Queer Narrative Theory and *Currere*
Thoughts toward Queering *Currere* as a Method of Queer (Curricular) Self-Study

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HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL EXPERIENCE in the United States from the lived perspective of LGBTQ students before the Stonewall Riots, noted by some as the beginning of gay liberation in 1969 (Duberman, 1993), are rare. In 1989, twenty years after Stonewall, the *Harvard Educational Review* published one of the first articles on LGBTQ educational issues by Eric Rofes. In it, Rofes (1989) stated,

> [The] across-the-board denial of the existence of gay and lesbian youth has been allowed to take place because their voices have been silenced and because adults have not effectively taken up their cause. (p. 446)

The *Harvard Educational Review* followed Rofes' article with a special issue in 1996 on "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People and Education." In the section, "Youth Voices," LGBTQ high school students gave first-person accounts of their own experiences in public high school.

For example, student Kathryn Zamora-Benson spoke about the disconnect between rhetoric and reality at her school's "Diversity Day" event in 1996:

> Contrary to its "Commitment to Diversity" statement, the Academy does not provide an environment where people of differing gender, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation can grow fully. No healthy person can thrive in the midst of a sea of sexism, homophobia, and other types of prejudice. … Homophobia at Albuquerque Academy may be hidden under layers of polite surface smiles and monotonous mottoes and mission statements, but it lies there nevertheless. (Zamora-Benson, 1996, p. 179)

Although her comments may sound familiar to many people a quarter of a century later, to pre-Stonewall gay men and women, they would have sounded nearly incomprehensible. At that time, when I was a closeted gay male high school student (late 1960s/early 1970s), no specific educational programs or curriculum for LGBTQ students existed (that I've been able to locate).

The first school-based program for gay and lesbian youth—Project 10—was established a few years later by Virginia Uribe in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Uribe described Project 10 in 1985 as "an attempt to relieve some of the pressures on gay kids so that they can go on to graduate instead of dropping out" (Ocamb, 2019, para. 9). At almost the same time in New York City, the Harvey Milk School began accepting LGBTQ students, becoming a formally accredited school in 2003 (Colapinto, 2005).

On the school level, the presence and experience of LGBTQ students before Stonewall was rendered invisible. Today, their experiences do not (or rarely) exist in the historical record. But this absence obviously does not mean that LGBTQ students did not have an American educational experience. They each did in a uniquely different and often painful way. Edmund White (2009), the gay novelist and biographer, gives a sense of the alienation in general of being gay around 1970 when he describes his own early adulthood: "There was no 'gay pride' back then—there was only gay fear and gay isolation and gay distrust and gay self-hatred" (p. 24). But the documentation of these stories is important not just for historical reasons. They also reveal the inspiration, pain, agency, and even joy of under-represented experiences of education. Amnasan (2021) discusses past-and-future losses due to cultural erasure:

> What was working will be erased from history, replaced by the familiar version of social movements led by key figures. Something hard to sustain will be lost not only as a community, but as a way to imagine what's possible when greater numbers of participants are regarded as important and unlimited participation replaces gatekeepers. (p. 1291)

To state the obvious, the lived history of people within a situation is often very different from the official story of that situation (Greene, 2021). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) described dominant stories as "privilege[ing] Whites, men, the middle and/or upper class, and heterosexuals by naming these locations as natural or normative points of reference" (p. 28). Unfortunately, the official story depicting educational history is often conflated with its lived history (Gordon-Reed, 2021). Edleman (2007) states, "through a naturalization of history … [occurs] the conflation of meaning itself with those forms of historical knowing whose authority depends on the fetishistic prestige of origin, genealogy, *telos*" (Edleman, 2007, p. 470). This naturalization of history, even a false history, can supplant untold stories of resistance, reshape the memory of those engaged in historical counter experiences (Brown & Au, 2014) and even scaffold a positive reception of a false narrative.

