On the Raveling of Deep Aspect
Curriculum as Subjective Place

BRIAN CASEMORE
George Washington University

Psyche is extended; knows nothing about it.

—Sigmund Freud (1938), "Findings, Ideas, and Problems"

In Freud there is no summit, as it were, to be reached, even though consciousness is ethically obligated to bring to exposure as much of its obscurity as it can.

—Hortense Spillers (2004), "Topographical Topics: Faulknerian Space"

I need a notion of aspect that involves all the senses, including the affects. A sort of deep aspect, if you will. The dawning of deep aspect, if durable, will represent a long and arduous process. Perhaps an interminable one. And this process implies a pedagogy, one addressed to the senses as the terrain of those sociogenic forces by which race and gender cement themselves in the modern psyche.

—Dolsy Smith (2020), *Rough Notes to Erasure*

I'D LIKE TO EXPLORE THE IDEA OF CURRICULUM AS SUBJECTIVE PLACE, first through a brief review of psychoanalytic and curriculum scholarship that discloses the concept and then through a reading of Dolsy Smith's (2020) para-academic, autotheoretical book, *Rough Notes to Erasure: White Male Privilege, My Senses, and the Story I Cannot Tell*.[1] Through my reading of Smith's book, I develop and offer a specification of the subjective place of curriculum that emphasizes the encoding of psychical locality in its social implication and involution.

Smith's (2020) book proceeds through critical writing and memoir, making it legible—outside the field of curriculum theory, in literary studies—as an "autotheoretical" text (Fournier, 2021).[2] Within the field of curriculum theory, Smith's project has much to offer our understanding

of *currere* (Pinar, 1975/1994, 2004, 2023; Pinar & Grumet, 1976)[3]—specifically as that labor of autobiographical study is carried out toward understanding white masculinity as lived experience and social hegemony. Working autotheoretically, Smith pursues "the raveling of deep aspect" (p. 80) of white cishet male subjectivity, the social and subjective position from which he writes. The exposure of the lived raveling of hegemonic white male subjectivity—an intimate analysis of the entanglement—is necessary, in my view, for countering the social formations, violent and oppressive, to which it is passionately attached.[4] More generally, *Rough Notes to Erasure* might inform our grasp of *currere* as a necessary practice and an impossible genre of curriculum inquiry. Regarding the genre of *Rough Notes*, Smith describes his effort to "write against the grain of explication in … the academic critical essay"—"a genre," he points out, "that prizes the explicit as both method and end" (p. 29). It is through the logic of explication, Smith argues, that the hegemonic white male subject "figures himself as transcendent to his body and its milieu … forgetting shared history and collective destiny" (p. 23). Smith attempts, then, to "sketch failures of explication," toward exposing "deep aspects of privilege and domination" (p. 28), and he does so under the sway of an autobiographical impulse, a drive to write through the subjective substrate of personhood, and toward "explication's remainder" (p. 41)—what he terms, following Hortense Spillers, "the flesh." I examine Dolsy Smith's project through the notion of "curriculum as subjective place," further specifying the concept through a reading of his work.

I use the phrase "curriculum as subjective place" to evoke the educational potential and the fundamental difficulty of conceptualizing curriculum as the location of educational experience.[5] An inextricable correlate to curriculum *of* or *about* place, curriculum *as* place is, nonetheless, a necessarily distinguishable problem—that is, as I understand it, a problem of subjective emplacement in an emergent, temporally complex, socially and psychically bounded, yet porous and capacious sphere of meaning. Such a sphere of meaning comes to form, Bill Pinar (2004, 2015, 2023) explains, as "complicated conversation" and through the labor of study. With the phrase "curriculum as subjective place," I want to bring emphasis to the encoding of psychical locality in the process of study: in the scene of study.[6] To grasp the significance of the subjective place of curriculum in these terms requires that we reconsider and amplify the psychoanalytic foundations of the discourse on place in the curriculum field (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991b; Pinar, 1991).[7]

I'm using "psychical locality" to designate the spatial figuration of the self's emergence, incompleteness, and entanglement with otherness. I'm borrowing the term from Freud, not in his precise usage,[8] but rather for the spatial ambiguity of subjective emplacement the term installs, both to defamiliarize the notion and felt sense of subjective interiority as wholly mappable, delineable, and narratable space—and, simultaneously, to insist that the elaboration of an inner world, in its confounding "intimate exteriority" (Lacan, 1986/1992, p. 139),[9] is an ineluctable project of the study of place in education.

What Freud (1900/2001) introduces as "psychical locality," Lacan (2004/2014) elaborates as "the scene" of subjectivity, and Paola Mieli (2017), underscoring the worldliness of psychic reality, terms "the scene of the world" (p. 19). For my purposes, psychical locality, the scene, the scene of the world, is the "reality"—a figural, non-referential space—where "a speaking being, lives and experiences the world, where the things of the world are said, are designated, and allow themselves to be studied, observed, classified" (Mieli, 2017, p. 18). While psychical locality is the scene from which we symbolize the world, it is also the scene where symbolization fails—where our study meets the "unassumable excess" of the world and our place in it (Santner, 2001, p. 22). This excess—what Santner (2022) elsewhere terms an "*encystance* of [a] void" of knowledge (p. 127)—is what we negotiate in anguish, pleasure, and ambivalence as we sustain and potentially

transform our "*libidinal implication* in reality, our being truly—and that means *partially*, with *partiality*—there" (Santner, 2022, p. 173).

Freud (1900/2001) introduces the concept of "psychical locality" in *The Interpretation of Dreams* as he discusses a set of diagrams of "the psychical apparatus," the diagrams presented to elaborate the way dreams, understood as unconscious wishes, find passage through memory traces into the perceptual field of the dream and consciousness. For Freud, the term "psychical locality" designates the site of memory processes that function outside of consciousness—the unconscious and the preconscious—as they facilitate the self's libidinal trajectories.

Freud (1900/2001) is inspired in his spatialization of the psyche by philosopher and physicist G. T. Fechner, who, Freud argues, puts forth "the only hypothesis that makes the special peculiarities of dream-life intelligible"—that is, in Freud's paraphrase: "the scene of action of dreams is different from that of waking ideational life" (pp. 535–536). Dreams, Fechner suggests, have a spatial distinctiveness, a scene of their own, a locality and constitutive eventfulness other to material reality—an idea that compels Freud in his pursuit of the meaningfulness of dreams and, more generally, in the development of his topographical metapsychology. This notion animates Freud's thinking because his theory of mind necessitates spatialization. The mind, for Freud, is constituted by what it occludes and by the symbolization—circuitous, conflicted, and libidinally contingent—that discloses to consciousness, however incompletely, its occluded dimension. "Psychical spatiality," Simanke (2011) explains, "was the condition under which Freud's concept of the unconscious could be formulated: if there is to be something mental that is not conscious, it can only belong to another psychical location—that Fechnerian 'other scene' (anderer Schauplatz)" (p. 274).

Although his theory of mind demands a spatial concept, as he theorizes psychical locality, Freud (1900/2001) explicitly avoids the impulse to situate psychical processes anatomically, within any definitive physical or corporeal space. Through analogy, he emphasizes that the psyche is space of another kind, comparing the psyche to "a compound microscope or a photographic apparatus" (p. 536). Within the analogy, "psychical locality," Freud writes,

"will correspond to a point inside the apparatus at which one of the preliminary stages of an image comes into being" (p. 536). More specifically, he explains, unconscious and preconscious processes are located at "ideal points, regions in which no tangible component of the apparatus is situated" (p. 536). As suggested here, and throughout Freud's topographical modeling of the mind, Freud conceptualizes the location of psychic life, the subjective space of self-formation, as a scene non-locatable within—though profoundly entangled with—material reality. The notion of psychical locality *figures* a space for the translation of unconscious libidinal life. "In other words," de Lauretis (2008) explains, through his spatialization of the psyche, Freud demonstrates that

> the drive exists in a space between corporeal stimuli and mental representation, a space or 'psychical locality' that is not just non-homogeneous but more precisely heterotopic: it is the space of a transit, a displacement, passage and transformation—not a referential but a figural space. (pp. 61–62)

Given his speculative theorizing about the inner dimensions and fundamental location of human subjectivity, as he employs figures of space to describe the ultimately non-locatable "scene of action" that constitutes psychic life, Freud heightens a sense of an inner reaching for subjective meaning that must negotiate, as Miele (2017) explains, "a structural doubt that underlies the appearance of the 'I,' and from which the 'I' will ceaselessly suffer" (p. 56). Curriculum that

emerges and functions as a subjective place encodes one's singular negotiation of this structural doubt as well as the social and libidinal coordinates of one's subjective emplacement in the world. Regarding subjective emplacement, following Lacan, Mieli (2017) argues: "The advent of the subject coincides with the constitution of the milieu that is its own" (p. 61). She explains further:

> We call place the particular space that belongs to a given subject, his or her singular relationship with the world s/he inhabits, the creation of "his" or "her" world on the world scene. The drive objects relating to demand and desire situate the subject, locate its sphere of action, draw the coordinates of its extension. (p. 61)

Curriculum as subjective place echoes and redoubles this scene and surround of subjectivation, serving as an intellectual locality for the inauguration of new trajectories of thought, self-formation, and relationality.

The curriculum of subjective place that I've elaborated in psychoanalytic terms is founded in curriculum theory. For Pinar, "'*place*' denotes a cultural, historical, subjectively meaningful even spiritual location" (Pinar, 2023, p. 27). Study, in his theory, as I've noted, establishes curriculum as such a location. Pinar's notion of "study as the site of education" (Pinar, 2015, p. 20)—specifically the spatial and habitational characteristics of this concept—appears in a rich yet somewhat diffuse literature. The idea is introduced, by my reading, in his essay "Curriculum as Social Psychoanalysis: On the Significance of Place" (Pinar, 1991)—his contribution to the book on the American South edited with Joe Kincheloe, an essay reflective of their shared study of the South (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991a; Pinar, 2010).[10]

Pinar's contribution to the book bears out the larger project's social psychoanalytic framework, situating curriculum geographically, in the American South, while elaborating the self's encounter with history in terms of place. Here, Pinar first specifies what I'm calling "curriculum as subjective place." Discussing "a program of study … appropriate to [the] American region" that is the South, Pinar (1991) explains, "such a curriculum not only represents a 'place,' it also becomes 'place,' a curricular embodiment and contradiction of peculiarly southern experience" (p. 165). Pointing up the conditions of social-historical alterity that confront and infuse curriculum-situated subjectivity, Pinar characterizes curriculum *of* or *about* place as, in itself, "a 'place' or 'ground' in Gestalt terms," one that "permits the student to emerge as 'figure,' capable of critical participation in a historical present widely ignored and denied" (p. 165). In this account, a curriculum of place, through some temporal interval, becomes a subjective place. In terms of psychoanalysis, I suggest the student of place encodes their psychical locality through this curricular becoming, coming to inhabit curriculum as a discursive, imagistic, and temporally complex location (affording a unique sense of place in the world), as they refigure "the scene" (the always incomplete psychical location) of their subjective constitution.

In the first edition of *What is Curriculum Theory?* Pinar (2004) integrates his initial conceptualization of the curriculum of place into a *currere*-structured investigation of the, then, present moment of public and institutional education in the United States—the "nightmare" of the present, Pinar is often quoted. The subtle reworking of the curriculum of place material for that book, he explains elsewhere, reflects his effort to "[refocus] autobiography from self-study to self-expressivity through academic knowledge directed to, informed by, the world" (Pinar, 2011, p. xiii). Toward that goal, Pinar manifests the autobiographical labor of *currere* in interdisciplinary explorations of questions and ideas specific to the phases of *currere* (regressive, progressive, analytical, synthetical). In these explorations, Pinar composes what Eric Santner (2022) might call

"constitutively open or decompleted" textual spheres (p. 61), so they might not only inform but also foster subjective and social movement among teachers, addressed in their collectivity, as they face the stultifying conditions of institutional education. I understand Pinar to be saying these compositions are autobiographical in that they are implicitly self-analytical (most often implicitly); and, they are self-expressive, encoding psychical locality in its social implication and involution.[11] They are also provocations to self-analysis and self-implicated academic study, the latter of which Pinar refers to as "indirect autobiography," an approach to study that "subjectifies intellectually the process of social psychoanalysis" (Pinar, 2004, p. 38).

Pinar (2004) subtly inflects the account of curriculum as place in *What is Curriculum Theory?*—emphasizing the psychical constitution of subjectivity-emplacing curriculum by quoting the psychoanalytic thought of Kaja Silverman. As a potential, the emplaced subject of curriculum, who brings curriculum to form as place through social psychoanalysis, Pinar (2004, quoting Silverman, 2000) suggests, "is receptive to the resurfacing in the present and future of what has been" and "holds himself always open to new possibilities for the deployment of that signifying constellation which most profoundly individualizes him" (p. 246). Such openness— what Silverman (2000) calls "an ethics grounded in a passion for symbolization" (p. 62)—is contingent upon the singularity of subjects and their very resistance to such libidinal expansion. Pinar's interpolation of this concept implies that what initiates and sustains curriculum as a place is the working through of one's particular psychical investments, occlusions, and repetitions within a sphere of interdisciplinary study.

Over a decade after his writing on the South with Kincheloe, Pinar (2004) reiterates, a curriculum *of* place becomes "intellectually lived ground" (p. 241), as he indicates that the interdisciplinary discourses that constitute a curriculum of place ("abstract traditions") become "situated in the concrete lives of individuals and groups" (p. 246). In an extension of the earlier Gestalt analogy, Pinar continues: curriculum "becomes a place of origin as well as destination, a 'ground' from which intelligence can develop, and a 'figure' for presenting new perceptions and reviewing old ones" (p. 246). There is here, what we might call, a shift in aspect perception: curriculum appears not only as *ground*—that is, a place of intellectual and autobiographical dwelling and contradiction—but also as *figure* for symbolizing, challenging, and reconstructing perceptions. Subtle as this shift is, it enables us to grasp curriculum as a site and process—like the scene of psychoanalysis, the scene of aesthetic encounter, and the scene of reading—in which the experience and symbolization of subtle movements of perception potentially accrete into scenes of more profound subjective transformation.[12]

If, in Pinar's conceptualization, place is "a fluid and shifting phenomenon" (Casemore, 2017, p. 44), it is ineluctably a matter of subjective presence—and, therefore, a matter of the minimization, loss, and destruction of subjectivity in our historical moment. In his most recent work, Pinar (2023) thoroughly accounts for the narcissistic deterioration of subjectivity via presentism, instrumentalism, and technologization. In earlier work, Pinar (2001) examines specifically "the erasure of subjectivity" within hegemonic white masculinity (p. 979). Such racialized and gendered self-estrangement, he argues, "produces a monolithic self-structure, impervious to self-criticism, inner conversation, [and] self-reflexivity," making those invested in this enclosure of identification "easily threatened, easily threatening" (p. 979). Transformation of these conditions and implications requires, in part, an intimate analysis of the "lived ground of bonded relational experience underneath" white manhood (Pinar, 2001, p. 942)—what Smith (2020), in my view, terms a "raveling of deep aspect" (p. 80). Following Pinar, in my reading of Smith's book, I am concerned with the suturing of white male subjectivity—its emplacement

within—"a certain 'dominant fiction' of interiority" (Silverman, 1992, quoted in Smith, 2020, p. 34) as well as the raveling of that logic of habitation.

