
Curriculum, Empiricisms, and Post-truth Politics

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IN SEPTEMBER OF 2016, two months before the election of Donald Trump, Colin Kaepernick, the former professional football player, kneeled during the playing of the U.S. national anthem before a game to protest ongoing police violence against Black people. Kaepernick, like many athletes before him, used his visibility to make a public statement in solidarity with racial justice. The facts seemed clear: police brutality, police killings, police accountability, and policing in general were dire societal issues, issues that we sought to center in our work with future and practicing educators. And, we hoped that, if numbers and statistics alone could not convince the skeptical, the ever-expanding archive of videos cataloguing the brutality would suffice. Whether our students and the public in general agreed with the cause or not, the reason for Kaepernick's political expression, we thought, was beyond dispute. Instead, our news feeds and the conversations in our classrooms revealed something different (Thiessen, 2017; Wilson, 2018).

The reason that Kaepernick gave for the protest was lost in a heady avalanche of public discourse woefully divorced from what Kaepernick himself said. How does a silent and non-violent protest about police brutality become enveloped in a narrative about patriotism, something so far removed from his stated intent? More, how could this protest, couched comfortably in the tradition of American civil disobedience, become so offensive to so many that his career in football was essentially over as a result? This cynical translation—of protest against police brutality into racialized, anti-American fervor—makes the action coherent with racial tropes that adhere to entrenched aspects of the American imagination and the continuum of who counts as fully American, fully human. The “truth” of police brutality in public discourse remained open for debate; perhaps more importantly, the validity of Kaepernick's experiences and words were always already suspect. Colin Kaepernick's experience and perception of reality, and the event of his protest, are experienced and known in vastly different ways depending on how those truths enter into the realm of knowledge. Because societal norms discourage a discourse that tolerates the killing of innocent lives, the normalization of this violence must operate on different grounds of truth.

The purpose of this paper is to approach the phenomenon of post-truth politics as an important site of inquiry for the field of curriculum theory. We are motivated to consider how the possibility and production of this political movement emerge in relation to schooling practices. As we note below, we do not argue that schooling alone is responsible for the production of this politics. However, education remains an important site of inquiry for scholars interested in the ways in which schools actively reproduce and maintain problematic social structures, and we continue to believe in the possibility that education and curriculum are important sites of intervention and disruption. At the same time, we align ourselves with scholars like Frantz Fanon (1952/2008) who help us recognize that schools are not the only forces that shape our identities and ways of relating to the world; cultural texts from comic books to popular news articles are also agential in generating the narratives that produce particular social arrangements and hierarchies. As such, we believe that scholars of curriculum studies must attend to both the formal structures of school-based curricula, as well as the curricula produced by other social forces. This requires a theoretical framework that attends to aspects of curriculum beyond the dimension of humanist conceptions of objective knowledge alone.

Developing new practices and inquiries into historical topics like curriculum can be challenging. The languages and practices scholars use to inquire into curriculum depend on concepts and terms whose definitions are so sedimented that the production of newness seems fundamentally foreclosed. In other words, both concepts and modes of inquiry tied to the projects of post-positivism and conventional qualitative research actively maintain many of the problems we work against (St. Pierre, 2014). These problems relate to the continued marginalization and subjugation of vulnerable peoples in which schools *and* inquiries into education are tacitly complicit. In response to this challenge, we wonder what happens when we bring together particular texts, theories, and ideas, along with our experiences of teaching and working with other educators, to consider the relationship between a broad conception of curriculum and the current socio-political moment. We begin by discussing how our thinking emerged in response to the political present. We relate the production of post-truth politics to the inherited empirical traditions that haunt our curricular practices before identifying an alternate empirical tradition through the reconstruction of John Dewey's educational and empirical philosophy, which we argue provides productive possibilities for the field of curriculum theory.