To the extent possible, the huge gaps in the lived history of American education must be told by the people who lived those histories. It is not easy, however, for queer people to tell their queer stories. An initial problem is surfacing queer experience, given the power of heteronormativity to erase or invalidate queer experience and/or promote its sublimation. Additional concerns are the use of biased tools to investigate and uncover similar biases and the use of storytelling forms that reinscribe heteronormativity (e.g., presenting essentialist findings about life). As de Villiers (2012) states,

> biographical description becomes painfully acute, and the need to resist it becomes pressingly urgent, when the biographical subject is gay. The struggle for interpretive authority … intrinsic as it may be to the biographical situation in general, acquires an absolutely irreducible political specificity when it is waged over a gay life. (p. 11)

The challenge is developing a performance-centered methodology situated within the lived experience of knowledgeable performers (Meyer, 2002). Such a methodology would need to replace essentialist heteronormative discourses that frame analysis and representation of queer lives with non-binary-based approaches that generate complexity and new possibilities.

In this paper, I present and explore one method of queer self-study, the use of *currere* framed by queer literary theory. A curriculum as well as a methodology, *currere* is "a critical form of autobiography and curriculum studies that examines the curriculum of everyday life [and] one's process of engagement within [their] contingent and temporal cultural webs" (Sawyer & Norris, 2013, pp. 25-26). I explore how *currere* provides an epistemological and ontological break with Western autobiographical forms, opening queer complexities and possibilities of multiplicity within self-study and autobiographical narrative.

Specifically, I explore how *currere* facilitates an inquirer's attempt to gain access to and/or reimagine personal history when that history was erased or rendered invisible in the past. *Currere* also scaffolds an approach to storytelling that breaks with the promotion of heteronormative meanings (that is, it queers self-study). In addition, I draw from queer narrative theory as a framework for both the investigation and telling of queer stories in ways that don't reinscribe heteronormativity. Queer narrative strategies of resistance include "queer appropriations of forms typically linked to truth telling, the revelation of secrets, authenticity, and transparency, namely, the interview, the autobiography, the diary, and the documentary" (de Villiers, 2012, p. 27). Such strategies are also found in *how* we tell our stories. Representation is counter-productive with the use of heteronormative narratives, which reify the very structures we hope to dislodge and disrupt (Warhol & Lanser, 2015). Finally, and more in the background, I consider how queer stories (non-stable, multi-directional, non-categorical and non-binary, contingent, indeterminate, counter-intuitive) may destabilize and recenter mainstream stories (clear, definitive, unidirectional, and intuitive).

For a description of queer, I turned to Eve Sedgwick's (1993) well-known conception as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances, and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (p. 8). She further states,

> At the same time, a lot of the most exciting recent work around "queer" spins the term outward along dimensions that can't be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all; the ways that racism ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with these *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses, for example. (Sedgwick, 1993, pp. 8–9).

I also draw from Judith Butler's (1999) influential notion of gender performativity, which replaced conceptions of being gendered (gender essentialism) with practicing gender (gender performativity). Unique, abiding, and continuous views of the self were changed into performative, improvisational, and discontinuous (Meyer, 2002). Furthermore, to queer is to critique and resist: "queer is to resist or elide categorization, to disavow binaries … and to proffer potentially productive modes of resistance against hegemonic structures of power" (Johnson, 2008, p. 166). Current work in queer theory examines queer methodologies within, for example, performance studies, critical race studies, history, lesbian feminist studies, as well as literacy and self-study (Ghaziani & Brim, 2019). Given these complexities, queer history is not neatly bounded in the past, but links to the lived present. For example, Cvetkovich (2007) called for the study of queer

history to explore affective (including that of trauma) rather than causal connections between the past and the present. She suggested that the "invisibility or normalization [of private queer traumas] is another part of their oppressiveness" (p. 464).