Dolsy Smith: Raveling of Deep Aspect

I now turn to Dolsy Smith's (2020) *Rough Notes to Erasure: White Male Privilege, My Senses, and the Story I Cannot Tell* to consider the curriculum of subjective place it discloses.[13] The title of my essay I borrow from Smith: a phrase he employs to characterize his act of writing. Following Wittgenstein's thought on shifts in aspect perception, Smith pursues understanding and transformation of what he calls "deep aspect," a perceptual sphere "involv[ing] all the senses, including the affects" (p. 24).[14] Later in the text, speaking of the strange work of "acknowledgment" and "enthusiasm," Smith writes: "Under their tutelage, might writing become the *raveling of deep aspect* [emphasis added], threading the world's lures with their scriptural trace?" (p. 80). The gerund "raveling"—an untangling—plays against the noun "ravel"—a tangle, a cluster, a knot—such that we are compelled to imagine an analysis of implication that disentangles through writing and, yet, further implicates.[15] The phrase captures, to my mind, the necessity and impossibility of re-symbolizing psychical locality.

Undertaken from the position and through the experience of white male subjectivity, *the raveling of deep aspect* generates "rough notes to erasure," the title of Smith's (2020) book. The title is a doubled signification that suggests *both* the erasure—the concealing—of embodied, subjective, and relational experience in white cishet male writing *and* the recovery and disclosure of that experience as a challenge to hegemonic white male identification.[16] It is a project that contributes to "the 'shattering' of the white male subject," as Pinar (2006) theorizes it, in which the white male subject's "narcissism and exhibitionism are exposed, thereby threatening the collapse of the ancient patriarchal scopic regime upon which sexual and racial difference relies" (p. 183).[17]

In his book, Smith (2020) interrogates the white cishet male subject's production of an interiority that, "as a resource for the coherence of the self, can be sustained only by the violent production of an exterior," an exterior "occupied by those who, by definition [in this logic], lack a proper interiority" (p. 55). In my reading, Smith accounts for the production of a subjective place, one with a ubiquitous curriculum, encoding psychical locality as spatial absolute, as a psychical enclave buttressed against contexts, people, intimate alterity, and extimate selfhood.[18] Smith elaborates the psychical splitting of the white male subject as a possessive orientation to others, intensified by a passionate attachment to what has been severed. Enthusiastic possession, an intersection of impulses for profit and pleasure, orients the white male subject, in Smith's analysis, "obscuring the material and mutually constituting character of … 'interrelationships' with other people and things, [which] torques the senses into a narcissism that feels its entanglement with others and otherness as interiority itself" (p. 59).

The central figure of the book—specified through critical analysis and autobiography—is the hegemonic white male subject. Yet the book is equally focused on writing as process and mode of social and subjective inscription. With regard to the latter, Smith (2020) addresses composition pedagogy in the neoliberal university and its white masculinist underpinnings (p. 84); explores the inscription of white male rage in hate speech that "proliferates in the soil" of the explicative logic of bureaucratic capitalism (p. 32); engages with writers who carry out "critical resistance" and "recuperation" through aesthetic traditions of "Black women's and Black queer survival and

flourishing" (p. 162); and conceptualizes and writes "autobiography as a practice of resisting the closure of the scholarly essay" (p. 35). The topic of writing, the variegated theme of composition, and Smith's reflection on his own writing process—in the context of his deep but ambivalent engagement with his sources—makes the text, to my mind, a remarkable disclosure of study as subjectively expressive intellectual labor directed toward the reconstruction of one's particular "scene of the world."

Smith (2020) characterizes *Rough Notes to Erasure* as a "para-academic work" as he accounts for his struggle to bring the text to form as an "academic book" written "from a position of deep ambivalence about academic writing" (pp. 15–16). Writing through this personal emotional landscape, Smith introduces his larger concern with the "fate of the senses and the affects under capitalist, settler-colonial modernity" (p. 42). His autobiographical labor—directed toward senses estranged, constricted, and encrypted—both initiates and unravels under the force of his critical project. So too does his critical writing—his explication of philosophical, critical, pedagogical, literary, and more broadly cultural and aesthetic texts—give way to subjectivity recovered from the disavowed "ensemble of the senses" (p. 55).

Smith (2020), following scholars in feminist, queer, anti-racist, and decolonial traditions, establishes a stance of provisional, even faltering critique through his analysis of "the social and political dominance … of white cishet masculinity," arguing that it

> depends on the sanctity of this [specific] optical illusion: that the figure cut by these properties [whiteness, heterosexuality, and gender normative masculinity] is at once distinct by virtue of its superiority to all others and at the same time boundless, universal, and hence no figure at all. (p. 19)

Smith inscribes the figure for the purpose of its raveling. As he does so through "figures of space" (Mieli, 2017)—interiority/exteriority, the "fragile cage" of white middle-class culture, the schoolyard, the "phonic materiality" (Moten, 2003) of black radical poetry and music, for example—his book is intelligible as a curriculum of subjective place. In other words, the book comes to form through writing that exposes his psychical locality in its social implication and involution. It is an exposure initiated through Smith's analysis of—and effort to reconstruct—his own ethical orientation to others, those "whose becoming otherwise frustrates the compass of [his] knowledge," exposing, he writes, "not only what I know, but also what I believe and desire, what I have been and what I might become" (p. 77).

Smith's (2020) ethical pursuit requires an exposure, traversal, and reworking of his own scene of subjectification and thus the social milieu of its enactment. For Smith, this is fundamentally a problem of senses and affects, those mangled by "the 'possessive logics' that characterize the dominant modalities of social and political life in the modern nation-state" (p. 43). "These logics," he writes, "estrange our senses and affects, collapsing the multiple vital destinies that bind us to the world into a single sense, the [possessive] 'sense of having'" (p. 43). More specifically, regarding the racial and economic sphere that authorizes his subjecthood, he explains, "The fragile cage of what makes sense in a predominantly white, middle-class (or aspiringly white and middle-class) community" encloses the "vital field of propinquity between world and flesh" (pp. 47–48), diminishing, to some degree eviscerating, capacities for feeling, intimacy, intersubjectivity, ethical sociality, and self-understanding.

Through *Rough Notes*, then, Smith (2020) looks "beyond the enclosure," acknowledging those "traditions of solidarity and collective resistance [that] sustain communities for which

political neglect, economic exploitation, social segregation, and aggressive policing reproduce the conditions that make life in public a daily struggle" (p. 48). More specifically, he attends to, indeed attunes to, a black aesthetic tradition, which he describes, following Fred Moten, as "cut of an aesthetics and an episteme that refuse, openly or surreptitiously, the bargains" of white middle-class culture, a culture that demands "estrangement from every alternative as the [very] conditions of existence" (p. 48). And yet, in line with his critique of explicative logic, he writes: "it proves too easy to reiterate these truths without feeling them" (p. 48). Smith continues:

> *Not feeling them* enacts a flight from my debt to others, a flight whereby I know myself as a subject. But I ought to demand a reckoning of myself and the dominant culture. I ought to demand to know why these forms of knowing and feeling, of sensing and sustaining the commons, do not count as worth understanding to those of us privileged by our identification with whiteness. Which is not to say that they are not worth something to the dominant culture, for they are worth consuming by imitation and appropriation, but in deracinated fashion, pulled from the grounds of reciprocity and entanglement that are the only foundations of an ethical life. Must we remain so stupid and one-sided? (p. 48)

As an autobiographical project, *Rough Notes to Erasure* represents, Smith (2020) explains, his "own efforts to reckon with [his particular] composition as a subject of white male privilege and power" (p. 19). This endeavor relies on Smith's substantial critique of explicative logic, "explication," in his use, describing a "scriptural process that erases as it produces, erasing the trace of its own process" (p. 36). Explication, he continues, "does violence in order to reveal, like the social inscription of the categories of race, gender, sexuality, class, etc., which makes bodies more manageable, visible, divisible, and disposable" (p. 36). Provocatively, given his own extended analysis of privilege, Smith explains, "the explication of privilege [itself] remains bound up with the conditions that privilege explication as a vehicle for what Sylvia Wynter calls the 'overrepresentation' of the white Western subject" (p. 23). Following Smith's own argument, then, the autobiographical and critical dimensions of his book risk an explicative logic intended to "retrieve subjectivity … from what threatens to entrammel it in conditions external to itself," a logic intended to secure "interiority" as a "home to rational purpose in its transparency" (pp. 113–114). And, yet, Smith returns, again and again, to senses and affects of relationality that cannot be contained in the "clarity, precision, and apodictic certainty" of explication (p. 20)—that is, to "the flesh, flush and perplexed and lousy with partiality" (p. 18).

As an example, in the most directly autobiographical essay in the book, Smith addresses his father and explores the conditions of love that sustain the fantasy of the sovereign enclosure of white male subjectivity. He begins the narrative with an intimate account, characterizing his father's illness and frailty in the latter part of his life, recalling too his father's death. He remembers specifically his father's loss of vitality in terms of a waning of his father's lifelong tendency toward "imprecation," an impropriety in speech by which he sometimes "cast" others, particularly racial others, as Smith (2020) imagines, "into the dirt" (p. 221). Smith senses his father "being at the mercy of his own body and its affects, struggling against the difference that he cannot master in himself" (p. 221). Perceiving his father "tired of that burden that the flesh bears as its gift," Smith speculates: "the self closes, in the end, over the riddles and secrets and primal scenes that have sustained it, becoming wholly crypt" (p. 222).

This thought of the animating—what Eric Santner (2001) would call "undeadening"—dimension of personhood secreted in the enclosure of the self emerges as Smith witnesses the

exhaustion of his father's being, and it provokes an affective rupture, compelling an interpretation of the structure of feeling that constitutes white masculinity. Having encountered, through memory, through his writing, the "occultation of the Self" (Guillaumin, 2005, as quoted in Smith, 2020, p. 54) in the person of his father, Smith begins again, recalling his father's last days, now explicitly reading the social relation: "My father died the year white supremacy lost the popular vote but won the election," he writes, "sounding again that furious nothingness within the white male American soul" (p. 222).

This line—to my mind, a difficult one—encapsulates a maelstrom of affect, Smith's agony in witnessing his father's vulnerability, his love and hate for his father, and his rage regarding the terms set for love to circulate between them. It also provokes Smith to reflect further on the subjective place of white masculinity, in particular as it is established through his father's solicitation of love. Smith's father sought to enthrall the son in his love, calling for the recognition of the power of patrilineal love through a playful but provocative question. The question accrues force as an implicit presence in multiple dimensions of the father-son relationship. Uncannily, the question becomes explicit, available for Smith's reflection, in his father's care for, and transference with, his pet dogs. About his father, Smith writes:

> When not shuttling between specialists to manage an obscure disease, he spent his last years swearing at the news, watching reruns of Gunsmoke, and coddling and baby-talking to his two small dogs. *Aw, there's a baby, Daddy. Say, who loves you, Daddy? Aw, who loves you?* (p. 222).

This scene attests to the indirection of psychical expression. Smith's intimate witness of impossible interlocutors discloses opaquely his subjection to paternal authority. As witness to the scene, Smith is negated within the sphere of his father's gaze and yet figured by the force of his question. As Smith writes in response to the question, he demonstrates how curriculum as a subjective place comes to form—that is, by refiguring one's "libidinal implication in the space of meaning" (Santner, 2022, p. 175). Smith continues:

> I wrote this book as a way of talking back to my father. Of addressing the insistent narcissism of that question: Who loves you? … The question doesn't admit of an answer. Or the only answer is its repetition. Not a rhetorical question so much as a question that installs a rhetoric, it hollows out an interiority as the space of its resound. My father's demand that I desire his love remains one of the conditions under which, and against which, I write, since writing, or the ostentatious performance of "being a writer," was, from quite early on, one of the ways in which I learned to court and weather his approval. … That I am white, cishet, male, and middle-class: as the song says, *What's love got to do with it?* But love *does* have to do with it. (pp. 222–223)

Smith writes toward and traverses the symbolic limit of emplaced subjectivity. His writing encodes psychical locality as overdetermined by, in Santner's (2005) words, "the constrained space of a determinate social formation" (p. 105), but it also defamiliarizes the particular and contingent interiority this psychosocial bond affords as the imagined precondition for writing, autobiographical or otherwise. Interrogating love within the intimate space of the family, where it is troubled by the excess of demand and the conscription of desire, Smith composes a curriculum that exposes and begins to ravel his "libidinal implication"—that is, "the affective grip that a social

formation is able to call forth" in him (Santner, 2012, p. 44). Race, gender, and class in Smith's autobiographical analysis are not merely subjective positions functioning as correlates of power; they are libidinally and thus unconsciously invested spheres of meaning, requiring ongoing interrogation for the "sense of place" they afford. "From these social and political aspects of being, which are styles of having a body, of occupying one's parcel of space and stretch of time," Smith writes, "one derives ways of being lovable, along with a formidable sense of where love comes from. *And where, or to whom, it returns*" (p. 223). He continues:

> James Baldwin's observation that Black folk know white people "better than their lovers" reminds us that love, under certain conditions, can become an obstacle to self-knowledge. It reminds us that being loved, or seeking to be loved, might, in fact, enact … the "avoidance of love," insofar as the conditions under which one seeks love require that one refuse to acknowledge the totality of that love's conditions. This requirement is love's pact with power. (pp. 223)

In this thread of autobiographical study, Smith moves from intimate recounting of familial relations to reflective analysis of the social and psychical conditions of those bonds. The line of investigation, free associative in nature, diverges from, while deepening the significance of, a fundamental scene of libidinal implication—the significance bearing not the promise of sovereign subjectivity, but rather, what Janet Miller (2005) calls, the "necessary incompleteness" (pp. 45–56) of autobiographical inquiry. Smith's (2020) contemplation on the act of writing and its intractable uncertainties heightens the sense that self-formation involves both individual creative agency and the negotiation of self-shattering heteronomous forces.[19] As he turns to Baldwin to consider the vicissitudes of love and its racial entanglement, he further concretizes and expands the subjective sphere of his autobiographical study, rather than simply arriving at a new narrative enclosure for the disturbance his intimate analysis provokes. He brings to form curriculum as a subjective place, one that enables, in Janet Miller's (2005) words, "speaking and writing into existence ways of being that are obscured, unknown, or simply unthinkable when one centered, self-knowing story is substituted for another" (p. 54).

As a place, Smith's (2020) autobiographical curriculum counters the white father's pedagogy of love—a pedagogy that "encodes the power not to fail, the power to decide [one's own fate], as the promise of success" (p. 225). Smith counters this pedagogy, not by articulating a superordinate position of explicative critique, but through reflective immersion in the implications and involutions of his psychic life. This mode of subjective emplacement in curriculum—along with the anxieties and uncertainties of interpretation it provokes—is symbolized as Smith, again following Baldwin, underscores the "open secret" of the white father's pedagogy of love, a "pact with power" that white men "expend boundless energy to conceal from themselves" (p. 225). More specifically, he encodes the condition of self-estrangement for further analysis, while also exemplifying the remarkable openness and complexity of his self-study, by figuring the subjective place of white cishet men in a rhetorically variegated statement, a line at once autobiographical, hermeneutic, and critical—a line dialogically abundant, citationally dense, and poetically ambiguous. Although intricately meaningful, indeed cryptic, in its discursive and affective context, the line also reads, in a way, as a platitudinous statement of autobiographical significance, one suggesting the redemption of the self from its obscurities and alterities. Situating first person singular subjectivity in—and, from one angle of perception, in possession of—the locality of its existence, Smith writes: "The *I* appears, irradiated, in its place" (p. 225).