From Gaslighting to Post-truth Politics: Problematizing Curriculum in the Present

This collaborative experiment in thinking began with our noticing an increased use of the concept of *gaslighting* in popular news articles, a term first coined in the title of a 1938 play called "Gas Light" and popularized by an American film based on the play that was released in 1944. In recent use, the term was sometimes used to explain the normalization of sexual harassment that became publicly recognized through the #MeToo movement (Chow, 2017; Hatch, 2017) and at other times to account for the possibility and popularity of the Trump presidency (Dominus, 2016; Jeltsen, 2016). Gaslighting typically refers to the abusive behavior by individuals or groups towards others, where an "abuser manipulates information in such a way as to make a victim question his or her sanity. Gaslighting intentionally makes someone doubt their memories or perception of reality" (Porzucki, 2016, n.p.). How are our practices of schooling and curriculum tacitly allowing this treatment of experience, one that solidifies and sediments our inherited hierarchies and, thus, claims to reality?

Interestingly, as we continued noting the different ways that gaslighting was being mobilized in the press, we recognized that the term was used across political ideologies: in one striking instance, a lobbyist for the NRA suggested that the anti-gun rhetoric emerging in the wake of recent school shootings was also an effort to gaslight the American public (Barr, 2018). And while it is tempting to dismiss this as another example of the political right's ability to assimilate and leverage language from the left in the production of their own political discourse, we argue that the commonplace use of the term gaslighting also surfaces concerns with the ways that lived experience is simultaneously vulnerable to authority and unproblematically upheld as authoritative in this present moment of post-truth politics.

Experience as Curricular Dilemma

As scholar-educators committed to critical and creative practices of inquiry and pedagogy, we find the concept of “experience” to be both confounding and necessary—confounding, because the term carries diverse and ambiguous associations, particularly within our chosen scholarly milieu of post-qualitative (St. Pierre, 2014) and posthumanist research in education (Snaza & Weaver, 2015). In other words, the notion of experience seems to carry entrenched ideas about the primacy of the individual, the stability of the self, and the radical distinction between humans and other beings. At the same time, our conversations about the work we do with pre-service and practicing teachers inevitably return to those crucial transactions between organisms and their environments, transactions that make continuous the past, present, and future; these are the complex and emergent relationships that John Dewey (1917/1973, 1938, 1945/1981) names experience.

We open ourselves up to the present moment, with the conflicting and seemingly incommensurable forces of post-truth politics, of the #MeToo movement, of increasing political visibility of youth, women, and people of color, even while the forces of white nationalism and interlocking systems of oppression continue to surface. Rather than seeking to locate some underlying cause of the present or identify the sources of the curricular frameworks that confine our experiences to orderly definitions and stable human bodies, we focus on the relations that sustain and mold our experiences with, and in, the world. In doing so, we turn to the concept of *empiricism*, which we define as the processes that govern the relationships between experiences, modes of being, and knowledge of the world. Importantly, this term demands that we attend simultaneously to ontology, epistemology, and the methodologies that shape our understandings of knowledge, truth, experience, and what it means to be human. As Elizabeth St. Pierre (2016) suggests, there are multiple and competing concepts of empiricism that circulate in the present, and while St. Pierre notes that the concept of empiricism is rarely taught explicitly outside of undergraduate philosophy courses, particular empiricisms haunt many, if not all, of the curricular frameworks offered in school and beyond.

We argue that the contemporary manifestations of school-based curricula and their empirical underpinnings do not prepare students to enter into and relate to our complex and messy shared worlds. When the empirical frameworks afforded by schools fail, a vacuum is created whereby individuals and collectives begin to seek alternate curricular framing, as evidenced in the present post-truth era. Given the underlying connections between the empiricisms we discuss below and the projects of white nationalism and settler colonialism that Sylvia Wynter (2001, 2003) so deftly describes, the re-emergence of these frameworks is not surprising. They share a

similar logic, which we will discuss below, while reducing complexity by re-inscribing problematic articulations of race, gender, class, and nationality as authoritative frameworks for relating to the world. Accordingly, we ask how we might practice curriculum differently.