To illustrate aspects of this method, I give examples from a *currere* I conducted of my own high school experience, that of a closeted cis-gendered student who identifies as queer and who attended high school in Seattle, Washington, in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Sawyer, 2021). On the surface, I remembered upheavals and dislocations of relationships and of structures of often taken-for-granted support such as school advocacy and even familial acceptance. But, like many queer individuals (perhaps regardless of generation), much of my experience was erased by the school personnel and structures. *Currere*, as I describe, provided me with specific ways to recreate and animate missing experiences from my null curriculum—experiences present by their absence (Pinar et al., 2008; Portelli, 1993; Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

Queer Narrative Theory and Self-Study

Queer narrative theory (also known as narratology) critiques how narrative structures, including those in autobiography and self-study, as well as their investigation, regulate and/or replicate heteronormative structures broadly conceived. Warhol and Lanser (2015) noted, "We recognize 'queer' as the sign for move(ment)s that challenge—and again, aim to understand, analyze, and rectify—heteronormative systems and practices and their attendant binary assumptions about sex, gender, and sexuality" (p. 2). They stated (2015):

> narratives are critical to constructing, maintaining, interpreting, exposing and dismantling the social systems, cultural practices, and individual lives that shape and are shaped by performative acts. Feminist and queer narrative theorists identify and demystify the workings of those norms in and through narrative, and expose the dominant stories keeping the binaries in place. (pp. 7–8)

In relation to autobiography, queer "evokes the doubt, uncertainty, and blurred vision attendant upon the articulation of queer lives and a caveat against taking 'clarity and precision' as methodological goals potentially inadequate to 'messier and blurrier' (queer) textual performances" (Warhol & Lanser, 2015, p. 12).

Self-studies of experience within schools and schooling are especially prone to essentialist storytelling, given the identity regulation of public schooling (Pinar, 1975), encouraging people to "get their story straight" (de Villiers, 2012, p. 10). Part of the normative regulation of storytelling comes from institutions and schools acting as both the process and product—the discourse and its artifact—of the movement of entrenched power from the past to the present (Baszile, 2017b; Foucault, 1972, 1990). As people consider the past, their historical memory may be coded and structured by the very discourses under investigation, which manufacture a stance of consent (Flores, 2002; Gramsci, 1971). Referring to the closely related concept of cultural memory, Brown and Au (2014) state, "cultural memory contends that implicit and explicit modes of power (discursive and material) inform the way a historical narrative is rendered" (p. 362).

In addition to these considerations about content, queer self-study is also concerned with form: *how* we tell our stories matters. Heteronormative storytelling contradicts queer content, reinscribing the very structures intended for disruption (Bradway, 2021). A conventional storyline

with a subtext of redemption, or growth in self-understanding, or even progress and success subverts the depiction of the social disorientation "that queers and other sexual dissidents experience being violently dislodged from the social world" (Bradway, 2021, p. 19). Patriarchal norms in Western storytelling are reproduced in causal plotlines, authoritative representations, bounded representations of identity including gender and sexuality, and a fixed point-of-view—even the traditional organization of words on the page—all these forms undermine the reconstruction of non-binary possibilities of identity (Warhol & Lanser, 2015).

In contrast to these complications, however, queer narrative theorists have recently begun to examine ways in which writers have constructed texts whose content and form promote queer perspectives (Warhol & Lanser, 2015). Strategies include allowing for "nonlinear plurality, the open sense of temporality" (Matz, 2015, p. 242), "revers[ing the] positions of speaking authority—subject and object" (de Villiers, 2012, p. 11), and contesting the authority of signification (Meyer, 2002, p. 258). Matz (2015) has critiqued storylines that produce false hopes for the future as contrasting with typical gay outcomes. Queering is spinning positionality in different directions (Sedgwick, 1993), finding multiple variations in position and strategy without adopting any one definitively" (de Villiers, 2012, p. 15), breaking with causal, deterministic, natural, and pre-ordained plot lines (Roof, 2015), combining memoir with critical essay (Cvetkovich, 2007), and engaging in queer parody, such as camp, "an intertextual manipulation of multiple conventions" (Meyer, 2002, p. 257).

In short, queer narrative theory frames *currere's* critical analysis around gender and sexuality, while at the same time foregrounding the political nature of embodied experience. It acknowledges "linkages between sexual politics and other issues such as war, migration, and racism" (Cvetkovich, 2007, p. 462). And, it also provides a range of queer narrative strategies for synthesizing and telling queer stories in non-heteronormative ways.