Smith (2020) offers this line as a gloss of a statement made by the French psychoanalysts Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok (1986), a statement that is, in fact, a reversal of a Freudian dictum regarding the purposes of the psychoanalytic process. Freud's (1933) maxim, "*wo Es war, soll Ich werden*" was rendered by James Strachey, Freud's original English translator, as "where id was, there ego shall be" (p. 80). "Most analysts today," Luepnitz (2009) argues, "understand the violence done" to Freud's ideas "by the introduction of the Latinate id, ego, superego" (p. 968). In this context, Smith notes that Freud's line can also be translated "where it was, there I shall be" (pp. 225–226).[20] At stake in the interpretation of the maxim is the degree to which psychoanalysis understands and thus fosters "consciousness" as, in Spillers' (2004) terms, "ethically obligated to bring to exposure as much of its obscurity as it can" (p. 544). By some accounts, particularly the Lacanian one, the line is too often mis-interpreted, interpreted in a way that diminishes the capaciousness and complexity of subjectivity and the analytic process. Ego-psychology, in Lacan's view, takes the line to mean that the "conscious ego can and should both achieve reflective … transparency to itself as well as, on the basis of this achievement, attain the self-mastery of taming and domesticating the unruly, irrational portions of the psychical apparatus" (Johnston, 2020, p. 31). Given his critique, Lacan retranslates the statement ("Ich" read as *I* instead of *ego*)—"Where It [Id] was, I must come into being"—to suggest that psychoanalysis enables "a kind of 'existential recognition' of the symbolic determinants of one's being" (Evans, 1996, p. 82).

Abraham and Torok (1986), who Smith (2020) quotes, reverse the Freudian dictum altogether, specifically in their conceptualization of "crypt" and "cryptonym." The crypt refers to "an isolated region within the psyche in which an experience that is shameful, and therefore unspeakable, has been 'buried alive'" (Rand, 1990, p. 59); and the cryptonym refers to this force of "repression … carried out on words" (p. 59), such that, in Smith's (2020) synopsis: "a word buried in the unconscious part of the ego … occupies a site that can be expressed only by a series of detours through a lexicon" (pp. 231–232). To capture the functioning of the crypt, Abraham and Torok reverse Freud's dictum regarding the relation of id and ego, characterizing an ego split and psychically immobilized by an inner crypt. Not only is Freud's line reversed; the rhetorical context of its articulation also shifts inward. If Freud's statement represents a metapsychological perspective on the purposes of psychoanalysis, Abraham and Torok rework it uncannily to represent an imagined voice from a severed psychical interior. "It is as if one side of the Ego acted the part of the Unconscious for the other half while saying … Where there was Ego there should be Id" (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 81). In this formulation, a shameful experience encrypted in the ego, encoded by an inarticulate word, functions "*like* an unconscious" (Derrida, 1986, p. xx, emphasis in original), an ersatz unconscious signaling an otherness to be symbolized while, through a void of signification, sustaining the structure of psychical occlusion. In another turn of translation, one hears the agony of the impossible self-relation: "*Where I was there should be it*" (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 81).

In Derrida's (1986) introduction to Abraham and Torok's work, he explains the crypt functions as a "kind of 'false unconscious,' an 'artificial' unconscious lodged like a prothesis, a graft in the heart of an organ, within the divided self" (p. xiii). The ego encrypts a libidinally invested shameful experience, one that echoes within but cannot be symbolized in language. Thus severed from the state of becoming that would be an existential recognition of the symbolic determinants of being, the ego is riveted to "the non-place within space, a place as no-place" (Derrida, 1986, p. xxi). In Abraham and Torok's (1986) characterization,

the Ego cannot quit the place where it had once been; it can only withdraw into seclusion and construct a barrier separating it from the other half of the Ego. *Where I was there should be it* is the slogan of a maneuver whose sole purpose is to preserve this nonplace … that shuns symbolization. (Abraham & Torok, 1986, p. 81)

Where I was there should be it, Abraham and Torok (1986) write in the voice of the encrypted ego. This is the slogan, they suggest, of the *I* that eradicates symbolic movement within its subjective place by encrypting a shameful experience. In his translation of the line, Dolsy Smith (2020) writes*: The I appears, irradiated, in its place.* Smith's gloss, in my view, can be read as the slogan of the maneuver to preserve the subjective non-place of white male subjectivity, encrypting the shame of the subject who accrues privilege and experiences the pleasure of identification through white patriarchal violence. So structured, the *I* is grasped as wholly illuminated—*it appears, irradiated*—in a space of its possession—*its place.* In one moment of my reading, fantasizing that Smith has properly, authentically, illuminated the space of "subjective non-coincidence" (Pinar, 2017, pp. 99–100), I admit, his line tempts me to grasp it as a celebration of place-oriented autobiographical study. Yet, the narrative lingers and returns to the point: "The languages of patriarchal white supremacy," Smith (2020) writes,

are cryptonymic … insofar as the ingredients of fantasy no less than the armature of common sense remain, for those who take up those languages, linked to the buried pleasure of the word as a vehicle of unrestrained power over others (the power to terrorize, the power to possess). (p. 232)[21]

The I appears, irradiated, in its place.

Psychoanalytic thought affords Smith a grasp of the structure of the psychical crypt that is the non-place of hegemonic white male subjectivity. But it is writers in what Fred Moten (2003) calls the "Black radical tradition" who lay bare the social dimensions—the conditions of social implication and involution—of this mode of subjective emplacement. For Smith, James Baldwin, Hortense Spillers, and Kiese Laymon mark the place of white men's absence to themselves. Smith (2020) writes:

Of course, whiteness, particularly in its cishet masculine and moneyed isotopes, grants power. But as Kiese Laymon argues, this power is most visible, at the level of the individual, as a kind of absence or negation. … His power is evident in all the things that do not touch his life, like lead in the water, like searchlights through the windows at midnight, like whispers and cries you can't get out of your head. (pp. 224–225)

Smith continues:

Who loves you? That your white Daddy does, and that his love is all, encodes the power not to fail, the power to decide, as the promise of success. But such success remains a volatile, violent, jealously guarded thing, unevenly distributed even among the white male population. The true meaning of this promise is an open secret, as Baldwin suggests, well known to people of color, and which whites expend boundless energy to conceal from themselves. (p. 225)

Smith writes:

> the *I* appears, irradiated, in its place. *It* is what Hortense Spillers calls "the blankness of 'race,'" an emptiness "where something else ought to be," signifying nothing. But the blankness must be covered over; that is the condition of its power. (pp. 225–226)

Understood as a curriculum of subjective place, Smith's study of Spillers, Laymon, and Baldwin in juxtaposition with psychoanalytic theory reveals a form of subjectivation in which Smith is implicated and therefore that he must confront and work through. In this account, subjectivity takes shape—"the *I* appears"—as it covers over a psychical void. That void, as Marriott (2021) would argue, is not merely the "lack out of which meaning is woven," as elaborated in Lacanian theory, but rather the disavowed yet ever-present "thought that makes blackness itself into a state of terror *or* wretchedness" (pp. 9–10).

What I have discerned in the citational context of Smith's uncanny line, he reveals in a narrative about his experience of high school. The narrative discloses a scene of subjectivation in which the marking of the black body as other produces an exterior, securing extimate selfhood in that figured blackness. A scene from the schoolyard, which I quote at length. Smith writes:

> The radio and MTV sponsored our senses, rallying us with anthems by C+C Music Factory. Crushing, we drank from the gospel swoon of Boyz II Men and Whitney Houston. Bobbing our heads to Bell Biv DeVoe, we tasted something that raised the hair on the backs of our necks, as the beat sent shudders past the edge of what we understood. Our flesh was the hem of a garment that we touched, longing to be cured. But the poison that ailed us wasn't a girl. It was the distillate of a structure that granted our bodies the power to fail at others' expense, and to profit by their pain. We consumed Black pain, repackaged and commodified. We white boys sagged our jeans and salted our speech with "bruh." With the white girls in our grade, we made an enclosure of our bodies on the cement porch of McKinley Magnet High, inside a driveway separated by razor wire from the wooden-frame houses of a neighborhood that stood blocks away from the heart of planter affluence, rife with private security, manicured azaleas, and white colonnades. … We white boys cultivated cruelty in our voices and our postures—the cruelty that watched behind my father's eyes, that strikes at the gut, that sounds too much like love. We regaled each other and rolled our eyes, we shoved and joshed and egged each other on. We embodied the logic of "plantation power" that Clyde Woods has written about, keeping to our tight, cruel circle, policing our pyramid, while the meaty paramilitary arm of the state put the screws to all those who, against the white screen of our self-love, passed by in silhouette. Collectively, we ignored, avoided, and neglected our Black classmates, like the Black neighbors we avoided and the Black workers we ignored or talked down to. … From the Blackness in our milieu, we white kids leached a language and a kind of hunger for being, which lit up our insides with feelings that we had no name for. Feelings borne of the radiance of a history of resilience that held no meaning for us as anything but feeling. And what was that feeling, for us, but the nimbus of moments promising a taste of our potential as it evaporated into the present? (pp. 278–279)

The essay in which this narrative and the line regarding the crypt appear is a personal narrative intercalated with critical analyses of literature and engagements with critical, philosophical, and

psychoanalytic texts, acknowledging, specifically, its indebtedness to "the stories of others" (Smith, 2020, p. 35). In the narrative, Smith exposes the emplacement—the quotidian habitation—of his subjectivity in the logic and the affective terrain of patriarchal white supremacy. He does so to depict the fraught psychical landscape from which he now engages the creative work of those who "the terms of [his] embodiment would [otherwise] silence or efface" (p. 35).

Among those Smith listens to most intently "in the midst" (Santner, 2001) of his own autobiographical self-encounter are, as I've elaborated, James Baldwin, Kiese Laymon, Hortense Spillers, and Fred Moten. In his more indirect autobiographical labor, earlier in the book, Smith engages deeply with the work of Tracie Morris, Christina Sharpe, Dionne Brand, Julius Eastman, Sylvia Wynter, and Frantz Fanon. Of his attempt to move beyond the subjective non-place of white male subjectivity, Smith (2020) writes:

> I'm on the terrain here of a debt that I cannot hope to acquit. … Failure or not, my writing exposes my debt to those, living and dead, in the grain of whose works and days I become what I am. … In writing this book, I've tried to quicken my senses to that debt, without making a sideshow of the modern world's profound reserves of suffering and pain. And I've come back, again and again, to the grain of the sentence and the phrase, trying to improvise with (not improve upon) the brilliance of those whom I cite. (pp. 37–38).

In this entangled, dialogical autobiography, Smith (2020) establishes, I suggest, a curriculum of subjective place—one decompleted through solidarity with an expressiveness in the "black radical tradition" (Moten, 2003). Such a curriculum challenges, potentially "shatters" (Pinar, 2006, p. 181), the racialized encrypted state of white men, illuminating the way beyond subjectivation in white patriarchy. Writing through the Black radical aesthetic, Smith explains, Moten accounts for an expressiveness "that court[s] the disruption … 'the cut'—out of which meanings emerge" (Smith, 2020, p. 38). Smith draws on Moten's concept of "the cut" extensively, emphasizing that Moten is not concerned, merely, with "that abstract vantage point from which critical thought glimpses its dispersal behind a deceptively univocal meaning" (p. 39). To the contrary, Smith clarifies that

> The cut evokes the eruption, within the dominant practices of modernity, of the matter of the flesh and its history, which is the matter of spirit. And in particular, the spirit of the Black radical aesthetic, including Black feminist theory and poetics, embodying creative resilience in an unredeemed time of terror and pain. (p. 39)

To seek solidarity—or to imagine joining an "ensemble," to use Moten's term—with this mode of expressiveness, Smith acknowledges, is for him to be caught in the tension of either "exploit[ing] this aesthetic, as in to capitalize on it" or, on the other hand, "draw[ing] strength from it" for his project of raveling white male subjectivity (p. 39). From Smith's positioning "within a history of privileged appropriation, as a subject identified with that privilege," to engage the Black radical aesthetic at all, he acknowledges, "is perhaps necessarily to fail or fall short before Moten's invitation" (p. 39). Smith pursues this engagement, nonetheless, negotiating the affects of failure it generates, offering the dialogical autobiographical narrative "as way, not of owning the story, but of exposing the teller, outside the refuge of critical distance and control" (p. 35). Moreover, and more boldly, Smith imagines, he might find himself in this place beyond the encrypted self, in the place of "an intimate or impossibly proximal otherness that spells both resistance [to white

supremacist patriarchy] and vulnerability at the same time" (p. 66). Such a re-emplacement of subjectivity might effectuate a cut in the suture of the hegemonic white male psyche. If, as Smith suggests, the fantasy of transparent, wholly unencumbered interiority, the fantasy of the self in possession of its interior and the external space of its being, sutures the flesh to forms of domination, then to experience his subjectivity in the "rooted rootlessness" of the black radical aesthetic, inhabiting, in solidarity, "such eccentric, such impossible, ground" (Moten, 2017, p. 91) might be to experience "the cut [as] in-formation, ingress—the world pressing upon the flesh— the world realizing itself in the here and now" (Smith, 2020, p. 202).

Conclusion

In his recent book, *The Praxis of Presence in Curriculum Theory*, Bill Pinar (2023) speaks to the capacity of study to intensify our perception of "our embeddedness in the world," suggesting that study figures our worldly embeddedness—irradiating it, if partially—as curriculum (p. 38). Curriculum—understood as a complicated conversation initiated and sustained by the practice of study (Pinar, 2004, 2023)—emplaces subjectivity in a realm of heightened awareness, one that fosters our attunement to our own experience of "subjective non-coincidence," the conditions of our own "non-coincidence with what is" (Pinar, 2023, p. 37). Non-coincidence is the term Pinar employs to account for subjectivity's irremediable separation from society, culture, history, materiality, *and* the very objects and dimensions of psychic life, despite its overlay with and constitution by these very forms of otherness.