Our Inherited Empiricisms

Our inherited schemes of intelligibility, our traditional frameworks of meaning, have themselves been rendered by events and experience, secular upheavals and existential crises, meaningless. Our desperate adherence to them condemns us to make ever-more-debilitating nonsense out of ourselves and our strivings, our successes no less than our failures. Deliberate, painstaking attention to the manifestly ephemeral and the apparently insignificant can provide a counterweight here. (Colapietro, 2008, p. 124)

Colapietro points to the disconnect between our inherited modes of intelligibility and meaning and the complex experiences and events of the present, and we wonder how curriculum works to maintain these empirical schemes and frameworks. The history of empiricism is complex and contentious and has become an object of inquiry within the call for new empiricisms (Clough, 2009; Latour, 2011). A full overview of this history is beyond the scope of this paper, so we focus on Elizabeth St. Pierre's (2016) discussion of empiricisms within the context of schooling and educational research before considering how these elements inform and make possible the relationship between curriculum and post-truth politics.

St. Pierre (2016) begins by acknowledging that it is within the domain of epistemology that we most often think about empiricism, where it is defined against rationalism as a mode of knowing that is dependent on sensory experience. Accordingly, empiricism holds that the source of knowledge claims about reality can and should be derived from "sense-based observations of experience" (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 113). Traditional empiricism limits all knowledge claims to the givens of experience and, thus, has methodological, in addition to epistemic, implications. That is, empiricism defines what counts as objects and subjects of knowledge and knowing, as well as the method by which a knowing subject may come to know an object. In terms of research, this has the consequence of positing human minds as instruments capable of capturing the world *as it really is* through sense-observation; and because language is imagined to be clear and precise, representing this reality through language is a straightforward affair. In terms of schooling, we add that such a formulation of empiricism undergirds the ability to transmit knowledge faithfully and to define learning in terms of this act of transmission. It also informs what types of knowledge we deem worthy of passing along and what types of bodies are capable of producing experiences that come to inform sanctioned knowledge.

Traditional philosophies of empiricism also extend into the realm of metaphysics and ontology. Hume and other British Empiricists famously dismiss metaphysics as a field beyond the purviews of sensory observations; this, however, is itself an ontological claim. St. Pierre (2016) defines ontology as the branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of being and the basic categories of reality. Classic empiricists, like rationalists, follow the dictate that the domains of ontology and epistemology must be separated to preserve a particular ordering, one that addresses the concern that "an object might withdraw itself from scientific analysis (from being known) by slipping across the border that separates words and things, human and non-human" (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 114). This ontological commitment is a central tenet of humanism and, as St. Pierre

demonstrates, informs research within two traditions that are central to contemporary educational research: phenomenology and the empiricism of logical positivism.

Although St. Pierre (2016) suggests that these two research paradigms are incommensurable, we argue that such incommensurability stems from their methodological implications alone and potentially obfuscates their strikingly similar ontological commitments and their relationship to the tradition of humanism. In terms of method, phenomenology relies on the tropes of intentionality and epoch, or the ability to bracket out human judgments from the essences of things to make stable and coherent claims about the world. Logical positivism, on the other hand, is committed to a singular and unified theory of science, one that rests on the assertion that the processes of mathematics and quantification are able to ward off the infecting influences of interpretation, ideology, and theory in general, so that “[a] measurement is brute data, the final evidence, irrefutable proof” (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 116). Logical positivism may replace the intentional gaze with mathematical analysis, but both frame human values as epiphenomenal and problematic, and both hold that, against this problem, adherence to particular methodologies can guarantee objectivity.

In discussing the similarities between phenomenology and logical positivism, we find Bruno Latour’s (2011) overview of empiricisms particularly helpful. First, Latour resists the problematic approach of a categorization based on “old” and “new” and, instead, uses a cardinal ordering to discuss the historical development of different empirical traditions. Latour refers to the empirical traditions that St. Pierre (2016) discusses as the first empiricisms and describes how they are unified by a *bifurcation of nature* that insists on the separation between primary and secondary qualities.