Currere Informed by Queer Narrative Theory

Currere's roots in the first wave of the curriculum reconstruction movement of the 1970s and 1980s reveal its critical stance toward deconstructing normative discourses. As a reaction against the structuralism, positivism, and technicism undergirding American curricular thought and design and a reaction toward self-critique in relation to issues of equity (e.g., schools' contribution to mechanisms that sort students into producers and consumers) (Pinar et al., 2008), curriculum scholars called for a reconceptualization of the curriculum field, shifting "from a primary and practical interest in the *development* of curriculum to a theoretical and practical interest in *understanding* curriculum" as critical text (Pinar et al., 2008, p. 187).

In this process of understanding, *currere*'s creator, William Pinar (2017), emphasized the intersections between lived experience and educational experience (Pinar, 2012). Central concepts to curriculum reconceptualization include historical/cultural deconstruction, a juxtaposition of stories, and a promotion of textual multiplicity (Pinar et al., 2008). Within *currere*, these concepts, grounded in education, become pedagogical. As a methodology, *currere* has four moments (also known as steps or stages): the analytical, the synthetical, the regressive, and the progressive (Pinar, 2012). These four moments are generally recursive and nonlinear, with a shifting foreground/background emphasis in their use. In the following brief description of them, I first describe the transconceptual moments (i.e., analysis and synthesis) followed by the transtemporal ones (i.e., regression and progression), framing the discussion around queer narrative theory and

self-study. I illustrate key considerations with examples from my high school *currere* as a skinny, introverted, white male gay (but "closeted") student in Seattle long ago.

The Analytical Moment

In the analytical moment, we decontextualize and juxtapose memories of actors, places, and experiences into a temporal and conceptual third space:

> The analysis of *currere* is akin to phenomenological bracketing; one's distantiation from the past and extrication from the future functions to create a subjective—third (Wang, 2004)—space of freedom in the present. This occurs in the analytic moment, wherein we attempt to discern how the past inheres in the present and in our fantasies of the future. (Pinar, 2012, p. 46)

With my *currere*, my initial goals were to generate memories and to simultaneously dislodge them from their taken-for-granted story lines. I facilitated this goal by using bracketing, as suggested by Pinar and followed by Joe Norris and me in duoethnography (Norris et al., 2012; Sawyer, 2017; Sawyer & Norris, 2013). Pinar (1975) states,

> We require a strategy that will allow us to "bracket" the educational aspects of our taken-for-granted world. That is, we must attend to the contents of consciousness as they appear. One loosens one's usual holds on thinking that reflect cultural conditioning and result in vaguely instrumental and sharply other-directed thinking. (Pinar, 1975, p. 406)

This strategy is akin to the framing technique that queer artist Francis Bacon used in his paintings of embodied twentieth century horror. He framed distorted human figures in the center of his paintings in order to break their associations with a fixed contextual meaning, exposing the figures with a naked physicality (Deleuze, 2003).

To begin my *currere*, I found my old high school yearbook and selected the candid shots—not the formal individual student poses but the spontaneous pictures of students. I arranged them on my physical desktop in a random way, scanned a few onto my computer, and then began to rearrange them in my *currere*. To bracket them I placed them in boxes and formally exhibited them in my study. It's interesting to note that the yearbook editors placed Shakespearian captions under some of the candid photos to provide a witty narration. I highlighted the quotes in italics.

Exhibit One. A Few Yearbook Candid Photos   *Cut along the dotted line, rearrange images; write new captions.*

The image: A white male student with a long, crooked smile and gleaming eyes dangles a rope noose. He looks straight at the camera.

No caption.

The image: In the library, four standing male students crowd around a sitting female student who appears to say something defensively.

The caption: The lady doth protest too much, me thinks. –Hamlet

The title: "The Men's Club Officers" The image: In the lower photo four male teenage officers, all smiling, are dressed in evening attire (black slacks and jackets, white shirts, black bowties) and stand in front of an expensive, LA style restaurant. In the top photo the same four students, lean against a cocktail bar; drinks and straws litter the counter. *No caption.*	The title: "The Girls [sic] Club Officers." The images: Three photos show a faculty advisor with five female officers engaged in public duties in an auditorium. In one photo, they pose in front of a sculpture with the Space Needle behind them. They all wear matching sleeveless argyle sweaters, white knee-high socks, black skirts, and white shirts. *No caption*

The image: A male student, puckering his lips, is camping it up, holding out a limp hand [trying to look disabled? Gay?] and opening his long trench coat to the waist.