From Dolsy Smith's (2020) *Rough Notes to Erasure*, we learn that such non-coincidence can be encrypted via the white male "fiction of interiority," expressing "a desire," as Smith writes, "to close off the self from those histories, personal, national, and global, that challenge one's claims" to unimplicated self-possession—a desire for personhood that transcends the violent wages of white patriarchy (p. 37). "But this attempt to escape from the folds of history," Smith continues, "is bound to fail" (p. 37). Given subjective non-coincidence, however obscured, and despite fantasies to the contrary, curriculum as subjective place, as "an intellectually lived ground" (Pinar, 2004, p. 241), does not offer conditions of total, harmonious, unconflicted habitation in the space of being; it is not a site where the self, identity, sociality, and heteronomous relations come to be known—or to be explicated—absolutely, nor a space realized in the fusion of subjectivity with the objects and others of our passionate attachment. It is, nonetheless, a place, most certainly, where such fantasies of totalization must be confronted—again and again—a place, in fact, that discloses, if we are attuned to the disclosure, substantial risks in that regard, among them psychical abstraction from lived experience; psychical fusion with social, cultural, ideological, and technological formations (Pinar, 2015, p. 51; Pinar, 2023, p. 94); and, as Dolsy Smith (2020) demonstrates, psychical emplacement and suture within the encrypted non-place of hegemonic white masculinity. The disclosure of such defenses against the presence of otherness we grasp and suffer in the travails of speaking and writing through our individual "scene of the world" (Mieli, 2017)—through the worldly and psychical emplacement of, what Pinar calls (2015), our "dispersed and discordant self-reflexivity" (p. 196). Brought to form through study, curriculum can disclose not only our capacities for symbolizing experience but also and, importantly, as Smith's writing reveals, our failures of symbolization as constitutive of subjectivity—offering us a provisional yet potentially consequential sense of emplacement in the world. The curriculum that becomes a place—"curriculum as subjective place"—I understand, following Smith, to be a

curriculum established through the encoding of psychical locality in its social implication and involution, a symbolic process that conveys, evokes, and even affords a lived experience of place but transiently, not as evidence of new wholly ordered totality or space of being, but as evidence that we are engaged in the ongoing creation of a forever "decompleted" one.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was delivered as a keynote address at the 43rd Annual JCT Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice. I am deeply grateful to Tom Poetter, Editor of *JCT* and President of the Foundation of Curriculum Theory, and the *JCT* team for inviting me to serve as keynote speaker at Bergamo.

2. In Lauren Fournier's (2021) terms, autotheory is a "self-conscious way of engaging with theory—as a discourse, frame, or mode of thinking and practice—alongside lived experience and subjective embodiment" (p. 7). It has roots in the larger history of philosophy and "is brought into sharper view" (p. 36) by contemporary feminist, queer, black, brown, and indigenous artists and scholars – through "cultural production" that emerges in "spaces that live on the edges of art and academia" (p. 7). The corresponding tradition of curriculum scholarship is well elaborated by Janet Miller (2010):

   > Since the late 1980s, autobiographical theories have been and continue to be influenced especially by feminist poststructuralist, transnational, postcolonial, and queer theories, to name a few anti-foundational perspectives and philosophies. These theories enabled curriculum theorists and researchers, from various epistemological and ontological positionings and agendas, to consider divides between fact and fiction as well as the impossibilities of autobiography as a "self-expressive" act; to challenge possibilities of presenting a life "objectively"; and to examine how shaping forces of language prohibited any simple attempts at "truth," reference, or accurate and unmediated representations of '"self" and "others." (p. 62)

3. For key examples of *currere* studies that particularize and expand *currere* theory, see Baszile (2015), Doerr (2004), Doll (2017), Knox (2022), McNulty (2018), and Poetter (2025).

4. In his wide-ranging historical and conceptual study of "the gender of racial politics and violence in America," Pinar (2001) provides in-depth analysis of "the 'crisis' of white masculinity" (pp. 321–416) as well as the social and psychical conditions that compel white men to remain "strangers to themselves" (pp. 939–980). For further analysis of white masculinity in curriculum studies, see Burns (2017, 2018), Casemore (2008), Jupp and Slattery (2010), McKnight (2014, 2017), and Pinar (2006).

5. Through a rich set of methodologies, discourses, and frameworks, contemporary curriculum scholars explore where, how, and to what extent, effect, and implication educational experience is located (e.g., Asher, 2009a, 2009b; Casemore, 2008; Casemore & Guillory, 2023; Chambers, 1999, 2006, 2008; Donald, 2009, 2012, 2020; Gershon, 2013, 2017; Helfenbein, 2006, 2011, 2015, 2021; Helfenbein & Huddleston, 2013, 2021; Hendry, 2023; Hendry et al., 2023; Howard et al., 2016; Huddleston, 2018a, 2018b; Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991a; 1991b; Kincheloe et al., 1994; Knox, 2022; McNair-Lee, 2023; McKnight, 2014, 2017; Nakagawa & Payne, 2017; Ng-A-Fook, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2024; Phelan & Pinar, 2023; Pinar, 1991, 2004, 2014; Reynolds, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2022; Schmidt, 2011, 2015; Slattery & Daigle, 1994; B. Smith, 2017, 2024; Varga et al., 2021; Wang, 2004; Wang & Flory, 2021; Whitaker et al., 2018; Whitlock, 2007, 2008, 2017; Wozolek, 2021a, 2021b, 2023; Wozolek & Huddleston, 2022). The localities and spatial conditions that constitute and contextualize curriculum are understood variously as social, cultural, material, historical, psychological, and affective sites and situations. The study of these places and spaces in their distinctiveness and dynamic interrelationship generates complex vocabularies within the curriculum field, spatial and "placial" terms (Casey, 1993, 1997) used in unique theory-bound ways—as in their source disciplines—to establish substantial and diverse lines of inquiry. The concepts of space and place have become essential to curriculum scholars, Helfenbein and Huddleston (2021) argue, as they demonstrate both that the curriculum field, after the Reconceptualization, has been productively responsive to the "spatial turn" in the social sciences and humanities and that further engagement with "critical spatial theory" in its emergent complexity might enable our understanding of curriculum to "shift into new and generative trajectories" (para. 1). Acknowledging the fundamental importance of lived experience in the field of curriculum studies generally and in spatial analyses of education specifically, these authors draw attention to "scholars of color, feminist thinkers, and queer theorists" (para. 31) whose critical accounts of "embodied, lived experiences of curriculum" (para. 35) represent the foremost effort to produce more equitable spaces of education. In another strand of curriculum scholarship, place—rather than space—is the superordinate and organizing term for

exploring the location of educational experience. Summarizing the foundations of the discourse, Reynolds (2022) argues:

> Place is that which brings the particularistic into focus; a sense of place sharpens our understanding of the individual and the physical and social forces that direct him or her. Without place, our appreciation of such particularistic forces tends to be fuzzy and depersonalized. (p. 351)

Reynolds warns against the conflation via stereotype of "particular places" and the identities of their inhabitants, characterizing and calling for additional curriculum scholarship that serves as "a type of disruption … to the violent cartographies of place, which always already portray certain places and people as other" (p. 362). "To think deeply about power and agency" in the innumerable and complex sites and landscapes of education, Wozolek (2023) argues, requires careful analysis of the "relationships between space and place" (p. 19), a mode of analysis, as her research demonstrates, that can "make unspoken and tacit understandings more explicit" (p. 55). A key challenge in this regard is variation in terminology. The various strands of scholarship on place and space in the curriculum field surely intersect, but the distinctiveness of their conceptual lexicons can hinder careful analysis of shared commitments and critical tensions. Such analysis is enormously valuable for the curriculum field; however, I do not undertake that project in the present essay, even as I employ "figures of space" (Mieli, 2017) to revivify the sense of *curriculum as subjective place*. I am concerned with curriculum that emerges through the intellectual labor of an individual person—through the creative subjective agency of one who studies. Conceptualizing curriculum as the location of educational experience—and, indeed, experiencing it as such – is difficult, as I understand it, because it requires analysis of self-formation via the "idiolocality" of place (Casey, 2001), even as that relation inherently risks an interpretive conflation of self and place that occludes otherness.

6. I'm following Smith (2020) in his use of the verb "encode," as he employs it to designate various forms of occluded signification nonetheless discernable and reachable as sites and sources of meaning (see pp. 34, 123, 151–152, 195, 217, 225).

7. Psychoanalysis—elaborated in terms of "social psychoanalysis" via the Frankfurt School, specifically Habermas—decisively marks the foundations of the discourse on place in the curriculum field (Kincheloe, 1991, pp. 125–127; Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991b, pp. 1–4; Pinar, 1991, pp. 173–175; see also, Kincheloe et al., 1994, p. 409). Since then, psychoanalytic thought has remained influential, although implicitly so, in many curriculum studies of place conducted through autobiography—where the labor of free association, recovering occluded histories, and "working through" informs the autobiographical approach. Otherwise, since the inauguration of place studies in the field (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991b; Pinar, 1991), the study of place as a psychoanalytic endeavor has been largely unelaborated.

8. For discussion of Freud's conception of "psychical locality," see de Lauretis (2008, pp. 60–61), Kennedy (2014, pp. 82–83), Silverman (2000, pp. 85–89), and Spillers (2004, pp. 537–538).

9. Based on this phrase, Lacan (1986/1992) introduces the neologism "extimacy" (p. 139). For a discussion of the significance of this term for spatial thinking in geography, see Kingsbury (2007).

10. In the co-authored introduction to the book, in writing Pinar attributes to Kincheloe, Kincheloe writes: "the analyzed sense of place is a window to the *Lebenswelt*, a vehicle to self-knowledge, and a crack in the structure that allows the archaeologist of self to discover the etymology of one's own research act" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991b, p. 6). Pinar (2010) elaborates Kincheloe's writing on place, noting that this phenomenological account supports Kincheloe's broader concern with the self's encounter with—and critique of—social-historical forces. "Kincheloe's conception [of place]," Pinar writes, "is grounded in subjectivity's capacity to extricate itself from the forces which construct it through awareness and understanding" (para. 2).

11. I'm borrowing the conjunction "implication and involution" from Dolsy Smith (2020), who associates the terms in his analysis of "the property relation" through the work of Cheryl Harris (1993), Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007), and Patricia Williams (1991). "The property relation," Smith explains,

> is supposed to abet our interiority under the figure of our radical, absolute separateness from the external world of things that have properties and that can be possessed. And yet, as Patricia Williams suggests, separateness itself "must be actively obliterated" in the act of enjoyment. (p. 58)

Interiority, then, as shaped through the property relation, is an entwined, even snarled, condition of personhood, "the sense of having" entangling psychic life—via the libidinally animating surplus of the possessed and possessable thing—with others and forms of otherness subject to commodification, while, nonetheless, obscuring those very entanglements. Following Harris, Ferreira da Silva, and Williams, Smith is concerned with racial commodification, its roots in chattel slavery in the Americas, and the way it is "projected along the axes of gender, sexuality, and social class" (p. 57)—all this providing foundation for the self-sovereign interiority of social (particularly, white cishet male) privilege. In this context, Smith suggests: "Rather than 'stultification,' the subordination of our senses to the single sense of having might be better described as *involution* or *implication*"

(p. 58). He employs "implication" here in apposition and equivalence to "involution," using the term "in its more literal acceptation, signifying an entwining or entanglement" (p. 58). Yet, throughout *Rough Notes to Erasure*, "implication" resonates with multiple meanings—as inference, culpable or inextricable involvement, and dynamic enfolding relationship—bearing out Fred Moten's (as quoted in Smith) argument that "phrasing, where form—grammar, sound—cuts and augments meaning in the production of content, is where implication most properly resides" (p. 38). I employ "involution and implication" in this spirit of signification—understanding the sphere of engagement that is curriculum to be a place constituted through our symbolization—that is, our indirect expression—of singular psychical localities that are inextricable from the world.

12. Brought to form through study, curriculum discloses our capacities, practices, and—importantly—our failures of symbolization as constitutive of subjectivity, offering us a provisional yet potentially consequential sense of emplacement in the world. "Study," Pinar (2023) writes,

> acknowledges the extra-discursive sphere that extends beyond our capacity to apprehend it, but study also enables us to articulate what before we could not, yes always in the shadows of what we cannot, but maybe more acutely aware of our embeddedness in the world we inhabit and labor to understand and reconstruct. (p. 38)

13. Dolsy Smith is a poet and university research librarian at George Washington University, where he supports open access publishing and various humanities education projects. He writes occasionally on critical librarianship and composition pedagogy, and his poetry is published in various journals, among them *DIAGRAM*, *The Yale Review*, and *The Volta*. In 2014, in collaboration with the artist Kant Smith, his brother, Smith launched an interactive exhibit in New York—*The Clandestine Reading Room*—about state secrecy and government surveillance. It was a pop-up library of leaked and declassified government documents, shedding light on the history of state secrecy and surveillance. Their project fosters "clandestine reading" in a time when "the very act of reading has become suspect," a mode of reading rooted in a "poetic logic" that might undermine the process by which the state recruits "us to a near-constant state of self-surveillance" (Smith & Smith, 2014, n.p.). In his book, he pursues another—though not wholly unrelated—problem of orienting to oneself.

14. Of Wittgenstein's notion of aspect perception, Baz (2020) writes: "the aspect is a perceived, experienced physiognomy that connects it internally … with other elements of the phenomenal world" (pp. 24–25). He explains further:

> Given the common philosophical understanding of 'objective' and 'subjective', or 'external' and 'internal', the Wittgensteinian aspect is, importantly, neither: it is genuinely perceived, and sharable with others, but, at the same time, is not independent of its perceivers, or of its being perceived. (p. 5)

15. Smith's (2020) "raveling of deep aspect" expresses, in different terms, what Santner (2022) describes as "untying things together."

16. "Rough Notes to Erasure," the primary title of Smith's (2020) book, "is a quotation, under partial erasure, from Alan Turing's seminal essay on computability, which furnishes part of the theoretical foundation for the digital and computational revolution of the twentieth century" (p. 35). Smith employs the phrase to designate "the rough edges of the laboring flesh that vanish behind the products of mechanical production" (p. 36), a correlate to the dynamic by which hegemonic white masculinity erases the lives and labor of racial and gendered others.

17. Smith's (2020) autobiographical project aligns, as well, with the autobiographical curriculum scholarship of Douglas McKnight (2017), who, in his analysis of place, race, and identity, "brings forth counter stories that both challenge [his] identity as a white male from the Deep South … as well as infuse it with a greater depth of understanding of the narrative condition within which all Southerners live" (p. 19).

18. For a discussion of "the intimate alterity of the real," see Shepherdson (2008, pp. 1–49). For an elaboration of Lacan's notion of "extimacy," see Jacques-Alain Miller (1994).

19. See Bono et al. (2008) for an analysis of

> multiple senses of human and nonhuman agency …—the agency of citizenship, power, kinship, gaze, time, the death drive, new technologies and media, sexuality, and finally, the agency of rhetoric and politics—[that] imply that praxis and freedom are based on the heteronomy rather than the autonomy of the subject. (p. 4)

They account for a "heteronomy of the future beyond the threat of subjugation that the term *heteronomy* still implies, approaching it instead as a source of transformation and creativity in the broadest possible sense of the word" (p. 5).

20. Barratt (2013) explains: "Strachey translated this aphorism badly and several commentators, including Lacan, have contemplated its significance and offered alternative translations" (p. 180). Reflecting the debate over the translation, Barbara Johnson, the translator of Derrida's foreword to Abraham & Torok's (1986) book, presents Freud's aphorism as "Where it (Id) was, there shall I (Ego) come to be" (p. 118, note 12).