The Empirical Underpinnings of Curriculum

Importantly, this bifurcation produces a schizoid treatment of experience: on the one hand, the first empiricisms cast disdain on speculation, intuition, and other processes of knowing that are not founded in sense observations, providing an *a priori* rejection of knowledge claims that are not based on a particular mode of experiencing the world. Although experience is valued as the source of all knowledge, there is a narrowing of the type of experiences that count as knowledge in the first place. In particular, quotidian experiences that are part of our everyday interactions with the world, experiences that are full of emotion, aesthetics, values, and the like, are rejected as sources of knowledge. Further, knowledge is fully disembodied, and its objectivity depends on it. Consequently, even when racialized and gendered bodies participate in modes of knowing that resemble the contours of logical positivism or phenomenology, their refusal to reject the embodied nature of their knowing marks their experiences as vulnerable to dismissal by sanctioned forms of objective—that is tacitly white and male—authority. Importantly, “the disparagement of human experience has no greater consequence than the loss of our everyday world” (Colapietro, 2008, p. 118), especially if we want to participate in the making of everyday worlds that value the experiences and lives of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Both phenomenology and logical positivism insist that objects in the world are stable, defined by unchanging, essential characteristics and, thus, representable through precise language and communicated seamlessly through acts of speech and writing. Indeed, this is the basic presupposition on which our efforts to transmit knowledge in schools depends. Further, they share a logic of either/or, producing analytics of stable, self-evident, and brute data that *excludes* the

possibility of indeterminacy, of both/and. Given the rigidity of these frameworks, and their adherence to neat and tidy categorizations and borders between human and non-human, objective and subjective, nature and culture, it is no surprise that they break down when applied to the complex and messy world of the present, including the phenomenon of post-truth politics.

Empiricism, Colonialism, and Racism

Moreover, we argue, through the writings of Sylvia Wynter (2003), that this first empiricism is also inseparable from the projects of colonialism and racism. According to Wynter (2003), the struggle of our new millennium, which we suggest is part of the present moment of post-truth politics, resides in “the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself” (p. 260). In other words, we have come to define the human as one who interacts with the world through the empiricisms discussed earlier and to accept that such interactions also rest on the pervasiveness of the secular racism “on which the world of modernity was to institute itself” (p. 260). Wynter hypothesizes that the concatenation of oppressive forces relating to sexism, racism, sexual orientation, and the degradation of earth and non-human others, are all “differing facets of the central ethnoclass Man vs. Human struggle” (p. 261). Returning to Kaepernick’s protest, we suggest that efforts to dismiss and reframe his actions and experiences align and cohere with the overrepresentation of Man, thereby, disciplining and surveilling access to the category of human. Wynter (2003) emphasizes the ways in which the descriptive statement that secures Man’s overrepresentation of the human is secured by our systems of learning: “All such learning, whether at the microlevel of the individual or the macrolevel of the society, must therefore function within the terms” (p. 268) of this particular onto-epistemic formulation.

The disciplinary organization of our curricular practices, because of the necessity that they function within these terms, enable a “language-capacitated form of life, to ensure that we continue to know our present order of social reality, and rigorously so, in the adaptive ‘truth-for’ terms needed to conserve our present descriptive statement” (Wynter, 2003, p. 270). Importantly, Wynter is not suggesting that language alone is agential in this reproduction; instead, the biocentric conception of human life that informs the overrepresentation of the human as Man disallows a thorough investigation of the ways in which *meaning and matter* are in a relationship of mutual entanglement that sustains the disciplinary organization itself. Further, these orders of truth continue to dominate the curricular frameworks that we use, often with force, to assimilate diverse beings into the particular empirical frameworks; or as Vine Deloria, Jr., and Daniel Wildcat (2001) argue, “Curriculum, at all levels of American education, bears the largest imprint of Western metaphysics” (p. 10).