No caption.

I let the photos and captions speak to me, to engage me in an evocative dialogue (Leavy, 2020; Sameshima & Irwin, 2008; Sawyer & Liggett, 2012). I jotted down relational associations and thoughts to use later as I synthesized these artifacts from my life.
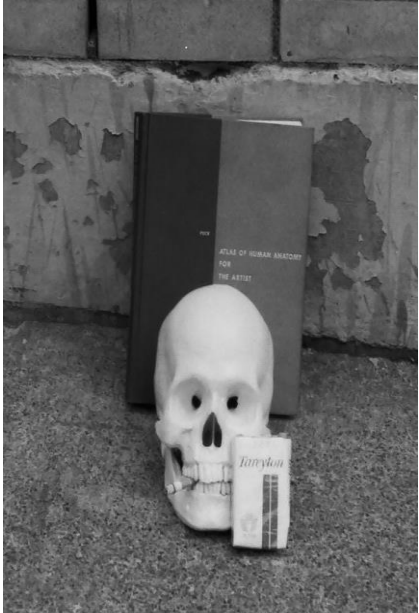
Next, I interrogated the photographs I took myself at the school, documenting the unofficial spaces around the school. Here I wanted to play with the performativity of the text. I turned to Kathy Acker's (1978) novel, *Blood and Guts in High School*, for inspiration. Acker queered her storylines by inserting a hand-drawn dream map—a pictogram—into her novel, as part of its movement. Merport Quiñones (2021) describes this queer strategy:

The achievement of Acker's drawings is that they encourage their viewer's desire to find, to come into contact with this sort of embodied performance without encouraging her attachment to the oppressive hierarchies of cultural production associated with traditional Anglo-European ideas about creative subjectivity. Look for me, they seem to say, but also—leave behind your usual ways of seeing. (p. 1349)

To promote polyvocality within my layout, I was also guided by Francyne Huckaby and Molly Weinburgh's (2015) *Spark Like a Dialectic*. In their duoethnographic self-study, they examined their connections to the familiar and racist "Ice Cream Truck Song," the jingle playing from trucks selling ice cream on city streets. To disrupt norms that mask the song as inviting and wholesome, they constructed their text as a polyvocal performance, with Huckaby writing in white type against a black backdrop and Weinburgh in black type against a white backdrop.

I built on their polyvocality to create a dialogue between my photographs and my vignettes. I opened the storyline by presenting two versions of the same experience.

Exhibit 2: Sex Education Class: Everyone Thought about Sex

We crowded into our sex education class in a basement classroom. Bodies were omnipresent. The flat-topped teacher spoke of the joy of sex within marriage. Then he said something rude about homosexuals. Everyone had sex in mind.

The smell of hairspray and rain-damp jeans filled the basement room. Guys had sideburns. The teacher: homosexuals are perverts. Me: I'm feeling sick. The class: everyone had sex on their minds.

Male students gathered in the choir and the drama class. On stage, they were dressed in loose fitting costumes and sang and danced in "The Miracle Worker" and "Lil Abner." One group at school was called "The Queen's Men." The Queen's Men looked wholesome and fresh—poster boys for queering a restricted space.

Male students gather in the choir and the drama class. On stage, they are dressed in loose fitting costumes and sing and dance in "The Miracle Worker" and "Lil Abner." One group at school is called "The Queen's Men." The Queen's Men look wholesome and fresh—poster boys for queering a restricted space.

The goal is create a third space that resonates with intertextual practices and multiplicity (Bhabha, 1994). According to Aoki (1993), curricular multiplicity is engendered in the spaces that lie between students, teachers, and others—in the dialogues we create. He cites Deleuze: "In a multiplicity what counts are not … the elements, but what there is between, the between, a site of relations which are not separate from each other. Every multiplicity grows in the middle" (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987, as cited by Aoki, 1993, p. 260).