21. Smith (2020) also hedges against this interpretation, as he writes:

Then again, this pleasure is hardly buried in much of the discourse, historical and contemporary, through which the white American public identifies itself and its common interests. Rather, spectacular and mundane forms of degradation practiced against its racialized and gendered others sustain the white patriarchy in the non liquet of its own laws about rightful possession and the just exercise of power. (p. 232)

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Somewhere between *Currere* and Ficto-*currere*, with My Teacher The Near-Sighted Monkey

TESNI ELLIS
York University

I think that [memory and imagination] are absolutely intertwined. I don't know if there's necessarily a difference, but I don't think they can exist one without the other, absolutely not. Like that question, can you remember something you can't imagine? I like those questions that when I think about them they make my brain kind of stop. You know, is a dream autobiography? Is it autobiography or fiction?

— Lynda Barry in conversation with Hilary Chute (Chute, 2014, p. 77)

THE CELEBRATED ARTIST LYNDA BARRY goes by many names. That is, she transforms into a variety of characters in her drawing classes, instructional texts, and artworks. One of her longest-running alter-egos, The Near-Sighted Monkey, is featured prominently in her work, through which she tells her readers "Words and pictures together make something happen that is more than good or bad drawing. You don't have to have any artistic skill to do this. You just need to be brave and sincere" (Barry, 2019, p. 18; see also Barry, 2008, 2010, 2015). To start making their own comics, Barry's students are encouraged to role-play, too, by drawing characters like scribble monsters and animals much like the ones they may have drawn when they were children. Still, the images that emerge contain both memory and imagination, intertwined as they are (Barry in Chute, 2014). Barry (2002) calls this *autobifictionalography,* her neologism for her distinct approach to deconstructing and reconstructing memory, imagination, and experience by drawing.

Making comics is conceived by Barry (2015, 2019) as a form of reflective practice through which memories and experiences may be analyzed and, as she puts it, transmitted. This resonates with the reflective method of *currere* which begins with the self to understand the significance of educational experiences and desires past, future, and present (Pinar & Grumet, 1976/2015). Further, ficto-*currere* involves explicit engagement with fictional storytelling to subvert our expectations of autobiographical inquiry (McNulty, 2018, 2019)—much like the way imaginary encounters, characters, and multidimensional perspectives can be rendered in comics that are

"something other than representation" (Barry, 2019, p. 22). Somewhere between *currere* and ficto-*currere*, then, we find Barry's *autobifictionalography.* This mode of storytelling is seen across her artwork and makes its way into her teaching—whichever characters we may transform into, Barry invites practicing drawing as a way of seeing and being in the world. She insists drawing is "about increasing your capacity to gaze and to listen and most importantly, to notice what you notice" (Barry, 2019, p. 37). Thinking with Barry, my present research concerns what happens when post-secondary students come together to draw comics, as I explore how drawing generates a sense of attunement to self, others, and the world—and what this means for curriculum study.

In the following, I offer making *autobifictionalographic* comics as a form of inquiry that, like *currere* and ficto-*currere*, can enable one to (re)construct the self while confronting (and even embracing) the limits of self-representation. I am thinking about the possibilities offered by speculative, subversive, arts-based forms of inquiry that implicate the autobiographical even as they leave intentional gaps, traces, and inconsistencies to play with notions of self-representation and generate fantastical, even monstrous, characters and situations. I begin by exploring *currere* and ficto-*currere* before situating my work in comics-based inquiry. Following that, I explore Barry's *autobifictionalographic* practice and analyze an example from a comic of my own, to consider the limits of autobiographical inquiry and whether comics might intervene to offer alternative, expansive modes of representation that invite relationship and dialogue.

Currere, Ficto-*currere*, and Comics-Based Inquiry

In the method of *currere*'s four recursive stages—regressive, progressive, analytic, and synthetic—what is already present may be brought closer for analysis (Pinar & Grumet, 1976/2015). The emphasis on temporality is obvious and the jump from past to future and back is telling—the method is not linear but recursive, encouraging a multidimensional reflective practice (Wang, 2010). Notably, in the imaginative progressive stage, what is *not yet* is considered as revelatory as past experiences (Pinar & Grumet, 1976/2015). The addition of ficto-*currere* by Morna McDermott McNulty (2018, 2019) takes this further to analyze what is *not even.* As the "definitive example of ficto-*currere*" (Downey, 2023, p. 9), McNulty's (2018) gothic novel, *Blood's Will*, explores the figure of the vampire, drawing on post-human, decolonial, feminist theorizing to engage "the reader in an exploration of the contingency of existence and, thus, the role of emergence and intertextuality in the making of one's *currere*" (McNulty, 2019, p. 78). Throughout the novel, human and vampire characters' experiences and reflections are framed through *currere*'s stages, and McNulty (2019) explains, eventually the (human) protagonist embraces a way of being in the world that is "far more emergent and unknown" (p. 79). McNulty's (2019) ficto-*currere* emphasizes a speculative mode, calling attention to the "unreal" and "constructed" nature of memory and fiction alike (p. 75). As Adrian Downey (2013) remarks, through form and content, McNulty (2018) subverts our expectations of autobiographical inquiry.

Downey (2023) argues that *currere* must maintain subversive intentions or else risk producing narratives that are "swallowed up by the same systems they once fought against" (p. 12). For instance, "subversive dreaming" through ficto-*currere* might be a form of "affective resistance to the post-truth movement" because "the speculative modality offers a vision of reality without denying the existence of truth" (Downey, 2023, pp. 7, 10). As works of fiction teach us, fictionalized accounts of experience that explore alternative realities may end up generating alternative ways of being in *this* world.

Taking up the form of the gothic novel and drawing on the literary practice of auto-fiction, McNulty (2018, 2019) shows that artistic practice can complicate autobiographical inquiry by offering ways of interpreting and representing experience that do not provide closure. As McNulty (2019) writes, "fiction is not the opposite of fact; it is the opposite of finitude" (p. 75). Recall, too, what Maxine Greene (1995) knew: through conscious attention to the "as if" worlds made by artists, students, teachers, and scholars alike, we can begin to develop new and ever-shifting perspectives to imagine alternative "possibilities for [our] own becoming and [our] group's becoming" (p. 39).

Curriculum reconceptualist scholarship is intricately tied to arts-based educational research's emergence and ongoing practice; in their earliest conceptions, these fields took dual turns to narrative and autobiographical inquiry. To be subversive in autobiographical inquiry we might, then, continue to expand the expressive forms through which we compose. The materials and artistic modes we play with to do so come with their own affordances and constraints. For instance, comics have recognizable conventions and "while these aspects are not definitional by themselves, take away too many and the work may no longer be recognizable as a comic" (Kuttner et al., 2018, p. 397). Comics are celebrated for their accessibility as much as their complexity, in which stories are told through a blend of images, character dialogue, and text narration, typically across frames known as panels (McCloud, 1993). The field of comics scholarship not only involves literary analysis, but also seeks to understand the thinking and ways of being involved in the act of making comics. I situate my own work in this latter area, aligned with scholars like Nick Sousanis (2015) who rendered his dissertation, *Unflattening*, in graphic-essay form, the first of its kind. Not just an "illustrated text," a comic is "a collective voice made of words and images" typically intended to convey a narrative (Pirie, 2024, p. 7). While the field of comics studies has eked out some space in the academy, comics-based research is still an emerging field of practice involving a meeting of visual, narrative, and arts-based methods (Kuttner et al., 2021). Comics may be made wholly by scholars or by participants or a combination of both, at any stage of inquiry. Wherever in the research process they are made, making comics is considered a way of thinking.

As Sousanis (2015) writes, "we draw not to transcribe ideas from our heads but to generate them in search of greater understanding" (p. 79). Similarly, Barry (2019) believes drawing provokes a "state of seeing" akin to a childlike wonder (p. 37), enabling us to see an "unexpected aliveness in things" (p. 23). Barry believes everyone can draw comics. But, she observes, most people gave up drawing at some point in their childhood, and many can hardly bear the images that emerge if they try to draw later as an adult. She says, "People are dismayed by this and even ashamed enough to destroy the picture—get rid of it—immediately" (Barry, 2015, p. 31). She saves abandoned student drawings from such a fate, insisting she loves their "strangeness that can't be faked" as much as the "realness in them that is hard to come by" (Barry, 2019, pp. 50–51). The strange and the real exist, all at once, in Barry's classroom; they also appear simultaneously across Barry's own work, in what she calls *autobifictionalography*.

Making *Autobifictionalographic* Comics as Inquiry

An *autobifictionalographic* comic might adopt the conventions of autobiography to tell a fictional tale; on the flipside, what may start as an autobiographical narrative is not limited to the *facts* and embraces the fictional elements and detours that *show up* (Barry, 2002, 2015, 2019). The

result is a kind of magical-realism that embraces context, subjectivity, and historicity even as it confronts the inevitable fallibility of memory and constructs some monsters along the way. For example, at the beginning of Barry's (2002) *One Hundred Demons*, we meet present-day Barry, rendered in her now-unmistakable cartoon likeness, sitting across from a demon at a drawing desk. Here, she asks, "Is it autobiography if parts of it are not true? Is it fiction if parts of it are?" (Barry, 2002, p. 7). While this question resonates before and beyond Barry, her belief in artistic practice as a transformative process of both deconstructing and amplifying "fluid and slippery truth claims" is made explicit in this piece (Trousdale, 2022, p. 125). Across the full-colour pages of *One Hundred Demons*, each chapter is divided by a scrapbooked title page filled with glitter, scraps, doodles, poems, photographs, and other childhood and school ephemera of Barry's. In these comics, the character "Lynda" confronts the various "demons" of her life. As a reader, you get the sense that Lynda is looking back on various experiences with these demons to better understand her relationship to them in the present.

These stories move back and forth in time and between settings; we often simultaneously hear adult Lynda's perspective in the narration while a child Lynda is seen in dialogue or activity with other characters. Susan Kirtley (2012) explains the effect:

> In *Demons* Barry limns multiple selves conversing with one another across boundaries of time, space, place, text, and image. The representations of self—child, teen, and adult—challenge notions of femininity and beauty, of race and passing, and of class and social dictates, exploring how the figure of "Lynda Barry" was constructed by and in opposition to these discourse communities. (p. 148)

At the end of *One Hundred Demons*, Barry (2002) invites the reader to pick up their own ink and brush to "paint your demon," insisting, "Try it! You will dig it!" (p. 224). Here and in her instructional, mixed-media publications that follow, Barry models drawing as a reflective practice that is not about visualizing or even interpreting events from lived experience—she says, rather, it's about *re-experiencing* them (Chute, 2014). Her enduring interest in the multidimensional nature of memory is clear in *Making Comics* (Barry, 2019) when she writes:

> The past is in constant motion. Some say a memory changes each time we remember it—giving the impression that a memory degrades over time—but what exactly is degrading? "What really happened" is never a fixed state. The significance of any element changes depending on when we're recalling it, why we are recalling it, and who we are re-counting it to. The past is in constant motion. (p. 150)

As Hongyu Wang (2010) points out, *currere* is a multidimensional reflective practice that stimulates an expansive sense of time—that is, as long as the conditions to engage in the method allow for attention to be paid to one's inner world over a sustained period of time. Sustained attention is central to drawing practice, because "your hand needs time to wander" (Barry, 2015, p. 9). We pay attention, too, by "accepting what shows up" (Barry, 2019, p. 13). Then again, many of Barry's drawing exercises rely on short bursts of activity in time to songs, poems, and movements—suggesting sustained attention to our inner world is not about quantifying the length of time spent. Instead, it is about attunement, the quality of our effort in study.

Making a comic is an experience of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction. To better illustrate this, the *autobifictionalographic* mode, and its potential to stimulate *currere*-like

revelations, I offer a brief look at images from a recent comic of my own (Ellis, 2022). Before I began drawing, I intended to centre the story on my evolving research interests over the past decade. Instead, while the scenes appeared before me, the trials and transformations that had occurred in my personal life took over the narrative. I made sense of this while drawing, where I tend to represent my inner world using imaginative imagery. Another past self, the one I remember being publicly is rendered through scenes of memories. Still, my hesitation to reveal the full story (even to myself) competed with my desire to understand and relay the significance of these experiences.

Select panels from the comic, made by hand in pencil on paper, are seen in Figures 1, 2, and 3.

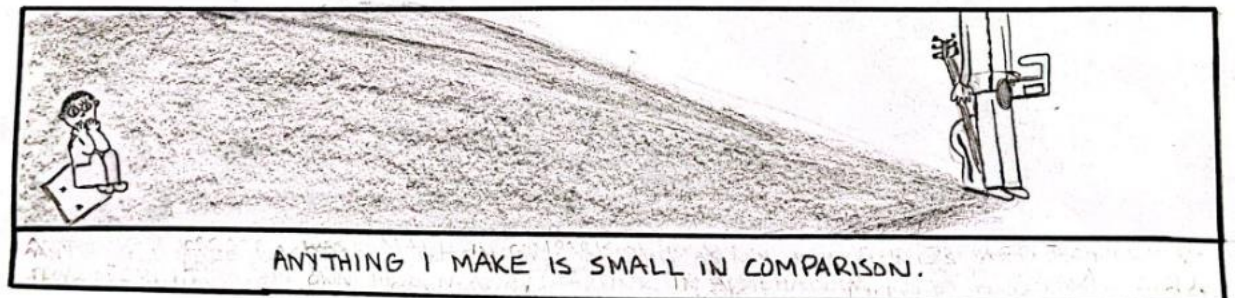*Figure 1:* Select panel from "A Decade of Becoming" comic by Ellis, 2022