Wynter (2003) demonstrates how epistemic shifts in the intellectual history of the West were also shifts in what can now be identified as the “politics of being.” This form of politics governs the descriptive statement, or sociogenic principle, instituting particular praxes of being human (p. 318). And, as the example of Kaepernick and the fight to frame the political actions by players across the NFL demonstrates, we argue that the ease with which Americans rejected the veracity and coherence of these protests is a symptom of the continued prevalence of this onto-epistemic framework that shapes our empirical interactions with bodies, experiences, and facts. The condition of post-truth politics emerges when this onto-epistemic framework, and its reductive and disciplining methodology, encounters a resistant, complex, and hybrid present. This resistance

is not inherently negative, but its ethical navigation requires a different empirical framework, one that we suggest can be found in the philosophy of John Dewey.

An Alternative Approach: Re-humanizing Dewey's Radical Empiricism

This turn to Dewey is also inspired by the work of Isabel Stengers (2005) and her concept of ecologies of practice. First, she reminds us that all practices, including those that we often lump together and call education, are always in relation to habitats. In other words, they are particular. This does not mean that they can be reduced to their habitats or that habitats alone are agentially responsible for the production of practices. Rather, it is a reminder that no two practices are the same and that we must respect their boundaries, even while experimenting with them as they diverge. Second, rather than call for the destruction of the practices we may deem problematic, she urges us to participate in their becoming differently, creatively directing their flows and ebbs by being mindful of the past *and* imaginative of the future that these becomings make possible.

This is part of why Dewey is so useful—he has generated concepts and philosophical ideas that are directly tied to the practice and habitat of schooling in the United States. At the same time, this reconstruction of Dewey's empiricism requires two moves. The first is that we read Dewey's philosophy of education together with his efforts to retheorize experience and empiricism more broadly. The second is that we face an important problem in Dewey's treatment of philosophy, the problem of problematization itself. In other words, Dewey is overly optimistic about our ability to socially and intellectually abandon particular problems as new and more pressing ones emerge within the present. Accordingly, we shift to the work of Sylvia Wynter, who problematizes experience without the bifurcation of nature that sets up the binary between primary and secondary qualities and without turning to ideology to explain how our experiences are distorted reflections of some ultimate reality. Importantly, both Dewey and Wynter recognize the agential role that culture plays in producing experience without suggesting that our empiricisms need to be polished by ridding them of culture's influence. Indeed, such escape from culture is impossible. Instead, we are left with the different task of learning how to engage our experiences, and those of cultural others, in ways that are ethical.

In the opening chapter of *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938) cautioned against the seductive idea that progressive education could be realized by opposing everything deemed traditional, urging philosophers and practitioners of education alike to define progressive education in its own process of becoming, always directed towards the particular problems that both shape and are shaped by the particulars of its practice. Importantly, Dewey recognizes that this act of reconstruction is best realized by thinking about the relationship between schooling and experience, noting that traditional education has not failed because of its inability to generate experiences, but because it fails to generate experiences conducive to growth.

Dewey's notion of growth is both important and perplexing. On the one hand, it seems attached to arborescent metaphors (Boundas, 1993; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and has meshed too easily with the aims of scientific curriculum making and its belief that all important learning can be conceptualized as growth towards stable and transparent behavioral and cognitive goals. But, if we understand Dewey's ideal of growth as one that is fundamentally concerned with opening up new realms of possibility, we can understand that this notion is entirely opposed to the empiricisms we have discussed before, which all tend towards stable idealized essences and disciplinary

certainty, rather than the openness and precarity we seek to emphasize. In other words, we join Dewey (1938) in asking:

How many students...were rendered callous to ideas, and how many lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them? How many acquired special skills by means of automatic drill so that their power of judgement and capacity to act in new situations was limited?... How many found what they did learn so foreign to the situations of life outside the school as to give them no power of control over the latter? (pp. 26-7)

Dewey ends this chapter with the important assertion that the progressive tradition of education is in need of a new philosophy of experience, an alternative empiricism. First, we explore his philosophy of experience as an alternate empiricism. Second, we take inspiration from the work of Nathan Snaza (2017), who points to the ways that Dewey's thinking is itself a practice that was shaped by and continued to shape the concomitant empiricism of humanism and settler colonialism. Accordingly, we seek to re-humanize it through conversations with contemporary theorists.

