (North African and White) who doesn't have a religion	How would the activists of the past describe their work today?
Navia	9th	14	Female, African American	Is the criminal justice system just, particularly for African Americans?
Kaz	9th	14	Muslim girl, immigrated from Ethiopia	How can medical justice be achieved by Generation Z?
Sheldon	10th	14	Non-binary (she/he/they) lesbian and atheist from Venezuela. Bilingual (Spanish and English)	How could Venezuelan Americans be activists for Venezuelan rights?
Miriam	12th	17	American resident since 2019, Iraqi refugee, Muslim female. Plurilingual (Arabic, Swedish, English)	Why do(n't) people identify as activists?

Youth described conducting interviews with community members and creating podcasts to answer their research questions as valued practices within their pursuit to respond. Thus, we went back to the data sources to contextualize and understand these contexts for listening to understand how they reflect healing pedagogies for internalized trauma. We noted that youth chose which sounds to filter and which sounds to attend to (Gershon, 2020), resisted compliance literacies that demand attention to teachers, administrators, adults, and those in power—aspects of which we now turn to explore.

Miriam: Assemblages of Sonic Violence

The enacted curriculum of compliance in schools had taught 17-year-old Miriam that listening is a performance of repetitive, near-mechanical actions that demonstrate a willingness to succeed within the power structures of schooling's false community. She described a typical school day:

> School, especially when you get to high school and especially when you enter higher level classes, AP [Advanced Placement] and IB [International Baccalaureate], um, it's pretty much, you know, teacher comes in, lectures, take a bunch of notes, and they talk so fast and you just gotta like, force feed all this information, and then they walk out. Next teacher comes in, you know, lecture, next teacher comes in, lecture, by the end of the torturing eight hours, you come home exhausted. Need to do homework. So, it's definitely not enjoyable. I feel so, like, systematic. You sit down—lecture. Take notes. Sit down. Lecture, take notes, read pages, textbook pages, you know, 55 to 97. It's very systematic.

Miriam aspires to academic achievement and success within school, but her experiences have made her critical of schooling as a coercive, often joyless ordeal. In the "systematic" school day she described, sound is produced by the teacher, who has also predetermined how and for whom it is meaningful. Miriam's explanation of this listening practice as being "force fed" speaks to her embodied digestion of the curriculum of this kind of listening—a set of practices that govern her time and her movement and insist on her silence as key to success.

In addition to the harmful listening practices Miriam had experienced in her academic work, she also spoke about her teacher's expression of unhappiness as a source of relational rupture. She told us that one of her teachers once said, "I know y'all don't want be here, and I don't want be here, but we still gotta figure this out" and concluded that "finding passionate teachers is really difficult. Teachers who make an engaging environment." Miriam was struck by how "very clearly" this teacher did not want to be in his classroom and how he attempted to connect to his students by outlining a shared dissatisfaction. To Miriam, however, the teacher's declaration felt like a rejection of an opportunity to engage with students in a way that honored their agency, humanity, and will to learn from each other. Her commitment and aspirations for academic success pushed her to "just pass his class" by taking up the transactional nature of schooling the teacher offered.

For Miriam, the summer workshop was initially "more enjoyable" than school because "there were no deadlines, there weren't lectures." Eventually, with the flexibility to choose how to navigate time and space and to engage in *conversation* instead of silent *performances of attention*, Miriam leveraged listening as a key to building intimacy and trust with both youth and adults.

While she sometimes felt "judged" by peers in school, or nervous about being judged in ways that stifled her speaking or her ability to listen intimately to others, the small number of young people who made up the writing program engaged her in an "ongoing conversation" that became a valuable curricular resource. Through collaborative conversations that privileged exploration, process, and joy, Miriam found "a comfort level" that eased her ability not just to listen, but to hear, speak, and write as well.

Perhaps even more powerful was Miriam's encounter with Dr. Allison, a retired professor at the local university whom Miriam interviewed as part of her research day at the café. The three of us (Miriam, Dr. Allison, and Hannah) sat at a small table on the sidewalk, and Miriam opened with questions for her interviewee—on the role of activism, the definition of community, and how people fight for social change. We were joined by more-than-human bodies: the sounds, objects, texts, and spaces that merged and disrupted mainstream schooling's literacy practices (Dernikos, 2020).

As a passerby's cigarette smoke wafted by and early 2000s pop music floated from the speaker overhead, Miriam listened to Dr. Allison tell stories of her life and shared in turn about her own experiences. Almost immediately, Miriam's polite smile broke into a grin; her eyes were bright and dancing. When the three of us discovered a shared affinity for *Anne of Green Gables*, Miriam broke out laughing. "Three generations vibing off *Anne of Green Gables*! Who would have thought?" Later that afternoon, Miriam told Dr. Allison that she wanted to call her grandmother—*bibi* in Arabic. The two made plans for Dr. Allison to come by the library and bring Miriam the *Anne of Green Gables* doll she had at home.