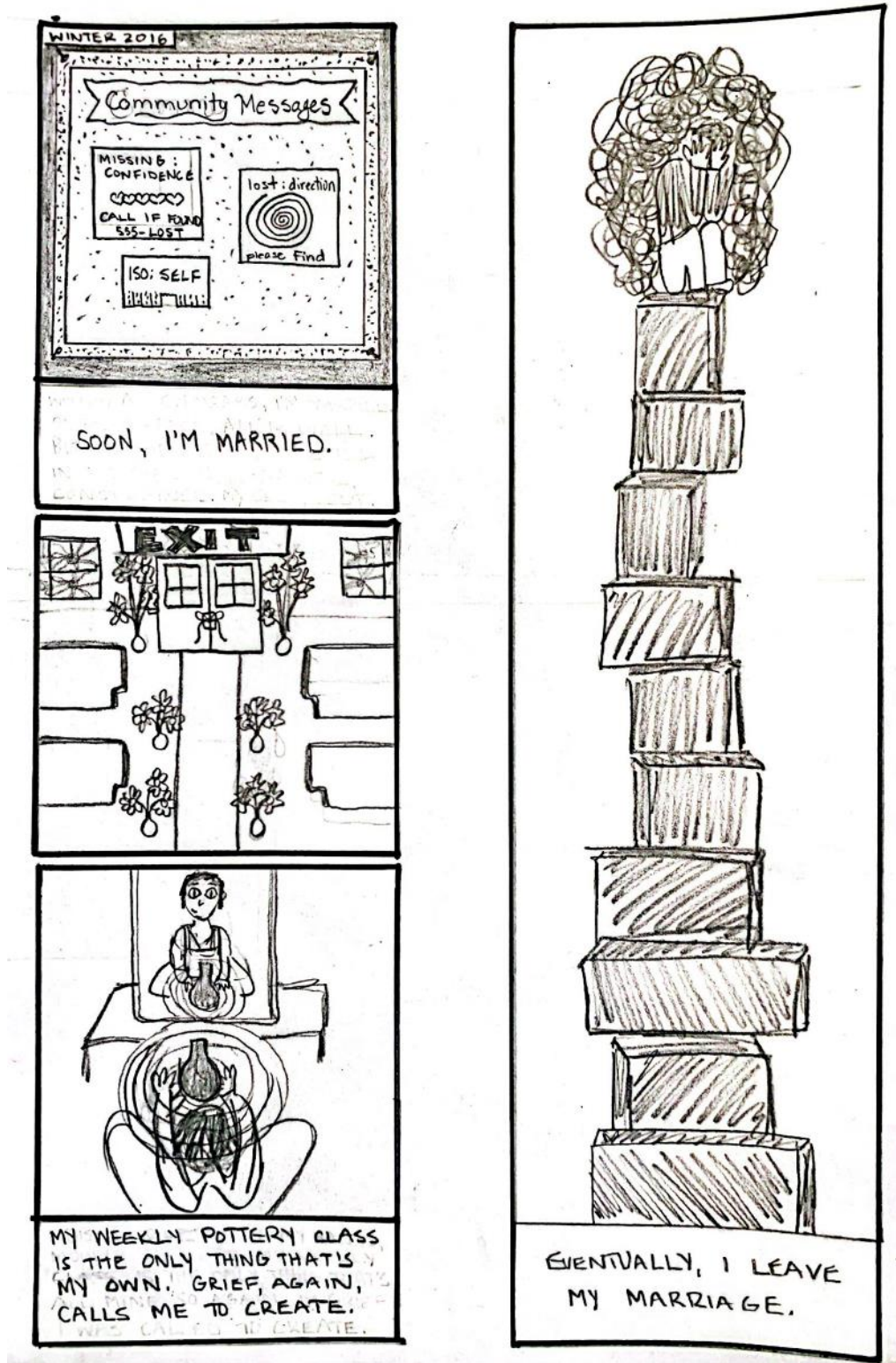*Figure 2:* Select panel from "A Decade of Becoming" comic by Ellis, 2022

Figure 3: Select page from "A Decade of Becoming" comic by Ellis, 2022

One page of the comic (Figure 3) includes four panels that contain: an impossible figure, a photograph I copied from memory, a metaphor, and even a scene from a memory that does not actually belong to me. There's a chronological inconsistency too. However, this remains obscure to the reader, though the narration vaguely addresses the images. Recognizing this, I decided to make authorial ambivalence even more noticeable in the piece. I left visible traces of the comic's own process of becoming—pencil marks, mistakes, erasures, and other ghosts of my process are laid bare. Here, I imply that inquiry and artistry, topics discussed throughout the comic, are processes through which we might attempt to structure and generate insight, but this is never complete, perfect, or tidy—much like my understanding of self.

My choice to leave ghosts of the longer, descriptive narration I later erased might make me an unreliable narrator. But, might an unreliable narrator still give something in what they refuse to disclose? Gaps like these are ready for manipulation thanks to some of the structural conventions available in comics. Indeed, the formal features of this artform are used to amplify the narrative (Lewkowich, 2020). When teacher candidates constructed "dreamwork" comics, David Lewkowich (2020) took to reading these comics with their formal qualities in mind, exploring the ways students used aesthetic strategies available in making comics to reconstruct their fears, anxieties, and desires about teaching. A multidimensional approach to reading the comics is important here: Lewkowich (2020) focuses on what is present in the comics while also reading for the "traces," temporalities, metaphors, gaps in meaning, and ambiguities the form itself enabled their authors to explore.

The frames of my comic are not equal in size; they take up space differently than each other from page to page; and what is outside the frame are those things I still could not confess, even as a drawing. In comics, even the spaces between panels have meaning. These *gutters* contain unseen information the reader fills in on their own, like imagining unseen events, time passing, and actions taking place (Lewkowich & Jacobs, 2019). This absence "that is also a presence" makes for a complex reading experience: the "stillness of the gutter is therefore stirred to life and filled with unpredictable manifestations of the reader's unconscious" (Lewkowich & Jacobs, 2019, pp. 21–22).

A complex reading experience, like what happens in the gutters, also occurs as authors and readers negotiate presenting and perceiving *autobifictional* characters in comics. In Barry's (2002) fictional worlds that feel autobiographical, childhood traumas are exposed, protagonists are sometimes bullies, and parents and teachers can abuse in one scene and care in the next. We learn to extend empathy not just to characters we relate to or care for but even to those antagonistic others we don't even like. Rachel Trousdale (2022) explains that Barry demonstrates

> the double-edged possibilities of autobiography as healing and as mode of attack … an ethical model of life writing not just as reclamation of the past self but as a way to understand the subjectivities of the people around us. (p. 125)

Indeed, as Grumet (1988) reminds us, "every autobiography is both someone else's story and our own" (p. 175).

While making this comic, I confronted my experiences and became aware of the contrivance of reconstructing certain memories. For instance, I negotiated the complications inherent in my approach to representing others in the story. Looking at it now as I think about the opportunities for *autobifictionalographic* comics in curriculum inquiry, I see that I might have taken the work further by putting my past, future, and present selves in a multidimensional

conversation with each other. I might also have broadened that conversation beyond myself, including those present as much as not present in the comic, the characters hovering perhaps just beyond the frame but inevitably implicated in what is made visible. *Unskinning* my own story, as Dennis Sumara and Brent Davis (1998/2013) put it, "recasting self-images, renaming, unfixing" (p. 89), I might have gone further to risk giving voice to the "shared action, shared responsibility, shared lives" that are entangled in what I 'know' about this story (p. 77).

Thinking of Barry's (2002) invitation to make comics about one's "demons," I recognize it may not always seem relevant or appropriate, in educational inquiry, to make public the intimate aspects of experience—revealing our inner world is risky. Leaning more into the fictional side of *autobifictionalography,* and the progressive, future-oriented stage of *currere* might offer a way to navigate that complexity. And with comics, where the creator's unique style and voice are ever present, where the simplest line can denote a figure and any variety of marks can create a world, the limits of self-representation seem not to reside in the marks on the page or even artistic skill, but in our willingness to be brave and sincere as we confront what shows up.

By confronting our demons from the past, even the ones we may have ourselves been, or imagining encounters with antagonistic others in the future, we might do better today. Through *autobifictionalographic* comics, we might re-write parts of ourselves, giving these experiences *second thought.* Thinking with Hannah Arendt (1978), Anne Phelan (2017) describes, "The idea of second thoughts conjures images of revisiting taken-for-granted assumptions and disentangling oneself from memories that have become confused with 'reality' so that they can be reconsidered and argued about" (p. 23). Second thoughts can be analyzed through *currere*, ficto-*currere*, or *autobifictionalography*, if they involve a determined focus on relating (personal, educational) experience to broader, public concerns. This might provoke the kind of meaning-making Stephanie Mackler (2009) wants to see flourish in education and beyond—a "seeing the whole" that determines how we choose to act in the world and "how well we live" (pp. 22–23). Positioned as a curriculum of second-thoughts, autobiographical inquiry might attempt to turn familiar memories, events, or objects on their side to illuminate something forgotten, assumed, or previously hidden from view.

Comics are especially suited to doing and showing this thanks to the ways in which non-representational drawing can render this perspective-shift. For example, we might draw a view of a scene or memory from above, from below, with a micro or macro lens, or from elsewhere entirely. Impossible figures like mine precariously perched atop a stack of boxes can evoke emotion in ways words might not. Characters can be larger (or smaller) than life or embodied by figures that exist outside of reality, like demons, monsters, animals, or aliens.

In the charming, heart wrenching cartooned book by Jonny Sun (2017), an alien is sent to earth to observe humans. In the allegory that follows, Jomny [sic] the alien, who's an outcast amongst his own kind, encounters Earth's creatures and learns about friendship, love, loneliness, fear, knowledge, birth, becoming, and death. That is, he learns all this from the plants and animals he meets, mistaking them all for humans, never having met one. The alien ethnographer is attuned to the relationships he crafts with those he encounters and with the world, even when it makes him sad or distressed. Through this story, "Jomny's curious presence allows these characters to open up in ways they were never able to before, revealing the power of somebody who is just there to listen" (Sun, 2017, back cover). Thinking again of Barry's (2002) invitation to "draw your demon," I wonder what kind of alien encounters and demons of educational experience might emerge from students, what they might look like and say, if they took to drawing them out. If this sounds like child's play, it should, for "the drawing of the child [is] an experience of ability, and of reaching

out a hand to the world" (Vansieleghem, 2021, p. 279). Drawing, after all, is a "prehistoric stage in evolution," our primary language of invention as children before rational, linear thinking dominates and "a mighty gap opens up between words and things, no smaller than between words and pictures" (Taussig, 2011, p. 35).

The stuff of dreams is well-suited to exploring through comics, too, as Lewkowich (2020) explores. Lewkowich (2020) asked teacher candidates to draw comics, constructed as dreams, to explore their "innermost fears, anxieties, wishes and desires about school—the otherwise unrepresentable and impossible psychic life of education" (p. 36). Lewkowich (2020) positions comics as uniquely able to mimic dreams, like moving "suddenly and without transition" from scene to scene (p. 30). Further, distorted versions of experience, fears, or wishes that might appear in dreams can be conveyed in comics. Lewkowich (2020) writes,

> [The] value of using comics to explore the teacher's dream life is that they are inevitably imprecise and incomplete, and since their meanings are never foretold or finally settled, their approximations and imperfections bring us to a place where the limits of knowledge are constantly reinvented, including the limits of what can and cannot be thought in teacher education. To recognize the presence of gaps in our thinking without necessarily needing to fill them in, this is a lesson that comics teach, identical to that initially devised by dreams. (p. 45)

Assured the activity wasn't about their drawing skills, and with an open-ended invitation, Lewkowich's (2020) students took to drawing comics using a range of approaches in their layouts, uses of narration and text, colour scheme, metaphor, sequencing, and more. Again, anyone can draw comics.

As I discovered while crafting my short piece, making *autobifictionalographic* comics provokes what Barry (2019) calls "a certain kind of remembering" (p. 155). She writes,

> It's a sort of living snapshot, the kind of memory you can turn around in. It needs very little set up or explanation. If you can "see" it in your mind's eye with your whole body there will be a hint of a story that bids you to follow. This kind of story moves not from fact to fact but image to image. It can jump time. (Barry, 2019, p. 155)

Turning around in the scene suggests an embodied experience and the parallels with *currere*, here, are evident. Indeed, Wang (2010) finds students describe the memory work of *currere* similarly, where fragments of images appear, out of order, before the story itself; these stories begin with the body, senses, and emotions. I find that a compelling place to begin confronting and interpreting educational experiences, giving them second thought, through figures like demons, aliens, and the stuff of dreams.

Like McNulty's (2018, 2019) ficto-*currere*, Barry's mode of *autobifictionalography* is disruptive. Barry doesn't seem to need an answer to her question, "Is a dream … autobiography or fiction?" (Chute, 2014, p. 77). *Autobifictionalography* does not deny the truth; nor is it about spinning lies—rather, it is an imaginative act of making or engaging with second thoughts and "as if" worlds. Comics are more than representational and through form and structure they can encourage makers to do something other than end tidily. Barry (2019) remarks, "I've always wondered about the four panel structure of comics. Stories and jokes use a three beat: beginning, middle, end. Comics use an additional, unnamed beat—the beat between beats drummers call the

pocket" (p. 124). That pocket might invite *currere* narratives "leaning into uncertainty" (Downey, 2023, p. 7), enabling makers and readers to confront the ambiguities of experience more compassionately. In her practice of (re)membering images, Barry is often especially focused on childhood and, indeed, experiences at school. Importantly, "Barry avoids a retrospective and nostalgic overdose: one is invited back not to *be* a child but to regain and rebuild *some* of what is lost in childhood" (Tolmie, 2022, p. 5, emphasis in original). Might *currere* be described the same way—regaining and rebuilding ways of seeing and being together that are lost in an alienated, instrumentalized education?

If ficto-*currere* can disrupt "the singular story we tell ourselves about ourselves and others, about the possibilities for transformation, and 'invites in' a liminal form of inquiry that is both fictive and real" (McNulty, 2019, p. 83), Barry's (2002) *autobifictionalography* offers a mode through which we might do so. With comics, we can craft and encounter narratives that play with expectations for authenticity in autobiography, enabling us to question broader concerns regarding what is "true" and can be known or narrated about experience—including regarding the other.

Still, curriculum scholarship has a long tradition of complicating the limits and assumptions of autobiographical inquiry in education (Chambers, 2003). Even Grumet admits feeling like she is "drowning in narrative" (Pinar & Grumet, 1976/2015, p. 233); she's wary of autobiographical narratives by teachers that are detached from educational theory and neglect to expand the scope of understanding beyond the self. Similarly, Janet Miller (2005) worries banal invitations to "just tell your story" miss something crucial and risk producing "unified, singular, and essentialized versions of 'self,' 'experience,' 'other' and 'voice'" (pp. 51–52). Grumet suggests autobiographical inquiry can't just be "parallel play" but, rather, "We must write narratives that pose a question about our experience in the world and invite our readers to join us in the exploration that results" (Pinar & Grumet, 1976/2015, p. 239).

Arendt (1958), as Adriana Cavarero (1997/2000) recounts, thought autobiography an "absurd exercise" because the meaning of one's actions is not known to the autobiographer but, rather, the narrator, as in biography (p. 24). The narrator, having witnessed the subject's actions in public, is entrusted to make meaning of the story—a political, relational rendering (Cavarero, 1997/2000). However, Cavarero (1997/2000) offers what she says Arendt missed: "between identity and narration … there is a tenacious relation of desire" (p. 32). That is, we desire both to tell our story and to have it told back to us. Cavarero (1997/2000) writes, "Autobiography and biography, while being different genres of the story, do not seem to be able to manage without one another within the economy of a common desire.…The story is what is desired" (p. 37). For Cavarero (1997/2000), through storytelling and listening, we generate *relating narratives*. This, surely, is more than just parallel play.

Comics rendered as reflective practice might be similarly thought of as a kind of relational, reciprocal artefact between our past/future/present selves and others—especially when we make and share them in each other's company. The significance of relationship in educational experience is implicated here—interpersonal relationships as much as those we craft with ideas. Indeed, while *currere*'s self-study is typically taken up through solitary writing practice, its meaning deepens through sharing and responding to each other's work (Wallace & Byers, 2018). This primarily happens in dialogue and writing, so I offer the addition of further aesthetic strategies of elaboration: *autobifictionalographic* comics, through which we might generate a kind of life-boat full of second thoughts that we can grab onto instead of drowning.