Dewey's Philosophy of Experience

In addition to Dewey's urging us to reconstruct our practices of education around his theorization of experience in *Experience and Education*, he makes a similar statement about the need to reconstruct our relationship with philosophy. In "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy," Dewey (1917/1973) argues that philosophy must be redirected towards contemporary issues, rather than remain "a dressing out of antithetical traditions" (p. 59). In particular, he critiques both empiricists and rationalists, noting that historical empiricism, despite its claim to value experience, has instead "served ideas *forced into* experience, not *gathered from* it" (p. 65, italics in original). Consequently, the philosophical traditions that Latour unifies with his notion of the first empiricism proceed through "the assumption that experience centers in, or gathers about, or proceeds from a center or subject which is outside the course of natural existence and set over against it" (Dewey, 1917/1973, p. 74). This positioning of the human subject outside of nature is part of the dualisms that define the first empiricisms; further, it sets up the strange possibility of human minds adding a subjective and, thus, spurious patina to our experiences of the world. Accordingly, true knowledge of the world comes from purifying our experiences of these subjective elements so that we can get at the objective nature of reality. Again, this is the premise that unites the empirical traditions of phenomenology and logical positivism and, we argue, the practices of schooling that Dewey labels as traditional.

The industry of epistemology, which we argue is also the industry that has guided our practices of curriculum and schooling, maintains this spectator view of knowledge, as it attempts to convey knowledge as absolute, universal, and transcendent of context. In order to retain generalizability, knowledge is held as separate and distinct from the contingent, particular, and uncertain experiences of the world. Like contemporary posthumanist thinkers, Dewey (1945/1981) argues that humans are like any other organism and, thus, inseparable from their dynamic environments. Consequently, experiences are not psychic renderings of physical reality, but rather "the entire organic agent-patient in all its inter-action with the environment, natural and social" (p.

78). The particular nature of experience—which includes the possibility of diverse experiences of the same phenomenon—does not reveal subjectivity or relativity; instead, the diversity of experience is an empirical product of the interactivity between individuals and their environment. “*Knowledge is always a matter of the use that is made of experienced natural events, a use in which given things are treated as indications of what will be experienced under different conditions*” (Dewey, 1945/1981, p. 84, italics in original). Dewey argues that philosophy must give up its quest for absolutes, without denying the reality of pluralistic experiences. Indeed, our arrival at a political moment that is no longer wedded to a singular truth might be understood not as a descent into moral relativism, but rather an opening up to the possibility of plural experiences. Unfortunately, we argue that schooling has not provided an empirical framework that distinguishes between pluralism and relativism, and here again, Dewey offers guidance.

In “The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism,” Dewey (1905) proclaims that “things—anything, everything, in the ordinary or non-technical use of the term ‘thing’—are what they are experienced as” (p. 115). In other words, experiences are not located in some realm separate from reality and the world. Importantly, when experiences vary from person to person, or temporally for an individual, such variations do not emerge from conflict between some eternal “reality” and the fallible realm of experience, but rather the “different reals of experience” (p. 115). If things are “what they are experienced as,” Dewey’s reconceptualization of experience is not simply an epistemological corrective, but also reveals an ontology that embraces pluralism and resists reference to a world that passively awaits the act of inquiry. For Dewey, the notion of reality expresses a quality of meaning, not absolute essence.

Although we suggest that Dewey’s empiricism is an important resource, we also recognize a fundamental problem with his methodology, one that concerns the possibility of problem making itself. Or, as Vincent Colapietro (2008) notes, “What Dewey does not do, however, is to problematize the very having of experience” (p. 119). First, we want to hold onto Dewey’s insistence that experiences are themselves real without claiming that this realness results from some coherence with a fixed, singular, and homogenous world. At the same time, we do need to recognize how our experiences in the world are shaped by processes that are both natural and cultural and that such shaping may prevent individuals and communities from grasping how and why this process of shaping matters. Second, we want to reject Dewey’s (1910, 1917/1973) belief that, as a social collective, we are willing to abandon old problems in order to take up new and pressing ones. These are facets of Dewey’s humanism that we seek to reconstruct by placing them in conversation with the theorizations of Sylvia Wynter.