To create dialogue, I juxtaposed items representing both the official and unofficial school curriculum: my senior yearbook, an old report card, old contact sheets of photos I took, and a journal. In dialogic spaces, meanings are generated in the present, broken from their discursive regulation. Central to this process for me was the creation of a polyvocal text. By this I mean the creation of a text (my *currere*) where I examined relational meaning within the dialogic spaces between texts, photos, situated memories, views of curriculum, and meanings over time. This multiplicity of voice promotes an intertextual heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1981) supplanting causality with relationality within the storyline. The polyvoices gave "shape to an internal dialogue" (Baszile, 2017b, p. vi), as a personal catalyst for insight and transformation.

The Synthetical Moment

In the synthetical moment, participants consider how to pull their analysis together, but in an emergent and ongoing way: "unlike traditional Eurocentric autobiography—where the point is to tell one's life story in heroic terms, the point of *currere* is to intervene in one's educational experiences and to consider how they have manifested and how they will manifest as one's private and public self" (Baszile, 2017b, p. vii). Pinar (2012) describes the moment of synthesis as heteroglossic and multilayered, involving both analysis and synthesis:

> Conscious of one's embodied otherness, one confronts one's own alterity in public. Listening carefully to one's own inner voice in the historical and natural world, one asks: "what is the meaning of the present?" This [is] a moment of synthesis—one of intensified interiority expressed to others. (pp. 46–47)

This replication of oppressive historical ideology is avoided by a process that is performative, subjective, transactional, and dialogic. Although here Pinar is discussing curriculum, I think this quote also applies to *currere*:

> Understanding curriculum as deconstructed text acknowledges knowledge as preeminently historical. Here, however, history is not understood as only ideologically constructed, rather as a series of narratives superimposed upon each other, interlaced among each other, layers of story merged and separated like colors in a Jackson Pollock painting. The stories we tell in schools, formalized as disciplines, are always others' stories, always conveying motives and countermotives, dreams, and nightmares. To understand curriculum as deconstructed (and deconstructing) text is to tell stories that never end, stories in which the listener, the "narratee," may become a character or indeed the narrator, in which all structure is provisional, momentary, a collection of twinkling stars in a firmament of flux. (Pinar et al., 2008, pp. 448–449)

Aside from its beauty, the above passage is almost a "queer" narrative manifesto in its critique of narrative authority, suggestion of character morphing, statement of provisional structure, inclusion of dreams and nightmares, and suggestion of open, changing stories.

Exhibit 3. Photography Class

	Two students fight with sticks in the road. Another student makes an anti-smoking message. I go to photography class. The flat-topped teacher talks to a jock. I stay in the darkroom. I love the wet alchemy of chemicals becoming images in the white light.	
Two students fight with sticks in the road.		A student makes an anti-smoking message.

Queer textuality promotes an intertextuality where meaning is derived from the performativity on the page and not their underling denotative meaning (de Villiers, 2012). Thinking of Bertolt Brecht's (1957) alienation effect, I attempted to distance myself from the denotative meanings in the textual material. Decontextualized photos, bracketed details, disjointed plotting, unexpected graphics, shifting points-of-view, announcements to the readers/audience, and jarring juxtapositions, for example—all contributed to an alienation effect and a queer disorientation. Double-coding these images with intertextual, relational, and connotative meanings, I examined them outside their routinized and normative meanings.

Exhibit 4. Language

The contrast between the specific discourses within the yearbook and the mainstream story of American education progressing toward equity is stark. I can't help but think about my indoctrination into the meanings of the yearbook just from these few images: my high school cultural conditioning endorsed white supremacy, male sexual dominance, female subservience, and gay invisibility.

90% of my LGBTQ friends who work in higher education have not received tenure or promotion. They were erased psychically during their employment and then physically after six years of work. Their bodies display political scars.