Autobiographical, biographical, and even *autobifictional* narratives need tending to in a relational dynamic. This might be what Barry (2019) means when she describes her experience of

"meeting" an image: "I'm meeting something. And it's also meeting me, if I can stand it" (p. 102). When I make a comic in solitude, it's an exploratory act. But it's a revelatory experience when images are brought to life in a group context, like a class or collective, while others draw and practice and confront their own demons, aliens, and dreams around me. Comics, the way Barry (2019) teaches them, are less about whether we can "accurately" draw a specific thing we set out to express—they are a mode for discovering what we didn't even know was there, waiting to be met. This is an opening for curriculum inquiry just as it is for arts-based educational research, which has long been concerned with debates regarding what is "art" in/and "research," "how" to do and judge it, "when" it "happens," and "who" makes it, sees it, or benefits from it. Attention to techniques, form, and craft remain important—and what we do with what emerges is, too. I learned this from my teacher, The Near-Sighted Monkey: by coming together to make comics that "bring about the unthinkable" (Barry, 2015, p. 10), we ask something of ourselves and of each other. Something we might not know we needed to ask until drawing and writing and sharing stories serves as a kind of incantation, through which we bring forth the strange and the real for analysis.

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Critical Consent Curriculum
Towards Ethical Self-Empowerment in Schools

BONI WOZOLEK
Penn State University, Abington College

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Attunement, Method, and Consent

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Samples

Sample 1: The Call

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

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

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

Sample 2: Friends Don't Bite

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

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

Sample 3: Real Books Defined

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

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

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

Sample 4: Rejecting Identities

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

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

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

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

Curricular Cacophonies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion: Consensual Attunements

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

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

Notes

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

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Autobiography Without an "I"
Currere for the Era of a Porous Self

ADRIAN M. DOWNEY
Mount Saint Vincent University

ERIVED FROM THE FRENCH VERB "*ESSAYER*" or "to try," an essay is an attempt to do something with words. This essay is an attempt to do something without particular words. Specifically, it is an attempt to write autobiographical inquiry without evoking an "I." More concretely, this paper is an attempt to put the very humanistic tradition of *currere*, the autobiographical modality of curriculum theorizing initiated by William Pinar (1994), in conversation with emerging new materialist work on subjectivity, particularly Rosi Braidotti's (2019) posthuman subjectivity, Jane Bennett's (2020) vital materialist self, and Stacey Alaimo's (2010) trans-corporeality. Collectively, these new materialist theories point toward what is described below as "the era of the porous self." Stemming from the central proposition that all matter is agentic or vital, these thinkers all suggest that the material boundaries of the human subject are not as static as they once seemed. Such an unbounding of the subject necessitates new forms of *currere* and new understandings of curriculum, pedagogy, and education broadly (see also Du Preez et al., 2022; Snaza et al., 2016).

When the self is seen as porous, the "I" quickly becomes a problem. Karin Murris (2016) tacitly acknowledges as much in her discussion of the neologism "*iii*." Murris (2016) differentiates the child as seen by developmentalists, a stable and singular "I," from the social child, a discursively co-constituted "ii," and from the child as viewed by posthumanists, a material-discursive relational "*iii*." The italicization of "*iii*," for Murris (2016), "indicates that a self is not a bounded singular organism" (p. 96) and moreover that "the posthuman child *is* relational" (p. 96). The neologism *iii* identifies the unboundedness of the posthuman subject as well as the multiple beings that help constitute it. Du Preez et al. (2022) likewise suggest a need to escape from the "arrogant 'I'" (p. 11) of western individualism and move toward a "humble 'I'" (p. 11) of the interconnected posthuman subject (see also Le Grange, 2019). Yet, writing from an "I"— even a humble *iii*—encompasses within it a whole host of agentic, vital beings, who are rarely considered and almost never given voice. The human body is an ecosystem, and the "I" speaks on behalf of the entirety, often without hearing the voices of its smallest constituents. In essence, all those gut bacteria really ought to be consulted before they are spoken for. There is, thus, an ethic in this movement away from the "I"—something akin to multispecies flourishing (Khan et al.,

2023) within and atop the human body. This paper attempts to draw the contour—a rough sketch and nothing more—of that ethic in and through *currere*.

The aim here is not to erase the necessity of a subject, nor enact the "god-trick" of "speaking from nowhere" (Braidotti & Strom, 2018, p. 209). Erasing the "I" is not an effort to hide away the discursive, linguistic, and ideological biases of the author. Nor is it intended to erase the category of the human. As Murris (2019) notes, "posthumanism is not about doing away with the self—the human certainly does exist—but the crux is to re-think how relationality (intra-actions) brings subjectivity into existence ontologically" (p. 157). Indeed, there is a human writing this paper. That human is often seen as white, CIS gendered, male, and for three years, disabled because of their experience of chronic pain, their lopsided gait, and the cane they sometimes used during that time. These markers of positionality locate the following discussion around a particular human body—a body that contains many others, is influenced by many ethereal forces, and is socially embedded: in short, a porous self.

As complicated as it is to write without an "I," "we" is also out of reach: "we-are-(all)-in-this-together-but-we-are-not-one-and-the-same" (Braidotti, 2019, p. 52). Like "I," to say "we" is almost always a reduction of a complex reality into something manageable but misleading. Reductionism aside, using "we" quickly comes up against the critiques of representing voices beyond one's own, as per the "crisis of representation" in the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). As above, erasing the "I" in this paper is an attempt to avoid representing nonhuman beings who have not agreed to be so represented. The ethic behind this might be named as part of "a new politics of attention" (Snaza et al., 2016, p. xxii), where attention is directed to very small beings (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015). It is an ethic of attempting to do no harm to those beings—something Braidotti (2013) calls ontological pacifism, a part of her wider movement beyond anthropocentrism and toward ontological relationality (Ross, 2021). Describing that ethic in and through *currere* may be an elusive goal, impossible in the current moment and with the current language. Indeed, the potential impossibility of such a task is precisely why it has been framed so explicitly as an attempt—because nothing else may be possible, *yet.* As noted by other posthumanists writing in curriculum studies (Ross, 2021; Snaza, 2013, Snaza et al., 2014), moving beyond the pale of humanist education remains a question—what might be possible? This paper, then, seeks a tracing of one of those possibilities.

This essay begins with a discussion of curriculum studies, posthumanism, and the method of *currere*. It then moves on to characterize the new materialist theories of subjectivity named above. After establishing the theoretical foundations of this paper, three attempts at writing moments of *currere* in conversation with new materialist theories of the subject are presented. While Pinar (1994) initially articulated four discrete moments in the *currere* framework—the regressive, the progressive, the analytic, and the synthetic—others have noted that these moments are interconnected and often bleed into one another rhizomatically (McNulty, 2019). Each of these attempts, then, begins with a short regressive excerpt before passing into a more analytic discussion. All attempts focus on the painful bodily experiences of the human writing this paper, and all showcase something of the complexity of writing an unbounded subjective experience. The paper as a whole can be taken as a progressive moment—a desiring or dreaming of the future—an experimental (Du Preez et al., 2022) gesture toward what might be possible beyond humanism in education. The conclusion of the paper can be thought of as a fleeting attempt at a synthetic moment in the suggestion of a *currere* for the era of the porous self.

Curriculum Studies, *Currere*, and Posthumanism

To begin, four interrelated but non-symmetrical terms deserve attention: I, self, subject, and identity. Pinar (2023) juxtaposes self and identity asserting that self is essentially internal, while identity is both how one thinks of themselves (internal) and how others see them (external). Pinar (2023) also differentiates "I" from either self or identity, saying that it may overlap with either concept, but never perfectly. Indeed, none of these concepts can be easily reduced into any other. While definitions are often reductive, for the purposes of this essay "I" can be thought of broadly as "that which speaks." The term "subject" might be considered "that which acts," and "identity" refers more to the markers of social location such as race, gender, and ability. "Self" is the most difficult of the four to pin down, which is why it serves in the title of this paper. The ambiguity is intentional and, hopefully, productive. Authorial intentions noted, the self might be thought of in many cases as something specifically human.

Pinar (2023; see also Pinar, 2011) is steadfast in his commitment to a human subject, and that humanistic definition of the subject is a sticking point in this essay, one that is also noted by others (Le Grange, 2019). Indeed, a decade ago, Nathan Snaza and several others pointed out that educational broadly (Snaza, 2013) and curriculum studies specifically (Snaza et al., 2014) had been tacitly rooted in a project of humanization since their inception. The problems emergent from this humanistic scope might be summarized as 1) the problem of anthropocentrism and 2) the problem of exclusionary definitions of the human (Braidotti, 2013).

The problem of anthropocentrism, or human-centered thinking, suggests that humans have positioned themselves at the top of a constructed hierarchy of life, and all other forms of life are there to serve their needs. The prevalence of environmentally destructive and extractive industries serves as one example of this hierarchy, and the human-led climate crisis to which it contributes serves as one problem among many with that hierarchy. The problem of exclusionary definitions of the human might be summarized thus: "not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that" (Braidotti, 2013, p. 1). There is a long history of constructing the western, European, CIS-gendered, able-bodied man as the ideal human to which all others (e.g., Women, QTBIPOC, and disabled folks) represent degrees of difference. Difference under that view is negative or subtractive. Being different means being positioned lower in the constructed, unjustified hierarchies of race, gender, and ability and, in some cases, explicitly being named less than human (Smith, 2012). For these two main reasons, then, several thinkers have advocated a move beyond humanism in theory broadly (Braidotti, 2019), in education generally (Snaza, 2013), and in curriculum studies specifically (Du Preez et al., 2022; Le Grange, 2019; Snaza et al., 2014, 2016).

The current of posthumanism and new materialism in educational thinking has often been met with resistance and critique (Ross, 2021). Some critique posthumanism for reducing the human to a thing, which functions precisely as a form of dehumanization. To this critique, Braidotti (2019) and other feminists have responded by distancing themselves from those dehumanizing forms of posthumanism and explicitly stating the need for a theory of the subject. Another critique is that there is nothing new in new materialisms, and that much of what is posited in this ontological turn is anticipated or present in Indigenous knowledges the world over (e.g., Todd, 2016). That critique stands; the concept of kinship, expressed as "all my relations" in different North American Indigenous cultures (King, 1990), does address human interconnectedness with the broader material world and the material world's vitality (e.g., Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). The response offered by Braidotti (2023) has been to agree with this critique, but also express the need to hold

the past to account or to critique European humanism from within its own tradition. Other posthumanist thinkers attempt to work with both posthumanism and Indigenous thinking as allied theories (e.g., Bignall, 2023).

While not presenting a direct counter to the discourses of posthumanism, the parallel movement toward reclaiming the category of the human in education does tend to occupy more attention in curriculum theorizing. Today, curriculum globally is assaulted by neoliberal, ideological, and colonial forces (Kumar, 2019). Schooling has become a dehumanizing process, for some much more than others, and some recent work has sought to speak back to that dehumanizing process under the name re/humanizing education (Lyle & Cassie, 2021). Others reclaim the category of the human but desire distance from the specific version of the human favoured by K-16 education systems—what Dwayne Donald (2019) calls *Homo Economicus.*

Currere, taken here broadly as an autobiographical method of curriculum theorizing or the writing of one's own lived experience, desire, and analysis of education, often aligns with these latter concerns. There is a methodological movement in the call to re/humanize education toward using the "I" as a subversion of schooling's dehumanization (Lyle & Cassie, 2021). Indeed, journals like *The Currere Exchange Journal* and even Pinar's (2011) theorizing of *currere* do much to mobilize autobiographical inquiry as a subversive force within an education system that attempts at every turn to standardize. In short, making the teacher and student subject by asserting the value of their lived experience in and of education remains subversive.

In some ways, *currere* speaks back to the elevation of certain humans above others, especially when taken up as critical race/feminist *currere* (e.g., Baszile, 2015). The problem of anthropocentrism, however, is one that *currere* has yet to fully exit—although some do move beyond the human in their evocations of the method. Paul and Beierling (2017), for example, note the need for a *currere* 2.0 amid the third millennium's proliferation of technology, seeking a self-understanding that is technologically mediated. As another example, Morna McNulty (2019) posits *ficto-currere*, or the use of fiction as a site of reflective work, as possibly working beyond the finitude of the human, especially its temporal bounds. These works still maintain the human subject as their focus, though they do push at the edges of its boundaries.

Lesley Le Grange (2019) has offered one of the more explicit challenges to the human subject of *currere*. He argues that *ubuntu-currere*, or the idea of reflecting on one's own humanness in conversation with human and nonhuman others, might offer response to the conditions of the posthuman moment by shifting *currere's* emphasis on "individual human beings" (Le Grange, 2019, p. 222) toward "an assemblage of human-human-nature" (p. 222), or an ecological form of subjectivity such as those discussed in the next section. While Le Grange's (2019) notion of *ubuntu-currere* inspires this essay and its rethinking of what *currere* might offer in the current era, the essay makes no claim to the label of *ubuntu-currere*. Rather it offers another rethinking, and partial demonstration, of what might be possible in and through *currere* while engaging theories of subjectivity that both extend and maintain the human as a category.

The Porous Self

It has been suggested above that the era of the porous self emerges from the work of new materialists. This is only partially true, as the last 400 years of western thinking about subjectivity can be viewed as a continual unbounding of the subject once bounded so tightly by Descartes' *cogito*. Such a reading of the history of western thought would suggest that the porosity of the self

has several antecedents in social and psychical contexts. Here, however, it is the *material* porosity—the conceptual erosion of the boundaries of the flesh—that is of interest.

Jane Bennett (2010, 2020) forwards one form of material porosity. She is perhaps best known for her book *Vibrant Matter* (2010), which posits the idea that all matter is not only agentic, but vital. Her more recent book, *Influx and Efflux* (2020), builds on this idea of matter's vitality to question what a self under such conditions might be and do. Hers is "a process-oriented self—a model of subjectivity consonant with the world of vibrant matter" (pp. xiv–xv) where "I alters and is altered" (p. xiii). In some ways, this book could be read as extending a form of psychical porosity, or intersubjectivity, to the nonhuman world through the idea of influence. Everything exerts influence on everything else. Relevant to the essay at hand, Bennett suggests the writing self as plural through influence, noting that in writing *Vibrant Matter* she "came more and more to experience 'my' efforts as a writer as but one vector within a much larger group of conative influences" (p. xi). The writing "I," then, for Bennett (drawing on Walt Wittman), "is a porous and susceptible shape that rides and imbibes waves of influx-and-efflux but also contributes an 'influence' of its own" (p. xi). Bennett's model of subjectivity certainly and explicitly evokes a porous self, but it is significantly less well known than the others discussed below.

Braidotti (2019), whose critical feminist iteration of posthumanism has seen more popularity in curriculum studies (e.g., Du Preez et al., 2022; Snaza et al., 2014; Ross, 2021), posits a posthuman subject as a human-in-relation, its state of subjectivity being continually made and remade through agentive assemblage with technological, geological, and biological entities. More concretely, microbes, technologic extensions, and chemical concoctions are all co-present with the "I" that writes these words, the "I" that speaks. The precise connection here is a network—not exactly the inter-fleshed connections discussed below, nor the ethereal realm of influence evoked above. Drawing on Deleuze's (1988) reading of Spinozian monism, all matter is one and agentic for Braidotti (2013), which allows for a movement beyond the anthropocentric hierarchies between different forms of life. Acting across difference, here seen as an affirmative force (Braidotti, 2019), within the assemblage becomes an act of ontological pacifism (Braidotti, 2013), which requires care, attention, and consideration (Bignall, 2023).