Rehumanizing Dewey’s Empiricisms: Curricular Possibilities

Sylvia Wynter, in conversation with Katherine McKittrick (2015), describes how taken-for-granted narratives, or *mythoi*, influence all experience, with the result that “subjective experience is *extrahumanly mandated* yet experienced, reflexly, as though it is *normally human*” (p. 57, italics in original). Said differently, our experiences are always already shaped by concepts and categories that appear natural and objective, upholding structures of power and oppression that are the results of particular ontological and epistemological frameworks. Wynter (2001), focusing on the work of Fanon, recognizes that Fanon’s ability to experience himself as both an object of the white gaze and a subject of Black consciousness is made possible not simply by his social location, but by the achievement of a transcultural vantage point *and* the adoption of a particular methodology.

Importantly, such achievements can be learned and, thus, can provide new orientations for our practices of curriculum.

Because Wynter's (2001) particular problematization of experience is sociogenic, reconstructing a different sociogeneity provides a way forward. In other words, the problem of experience is not foundational to particular types of bodies or positionalities in the world, but rather emerges at the confluence of nature-culture laws. Accordingly, Wynter highlights two important aspects of reconstructing a mode of being in the world that allows us to engage with our experiences in productive ways: the attainment of a transculturality and the use of a particular methodology, what she calls the "science of the Word." Becoming transcultural is to recognize that the nature-culture laws that shape our experiences are contingent; that is, different locations across time and space have always been subject to different variations of these laws, and our selves are in flux as we move between places and spaces where slightly different variations of these laws exist. Transculturalism is not about getting over one's culture, which is never possible in the first place, but learning how to be and relate to a plurality of cultural frameworks and locations. Further, simply existing in more than one cultural space is not sufficient; these experiences must be attended to with empirical methodologies that are both critical and creative, where the notion of empiricism again emphasizes how the politics of knowledge *and* being are irreducible forces in our relations with and in the world.

Transculturality and the Science of the Word: Experiments in Theorizing Curriculum

We are offering Wynter's (2001) concepts of transculturality and the science of the Word not as settled and defined terms, but as provocations and opportunities for experiments in thinking and doing curriculum differently. In addition, we believe that the work of Maria Lugones (1987, 2006) is helpful here, as her discussion of *world-traveling* (1987) and *complex communication* (2006) help us think in more concrete terms about the productive potential of both. Lugones' (1987) discussion of some of the ways in which women of color must move across worlds helps us imagine the practices of occupying a position of transculturality. She writes that worlds themselves are contradictory, and while they must be inhabited, they can be constructed by both dominant and non-dominant social forces. Because worlds need not be constructed by society as a whole, they can be incomplete in that they are open to further invention as we travel across them. In addition, "travel" is defined as the shift from being one person to being someone different. Thus, travel is a source of alterity, ambiguity, and uncertainty; it helps us recognize the possibility of being, thinking, and experiencing the world differently. It demonstrates that both thinking and being are subject to *play*, not in the Eurocentric concept of engaging in games with winners and losers, but in terms of processes always in flux: "the playful attitude involves openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to self-construction and reconstruction or the reconstruction of the 'worlds' we inhabit playfully" (p. 17).