The language of allegory further opens possibilities in the representation of one's story. Pinar quotes Angelika Rauch: "Allegory is an alternative way of reading that assembles fragmentary pieces in a collage that consists of various, if only once meaningful, representational elements" (Rauch, 2000, as quoted in Pinar, 2012, p. 51). In other words, the assembled pieces intertextually contribute to the multiplicity within *currere*, overlaying detachment and intimacy

and elevating a story as it grounds it: "Allegory keeps open the question of the present, however conclusive the evidence, precisely because it declines to coincide with it" (Pinar, 2012, p. 61)

The Regressive and Progressive Moments

Participants interweave—with occasionally a more dedicated focus on a specific moment—regression and progression—onto the analysis and synthesis (although again, in a non-linear way). In the progressive moment,

> the student of currere imagines possible futures, including fears as well as fantasies of fulfillment. … As in the past, the future is infiltrated with cultural content, but even aspirations for happiness are not only specific to the individual and his or her family, but incorporates elements of national history and culture. (Pinar, 2012, p. 46)

The above quote suggests the regulatory role of "national history and culture" to one's achieving happiness in the future. I think it's important to note that with *currere*, "aspirations for happiness" are lived in the present and are ongoing. To me this consideration echoes the observation about the hollow promise of future-oriented plotlines for queer individuals (and especially youth): critiques of temporality "cast doubt upon any hopeful sense that time naturally unfolds toward queer outcomes" (Matz, 2015, p. 230). Instead, hope for the future is produced by resistance in the present.

Finally, in the regressive moment, an inquirer tries to re-experience past lived existential experience. Again, to stimulate and transform memory, one free associates. "In doing so, one regresses, that is, re-experiences, to the extent that is possible, the past. The emphasis here, however, is the past, not (yet) its reconstruction in the present" (Pinar, 2012, p. 45).

In my experience with *currere* and duoethnography, this step or moment of re-entering the past in a critical yet concrete way with sensory detail and even contradictions of experience is central to the process. Reflexivity and self-understanding are grounded in an "honest" and maybe even harsh re-entry into the past.

The juxtaposed photos and paragraphs in my *currere* overlayed progression and regression, analysis and synthesis, The analysis did not focus on fixed meanings (in contrast to the traditional coding of the yearbook photos), but rather on their possibility of generating and constructing multiple and even conflicting meanings. They defied a simple truth or normative presence. In *currere* more generally, this synthesis generates and communicates new possibilities in the flux of the moment, in the process of engagement. Matz (2015) describes this generative pedagogy of temporality in relation to queer narrative theory:

> Perhaps what is at issue here is less futurity itself than an alternative way to refuse our present circumstances … determined by a more truly innovative temporality. Stressing its pedagogical character, I have hoped to shift attention from time schemes that shape our lives to those that are shaped by our practices and rhetorics. (p. 247)

In the progressive moment, Pinar describes the future as linked to the present (Pinar, 2012, p. 133).

Exhibit 5. Shadow Stories

The Official Story	My Story
My yearbook communicated an idealized image of white male strength, masculinity, beauty, and territoriality. The young men leapt, ran, tossed, carried, tackled, blocked, huddled, kicked, shot, bounced, dribbled, pitched, caught, batted, flexed, swung, putted, scored, and won. The male gaze projected onto young women who were sexualized, trivialized, cornered, and silenced in their photos or captions. Striking is the reified and closed nature of this power. The images and captions taken together showed that the avenues of power were one-way and open only to a few.	I experienced an educational story common to many LGBTQ children: alienation from the official curriculum, personal distress and anxiety, disempowerment, and dislocation instead of a direction forward. This was not teenage angst. It was a situation in which teachers were dismissive in rare references to homosexuality, rendered gay students invisible, or recoiled from gay students presenting an appearance of homosexuality. However, for me, in a shadowed light, I also experienced a disjointed counter curriculum of joy, critique, community, art, and liberation.

I am educated by friends, past and present: those who died of AIDS, and those who currently organize and engage in civil disobedience, those who love dinner theater, and those who are daily bullied and belittled at work. Taking our history from the shadows is a form of resistance.