For Miriam, the experience of listening in community—what she called a "chosen family"—shifted her conceptions of what intergenerational relationships might feel like and also deepened her thinking about listening as an agentive and relational meaning-making process. "That's the one thing I'm probably, I can say I'm good at—good at listening," she said. "Sitting and watching the conversations, you know, unfold, and there are group discussions, I love that. Especially like really listening closely to the word choices, especially which each person uses. Cause everything has meaning behind it." Far from a sanctioned performance of attention, obedience, and the digestion of predetermined meanings, listening became a process of interpreting sound-as-text in ways that were healing both emotionally and intellectually.

Sheldon: Healing through Listening

"I really like that everyone was so nice and the fact that they even complimented my voice. I'm like, are you lying to me?" —Sheldon

Sheldon, a 15-year-old bilingual Spanish/English speaker from Venezuela, shared experiences of linguistic harms in schooling spaces that have shaped her own disdain for the sound of her voice and her usage of English. She told us about a teacher who had pushed her boundaries by "oversharing" about her personal life and using Spanish to do so as a way to isolate their conversation from non-Spanish-speaking students and staff. She also shared that peers had made fun of her voice by equating it to an American cartoon character who sounds "really annoying." Based on conversations that wove beyond this project alone, we understand that Sheldon's discomfort and aversion to hearing her own voice reflected socialization into language subordination that occurs pervasively and primarily in schools where youth are corrected or forced

into silence when they challenge the standard language myth with their speech (Lippi-Green, 2012). Sheldon's voice, shaped by history, languages, and spaces, was once a sound that reflected linguistic racism—but as its sound reverberated and was listened to by peers she came to trust, her voice imbued the space with meaning and healing. As Sheldon engaged with listeners who responded differently—listeners who understood her voice as a multimodal text—her embodied, racialized, and historical experiences took on layers of meaning that Sheldon then used to author her podcast.

The use of podcasts can support student-led and student-centered educational efforts to foster identity and community (Alpay & Gulati, 2010) as well as students' reflexive criticality and their ability to make links between personal and structural challenges (Ferrer et al., 2020). Podcasts can also make "counterhegemonic listening practices" more available because of the ways in which digital technologies can expand coproduction of listening practices between listeners and creators (Joshi Brekke, 2020, p. 175). Sheldon's choice of the podcast as a genre placed her in a position of creative power, supporting her navigation of her familial and linguistic relationships as well as a new attention to her imagined listening audience:

> [Making my podcast] all seems easy and stuff. Then when it comes to editing, it's just like, what should I do? What should I put, like, what sound effects should I put? I don't want this just to be like a person talking into a mic. Cause like people might get bored.

Sheldon's decision to create a podcast about political upheaval in Venezuela and the impact on Venezuelans living in the United States emerged from a desire to make meaning of her often-fraught relationship with her mother and to bring together her family life, her peer relationships, and her emerging political understanding. She shared:

> Now that I'm thinking about it, I never actually came here with that idea that I was gonna like create a podcast. Like, I was just like, oh, I'm gonna be here and reach something and like, listen to the other opinions. But then all of a sudden, I was like, Oh, I'm creating a podcast. It was like so quickly. … Like I was just talking about my mom's childhood and was suddenly like, I'm gonna record her. So, I didn't record my mom because I was in a bad mood, and she was in a bad mood. So, I recorded my cousin, and we like, we just made it and then I didn't know what I was gonna do with that recording. I was just like write up a card or something, but then I saw that I can make a podcast.

Considering her mother's childhood stories as both emotionally and intellectually arresting but ambivalent about engaging with her mother when they were both in "bad moods," Sheldon's use of recordings of her family members offered new and agentive ways of navigating affective dynamics within her family system.

In the space of the workshop, Sheldon was also able to make agentive choices about which adults she wanted to speak and listen to and which adults would have limited access to hearing and knowing her. She was surprised to learn that she was "not afraid of talking to strangers—almost" because speaking with "strangers" provided more freedom for her to choose how others, namely adults, would have access to her. While conducting her interviews, Sheldon preferred speaking to a university professor, for example, rather than to her mother or high school principal, naming that the latter both had some kind of power over her. "It's like—y'all are targeting me!" she said later. On the other hand, Sheldon found it powerful to sit down with adults who did not have power over

her and did not have a preconceived idea of how she would be heard. In turn, listening to adult participants also expanded for Sheldon, as she explained:

> I've also learned to read, like, not just like body language, but also, like when they speak, I can see how they like, how they try to communicate towards me. Like in a way that, you know, you can tell if they're trying to insult you or something.