Importantly, Lugones (2006), like Wynter, is concerned not only with the act of being in multiple worlds, and the promise of alterity and liminality that might ensue, but also the agency of language in bringing such experiences from the site of the individual and towards the development of collectives and coalitions. If playful world-traveling and the achievement of transculturality help locate us on the *limen*, Lugones also warns that "'world'-travel does not guarantee that we have a metalevel of consciousness of inhabiting the limen" (p. 79). Such liminality is required for the possibility of invention and creation beyond the confines of oppressive social and material

conditions, but it does not ensure them. Instead, “what we need then is both to be able to recognize liminality and to go from recognition to a deciphering of resistant codes” (p. 79). This deciphering of resistant codes so that we can collectively engage in the writing of new ones, we argue, helps us understand what is at stake when Wynter (2001) asks that we engage in the science of the Word. And so we wonder, what might it look like to engage in this type of playful world-traveling as curriculum? How can we perform practices of schooling that allow both travel to and construction of multiple worlds, while also being able to decipher the codes that govern them and to write new codes that participate in the making of both new worlds and praxes of being human?

Lugones, alongside Wynter and Dewey, allows a reconsideration or reimagining of a kind of curriculum that differently engages experiences and the experiences of others in ways that encourage a practice of world traveling toward becoming transcultural. More, the simple experience of transculturality is not itself sufficient; we must also have a means of empirically engaging with both the science of the World *and* the science of the Word, understanding that what it means to be human is not reducible to either nature or culture. And, we contend, the achievement of these two critical features of being human can become orientations for our participation in the becoming different of curricular practices in the present. This is not to suggest that either transculturality or the science of the Word are to become new static aims for our curricular desires. Instead, these two ideals might support experimental acts of invention, to use the language of Fanon.

Post-truth Politics and Curricular Possibilities

Our experiment in collaborative thinking has not aimed at concluding with certainty, but rather opening up new spaces of creative and critical inquiries into curriculum, schooling, and their relationships with experience, knowledge, and being. We suggest that ideas here might provide launching points for further theorizations, as well as encouraging different ways of empirically considering the curricular formations offered in various sites of schooling, especially as they are related to the production of post-truth politics:

- How might we empirically investigate how curricula tacitly and explicitly communicate the boundaries between the human and the non-human?
- How might we attend to the ways in which our disciplinary organization of curriculum reinforces the border between nature and culture?
- We wonder, alongside scholar educators like Nel Noddings (2005), what it might look like to reorganize our curricular practices around ethical relationships between humans and other modes of being (Latour, 2013).
- We ask, alongside scholar educators like Brian Lozenski (2012), how we might offer multiple ways for students to participate in schooling in general, thinking differently about the entire structure of education instead of attempting to increase access to narrow and contemporary practices of teaching and learning?

Transculturality and the science of the Word both, in turn, help us think about Dewey’s concept of growth. That is, we can imagine transculturality as growth towards the capacity to relate to oneself and the world in multiple ways, to recognize that reality is never exhausted by experience. In other words, experience, in this framework, requires an empiricism that is additive.

The empiricisms we described as inherited in the earlier section are inherently subtractive. The belief that objective reality is a stable collection of homogeneous objects passively awaiting human inquiry requires that differences from idealized norms *and* the so-called subjective secondary qualities must be subtracted from experiences in order to arrive at reality. In this empirical framework, difference is always aberrant, in need of disciplining. As we continue along in the process of schooling, we become increasingly specialized, subtracting away the aspects of reality that do not count in particular disciplinary practices. And as we become normalized by the curricular forces operating beyond the walls of schools, we undergo a similar process of subtractive attunement, increasingly convinced that the reality sedimented by our own habits and habitats is exclusively true.

We are reminded of Angela Valenzuela's (1999) concept of *subtractive schooling*, where the dominant school culture requires Latinx students in a Texas high school to lose the aspects of their identity, including community resources, in efforts to assimilate. More broadly, we argue that the empirical tradition that runs through our curricular practices reinforces a process of subtractive schooling for all learners, where we treat our experiences of diverse modes of beings, beings fundamentally driven by alterity and not sameness, as subjective and messy things in need of simplification, reduction, and purification. When these empirical processes fail, we cling to problematic ideas of singular Truths, rather than embracing the potential that comes along with pluralism and uncertainty. Again, we argue that theorists of curriculum need not treat the present moment of post-truth politics as an issue to solve, but rather a productive space to ask important questions about how we might participate in doing curriculum differently.

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