A Continuing Reflection

When I first considered doing this *currere*, I wondered how easy it would be to access a queer high school story that had existed partly in an interior space. Then, when I began the study and thought back on my experience, I was immediately inundated by images of the school's homophobia and my general alienation, and I couldn't remember any positive experiences or thoughts: the official story dominated my lived experience. Initially, my null curriculum was out of reach. I discovered, as Baszile (2017b) suggests, that the hidden curriculum can dominate and become hegemonic:

> even more powerful than the discrete "education" we receive in schools is the curricula hidden …, reinforced through other social and cultural institutions and practices that support pedagogies of empire—neoliberalism, imperialism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and so on. These pedagogies teach us how to be raced and gendered consumers in ways that reinforce their disciplinary powers. Even more worrisome is that this learning is largely subconscious. (p. viii)

But the mutually generative moments in *currere* and the material strategies of queer narrative theory opened a space for me of political praxis (Freire, 1970).

Doing this study, I realized how the act of creating and presenting queer studies is a political act. Running these stories next to mainstream stories ideally exposes the bigotry if not the violence of more dominant stories. Stories are pedagogical, not just for the listener, but also and

perhaps more importantly for the storyteller/writer. Taylor and Helfenbein (2009) discussed how a process of conceptualization in storytelling can disrupt oppressive discourses (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Rooted in lived counter experiences, conceptualization promotes the emergence of counterspaces, which are "spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning" (Soja, 1996, as cited in Taylor and Helfenbein, 2009, p. 322).

My counterspace of praxis lay not just in the past (helping me to see and combat the heteronormative curriculum), but more importantly, in the present. Today, for queer individuals, heteronormativity manifests in the promotion of a "new normal," delineated by the concept of homonormativity (Duggan, 2002). Duggan defined homonormativity as "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (p. 179). To this day, when institutions of education (and certainly including those of higher education) are not erasing LGBTQ culture and critique, they are often co-opting and trying to mold them into neoliberal shapes.

To resist hegemony, as many scholars have noted, we need to try to understand and confront the lived past to move with a reconceptualized purpose and vision into the future (Baszile, 2017a, 2017b). *Currere* framed by queer narrative theory puts a human face on the abstract and symbolic quality of lived experience, helping to situate it historically, socially, and subjectively (Pinar, 2012), thus helping us to reconceptualize our relationship to it.

One question, though, is whether queer stories—rich with multiplicity, broken plot lines, brackets, and decontextualized frames—can compete with the traditional and predictable Anglo-European story. I have to answer in the affirmative. A few days ago, I saw a film called "In the Name of Scheherazade or the First Beergarden in Tehran," by Iranian director and filmmaker Narges Kalhor (2019) . The film (containing an inner film) presented multiply layered story lines: a queer man seeking asylum in Germany from "objective" immigration authorities, animated versions of tales from the Arabian Nights (Scheherazade telling the sultan a nightly story to prolong her life), delightful shadow-puppet sequences, friends talking and slowing rising on a "flying carpet," Kalhor trying to protect her film from her professor who desired a traditional story with a happy ending, Kalhor strategizing about her project to friends, characters' direct addresses to the audience, German beer-making experts describing Bavarian beer, Iranian authorities lecturing about the Western evils of alcohol. The film was a pastiche of different images and stories. To me, the film presented a powerful intertextual counterpoint to what might have been a typical Western story leading to an ending of unrealized and unrealistic dreams (a form of normative lecturing). The film showed the power of allegory and complexity to open the mind and imagination to new possibilities (in the midst of a bleak landscape).

I think that *currere* and queer narrative forms scaffold one's imagination of new images of social justice in action. Decades ago, Freire (1970) revealed that, to promote liberation, we need to change our understanding of the structures of oppression. To sustain a larger and more enduring social justice project and to counter white supremacy, patriarchal hegemony, and heteronormativity, we need to revise the epistemological and ontological bases for our conceptions.

Clearly, my own high school *currere* is not going to dismantle structures of homophobia or reduce the physical and psychic cost of being erased from the curriculum (Pinar et al,, 2008). But counter stories represented by *currere* help shift the discourses within educational and curricular entanglements that bind. Erased and silenced stories need to be reconstructed, told, and

heard to become pedagogical contexts for critique and disruption of ongoing discourses of supremacy. Telling our own stories is difficult, but the alternative is all too apparent: someone else will do it for us, and we will be present only through our absence.

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