Sheldon's interest in protecting herself was a byproduct of linguistic, racial, and historical harms. Her emerging ability to detect harmful intentions through listening processes further enabled her to create a sense of emotional security necessary to take positive academic, intellectual, and emotional risks. Through her podcast-making process, Sheldon was able to forge speaking and being heard to prioritize her emotional wellbeing and relational agency with both peers and adults.

Nellie: Worldbuilding across Time and Space

When 12-year-old Nellie told us he wanted to create a ghost podcast, we laughed and said, "Well... ok!" Hosting interviews with adult participants acting as historical figures, Nellie became a delighted sound producer, working diligently to improve sound quality and adding constantly and creatively to the imagined world of his podcast (Figure 1). He created sound effects with his mouth and hands—the whooshing sound of the "pipes" he imagined to connect the ghosts of the past with his podcast, creating characters who included himself and a bumbling nonbinary assistant named Jim. He selected music and leveraged digital editing tools to create a world that merged time, space, and a historical imaginary that lifted figures who have formed an oppositional history, like W. E. B. DuBois and the bisexual ancient Greek poet Sappho into the present day. He used the voices of adult participants to illustrate and enliven these people and to explore how their legacies could shape political and social realities of this moment. He asked each interviewee, "What do you think are the biggest social issues today?" and "What advice do you have for people now?"

Figure 1
Use the QR code to access Paranormal Postlife, Nellie's podcast, on Spotify.

Nellie used creative and relational sound to create a nested, layered sonic exploration across time and space that reverberated for him in meaningful ways (Gershon, 2020). However, when we asked him about his listeners' experiences with his podcast, it became clear that his intentions for creating were not about his imagined audiences, but rather circulated in the pleasure of production, relation, and creating a world that leveraged sound across imaginary time and space.

> I really enjoy history and that kind of thing. So, I thought it might be cool to—oh, and I also like acting—so I kind of put the two together to make it so you could kind of talk to the people from history that you can no longer talk to, and get some kind of closure or something, just a satisfying feeling out of listening to it. Even if the audio quality is kind of bad.

When asked to say more about the idea of closure, Nellie stiffened a bit. "I don't really feel like it's a good word to use, cause that means emotional connection, and this was just a one-time thing. There wasn't much thought put into it," he explained. He also told us that he "didn't notice any changes" in how he may have grown in relation to listening or speaking. We understood Nellie's resistance to our line of questioning as a way to maintain the sonic space-time as his own, meaningful to him in ways that were not intended to be shared or made meaningful to others, maybe especially to inquiring adults bending his experience to their educational expectations. In the space of his podcast, Nellie's use of sound suggested (and sometimes dictated) how adults would act, speak, and listen according to his vision. His podcast was thus protected as a sacred sonic space.

Conclusion: What Listening Came to Mean

Listening to and with our youth co-researchers, we sought to identify "counterhegemonic strategies that resist (and avoid reproducing) dominant narratives of race, ethnicity, and language" (Alim, 2016, p. 22). The youth we researched alongside shared stories of false communities found within schooling and familial spaces where listening was reduced to passive assimilation into hierarchical relationships that reified capitalistic purposes for their listening, bodies, and (un)responses to sound. Within dialogic relationships, the youth restoried their engagements with sounds and the producers of sounds. For Miriam, this meant leveraging sound to explore and resist compliance. For Sheldon, it meant making agentive decisions to heal from coercive linguistic power relations that forced listening and heard her voiced sound through linguistic bias. For Nellie, it was creating an otherwise sonic place of belonging.

Highlighting these three youth co-researchers, we understand that sounds are "methodologically valuable as they sit at the paradox of human experience—utterly individualistic and inescapably socio-cultural in their interpretation" (Gershon, 2013a, p. 258). If listening in schools is traditionally conceived of as a skills-based practice, where appropriate sound is narrowly conceived and student usage of sound is highly regulated, the way sound has been treated in schools reflects systemic power differentials. This has embodied consequences including constraint, restraint, and exhaustion. Instead of receiving sounds passively, the young people in our writing workshop not only made their own sounds but also co-created the terms, boundaries, and possibilities of engaging with sound. We listened to youths' sonic engagement as a subtle subversion of power relations and a refusal to accept pedagogies that require their silence and

compliance: agentive entanglements that sought healing. Thus, in their listening entanglements with community soundscapes, youth hear and come to understand themselves through reverberations of how others have listened, do listen, and might listen.

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