Stacy Alaimo's (2010) notion of trans-corporeality posits a more substantial, enfleshed connection between the human and other beings. Simply put, the boundaries of the flesh are no boundary at all. Alaimo (2010) writes that trans-corporeality shows how "the human is always meshed with the more-than-human world" and "underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (p. 2). Alaimo's is not a simple call to return to nature, nor to recognize that humans are a part of nature. Rather, she highlights the very real material interconnectedness of the human and nonhuman world. The proliferation of chemicals that are at once invisible and profoundly affecting to human health is one example of the way humans are constantly caught up in a material world that extends beyond perception.

More precisely on the issue of subjectivity, Alaimo writes, "understanding the substance of one's self as interconnected with the wider environment marks a profound shift in subjectivity. The material self cannot be disentangled from networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial" (p. 20). Work proves the illustrative example here, where "the body of workers [is] managed like other 'natural resources'" (p. 30). The material flesh of the human is caught up in the economic flows of capitalism, and all the beings that live on or within the human are brought along for the ride.

The porosity of the self, then, whether the precise connections with nonhuman beings are viewed as networked (Braidotti, 2019), enfleshed (Alaimo, 2010), or influential (Bennett, 2020),

is not a politically neutral fact. Some bodies are affected more harshly by the conditions of advanced capitalism than others. Some experience it as a necropolitics (Mbembe, 2019)—a tracing of the line between life and death, "make live" and "make die," along the boundaries of identity. Other bodies benefit from these systems. An emphasis on human materiality cannot erase the ways bodies are affected differently—thus the need to maintain the subject.

The combination of these new materialists' theories of the subject suggests a new era in the history of subjectivity, an era of the porous self. It is a moment of going beyond the bounded subject in both incorporeal and corporeal senses of the word, a moment of meshing human and nonhuman beings. In such a moment, new ethics and new methods will be required. Sketching the contour of that ethic in and through *currere* is the project toward which this paper now turns.

The Attempts

Each of the following subsections presents an attempt at writing *currere* with a porous model of subjectivity. The attempts focus on the experience of chronic bodily pain. They engage the living curricular experience of a body as part of the three-year course it ran alongside chronic pain. They, thus, form something akin to an embodied inquiry (Snowber, 2016), where the body is seen as a site of learning with, following new materialism (Ross, 2021), those co-present in the bodily assemblage seen as co-learners and co-teachers. Each attempt begins with a short regressive storytelling followed by a more analytic discussion, which puts the experience in conversation with the theories elaborated previously.

Attempt One: Pain

A virus jumps from animal to human. Its spread ramps up and forces the flows of global mobility and capitalism to slow. First China, then Italy and Spain, and before long North America. Even rural parts of the world are affected. Everything happens on Zoom now. Human materiality is an afterthought amid the proliferation of the virtual. Yet, some walk. Some run. Some are injured. Some seek health care for their injuries.

In the early days of a pandemic, a phoneline connects a physician and a body. The body's mind describes a pain: lips form familiar words, and worry propels them forward at rapid speed. Zoom. The next day, a virtual visit. The body, now broken, displays itself on a screen; it moves so the mediated eyes can assess. An adductor strain; go to physiotherapy. Do not pass go. Do not collect 200 dollars. Physio is a version of the same: a body displayed on a screen lead through a series of movements in hopes of helping the body to heal, to right itself.

But it never does. Every so often, when things seem to be moving in the right direction, a wave of adrenaline-anxiety-dejection washes from head to toe, and a familiar pain reignites. Muscles grow tense with knots, tendons pluck like guitar strings across other structures, and things stick together. "Move" says the physiotherapist; "sleep" says the doctor; "drink water" says the osteopath; "work" says the mind. Work, work, work. Reject the body, for it has betrayed "you"; live in the mind. Live as a mind. Such logic becomes tangibly possible within the accelerated world of neoliberal academia.

As above, in *Bodily Natures*, Alaimo (2010) highlights the way that 20th century working class bodies can be seen as lodged within the social flows of capitalism: "Capitalism … devastates humans and nature alike, extracting economic value and leaving a wasteland behind" (p. 35). In conversation with the poetry of Meridel le Sueur, Alaimo is specifically thinking of folks who work in close relation with the land, but more broadly, people who spend their lives working in physically demanding jobs literally sell their bodies for capital, and the proliferation of dangerous chemicals used in many of those industries makes the exchange far from equal.

In academic work, including schooling, the body seems less present. It is thought work—work of the mind rather than the body. It is, by comparison, much less strenuous work—a very privileged position. Yet, the increased expectations to publish or perish along with the heightened accountability measures of the neoliberal university certainly affect scholars' bodies. In some cases, those external pressures are internalized, first intersubjectively, then, following Bennett's (2020) thinking, they become materially lodged within the body through its postures and gestures. The protestant work ethic expresses itself physically as an inverted c-spine on an x-ray—a "scholarly" posture with shoulders hunched forward in intense study.

When bodies stop working, there isn't a user's manual on how to fix them. The medical system is the only way to find help, and, as Ivan Illich (1975) noted, medicine has become bureaucratized in much the same way that schooling has. Over the last three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadian healthcare has been found lacking in several respects. In October of 2022, there were 116,000 Nova Scotians on a waiting list for a primary healthcare physician (Thomas, 2022), about 11% of the province's population. No primary health care means over-run emergency rooms, and in rural parts of the country, they have routinely begun shutting down over long weekends because of staffing shortages; doctors in the system say there seems no end in sight to the ongoing crises (Varner, 2023). Medicine's bureaucratization is no small part of these situations, and it all directly impacts human bodies, some more than others. Indeed, necropolitics touches every social structure, whether medical, economic, political (Mbembe, 2019), or educational (Wozolek, 2023).

Pain proves the case in point. Poorly understood in general, pain is inherently subjective; no two bodies will feel pain in precisely the same way. Where there is subjectivity in medicine, there is also the possibility of bias, and there is a long history of ignoring the pain of racialized and Indigenous peoples in medicine. Joyce Echaquan, for example, was an Atikamekw (Indigenous) woman who, in 2020, died in hospital after live streaming the racist behaviour of staff toward her. Her pain wasn't taken seriously, and she died as a result.

No two pains are ever the same, and that, combined with systemic barriers, can constrain empathy. *Currere* might offer a way to understand the nuances of each pain personally, rather than bureaucratically. Indeed, running the course of empathy for others' pain, *no matter how small*, may be part of the ethic palpated in this essay—an ethic of listening for pain.

The regressive slice above depicts a privileged, white, academic body in constant pain. The body is treated here as a unity, porous only in the psychical and social senses of the word. Psychically, the voices of others are carried within it, while socially it is lodged within different systems, discourses, ideologies, and languages that help constitute it. While each of those dimensions has a certain materiality, from a critical posthumanist perspective this is all above and below the subject. Braidotti (2019) writes: "going 'above' the subject points to the supra-subjective face of institutional and social power. 'Below' the subject operate the sub-subjective and affective factors, including the singular psychic landscapes. 'Alongside' the subject there are adjunctive bio-technological assemblages of posthuman relationality" (p. 53). This first attempt, then, fails to

capture the material porosity of the subject. It does, however, highlight the way human materiality is always bound up with social forces. Nonetheless, a second attempt must centre the biological, technological, and geological beings that work "alongside" the subject.

Attempt Two: Chemical Entanglements

Three years after the initial injury, this body is still knotted, tense, and constantly affected by intensities; pops, clicks, and cracks all result in the familiar burning of pain. The pain is like the weather, bound within the constraints of climate but changing daily. Some days the pain is a hurricane, on others it is a mild rain, but the land is always saturated. The rare sunny day only evokes what has been lost: mobility and possibility.

Muscles are, by this point, deeply knotted together in ways they ought not to be. Muscle adheres to fascia, fascia adheres to muscle, and dura mater adheres in places it ought to float free. The muscles are sticky. Levator scapulae has knotted from hours spent hunched over a vibrant computer screen. Work. Work. Work. A thousand spikes made of Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS)—the plastic commonly used in LEGO®—poke into the muscles trying to release those knots (acupressure). In the first moments, the pain is intense. The skin doesn't like being poked, and blood rushes to the area. Slowly, inflammation sets in, and the intensity abates. After 15 minutes, there is a soothing effect, and the back seems less tense than before.

They say it's good for chronic pain (Frizziero et al., 2021), but those knotted muscles won't budge. They are too stuck, and the sticking creates pain as those muscles are held in places they ought not to be—like after a night spent at an odd angle.

Sleep and pain are intimate partners. Pain makes sleep impossible, while sleep is one of the most effective responses to pain. In pursuit of sleep, the body becomes entangled with chemicals. 10 mgs of doxepin or cyclobenzaprine helps the body rest through the night, but pain often persists. Cannabidiol, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and valerian complicate the entanglement. Each comes with effects and affects; each touches mindbody in unique ways.

Chemicals, whether ingested or pressed against flesh, become a part of the bodily assemblage. They affect and are affected (Braidotti, 2019; Deleuze, 1988); they change and are changed by their interactions with the body. It is easy to see this play out unidirectionally—to see the way that chemicals can affect the human body. It is harder to conceptualize the ways that human bodies might affect chemicals. Chemicals are not often thought capable of feeling, but in the era of the porous self, nothing is indifferent to anything else.

Those chemicals form the maps of human-nonhuman entanglement. Haraway (2012) made that point by drawing a line between estrogen supplements, themselves both necessary in some cases and caught within the social webs of patriarchal capitalism, and pregnant horse urine—a sisterhood across species. Tracing the web of any chemical makes one into what Alaimo (2010) calls an "ordinary expert," someone who wades through the scientific research and government reports to understand the way they and others are affected by those chemicals.

Cannabidiol (CBD), for example, is one of the two main active chemicals in the cannabis plant, commonly referred to as marijuana. The other is Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Both are often cited as effective interventions on chronic pain, and while anecdotal evidence for that claim seems strong, a recent systemic review was only willing to state that some cannabis products "may be associated with short-term improvements in chronic pain" (McDonagh et al., 2022, n.p.). From

a strictly medical perspective, the combination of CBD and THC has many effects on the body: dizziness, sedation, and perhaps pain relief. The authors also mention the psychoactive effects of THC and the possible anti-inflammatory effects of CBD (McDonagh et al., 2022).

Looking at these chemicals only for their physiological effect, however, can be profoundly misleading. In Canada, cannabis was legalized for medical purposes in 2001 and for recreational use in 2018. Cannabis, however, remains illegal in many parts of North America and around the world. In the United States, the disproportionate number of African American and Latino men who are charged with cannabis-related offences and see jail time as a result is well noted, and the initial criminalization of cannabis was rooted in racist perceptions and fears of those same groups (Bender, 2016). Bodies matter. The movement of cannabis from the legal system to the medical system and then into the free market doesn't erase its history. Each movement brings new associations, effects, and affects with it. In all these movements, bodies affect and are affected differently along the lines of race, gender, and ability.

This brief cartographic exercise—a gesture toward an ordinary expert's mapping of two cannabinoids—suggests an interconnectedness between humans and the rest of the world. Of course, there is nothing new in this notion (Jardine & Lyle, 2022). Indigenous thinkers have made clear the interconnectedness of the world since time immemorial (Todd, 2016). Posthumanists have likewise taken to mapping these interconnections, and even the idea that humans are entangled with chemicals is not a new one (Alaimo, 2010; Haraway, 2012). When read in relation to this essay's concern with not speaking for others, however, one additional provocation emerges: at what point do those chemicals become a part of "us," and when can they be unproblematically written as part of the "I"? Once they pass the gums? Once they enter the blood stream? Once they are metabolized by the liver? Likewise, must chemicals be injected or ingested to be a part of "us," or do those ABS spikes pressing into muscle form their own subject-assemblages in allyship with skin, blood, muscles, and fascia? Are they part of the "I"?

There is a weird quality to this regressive-analytic attempt at *currere*—not another failure, *per se*, but perhaps an impossibility or *aporia*. Writing the experience of those chemical others— listening for their pain—seems at once weighty and fantastical: something deserving of serious ethical contemplation and the sort of anthropomorphizing found in a science fiction novel. The beings in question are often imperceptible to the human, making "a new politics of attention" (Snaza et al., 2016, p. xxii) extend outward toward unintelligible and unseeable beings. Such an ethics, then, may ask for more than the human can give: a sustained effort to think and perceive across scale.

Attempt Three: Across Scale

Climate change makes hurricanes, forest fires, and floods more likely and more intense, and the East Coast of what is today called Canada is battered by all three in one year. Three months' worth of rain falls in 24 hours. Homes flood, roads wash out, and tragically one adult and three children lose their lives in a storm surge washing their vehicles from the highway. Two months previous, nearly 150 homes burn down amid province-wide forest fires. The loss of a habitat is no small sorrow.

In September of the previous year, a hurricane anthropomorphised as "Fiona" ravages the entire east coast. Trees are uprooted, harbours are destroyed, and mass, days-long power

outages make power lines—neglected until they fail—suddenly very affecting. They are down everywhere, black-snake corpses halting certain flows but reigniting others.

Amid the chaos, generators become the norm. There are mile-long line ups at the gas stations that still have power. Everyone has a generator, and they all require gasoline to run. A street once quiet in that suburban way now becomes a cacophony of industrial electricity generation, running 24 hours a day.

The body's sleep is disrupted, the industrial vibrations are too jarring a sonic disruption. Vibrations affect the body on a cellular level; too much intensity can thin, damage, or destroy nerve and muscle cells (Curry et al., 2002). Sleep deprivation can limit cells' capacity to heal themselves (Mônico-Neto et al., 2017). These two facts are derived from experiments on rats but are also acutely known by the body in pain. Those generated vibrations touch the body, keeping it alert throughout the night. Sleepless, the pain gets worse until the power comes back, and the generators stop. The privilege of all of this is striking.

Defined as unearned advantage received through group membership, privilege *feels* like entitlement and disregard for the feelings of others—a negation of the social contract in favour of one's own self-interest. Privilege is sacrificing nonhuman life for the advancement of human knowledge. Privilege is having pain immediately understood as real by healthcare professionals and never being denied care. Privilege is being noisy in a quiet world and being quiet in a noisy world. It manifests as a boisterous conversation held across seats on a crowded plane, a strong opinion shared without provocation, or an unnecessary generator running through the night during a power outage. It is the ability to choose excess without fear of consequences or repercussion and the freedom to choose lack amid abundance.

Privilege is affecting, and the dimensions of its affection are scalar—they are experienced at different magnitudes by the privileged and those witness to it. For those who live oblivious to their impact and the way their success isn't completely of their own doing, privilege remains infinitesimal. For those on the other side, privilege is obvious, impactful, and omnipresent.

The social and the environmental intersect in the way privilege functions as a discrepancy of scale. As Taylor and Pacini-Ketchabaw (2015) note, very small beings—earth worms, ants, gut bacteria, individual cells—are often difficult to mark as a life. Indeed, the smaller the being, the more difficult it seems to take notice of them. This incapacity to see, to mark as a life, functions precisely as a privilege; it is a privileging of the human scale.

This privileging of the human scale, another name for the wider problem of anthropocentrism, is what makes the ethics of not representing voices beyond one's own within the bodily landscape seem weird or fantastical. The beings discussed are too small, both materially and psychically, to influence and be influenced from a privileged perspective. In a word, then, the "new politics of attention" (Snaza et al., 2016, p. xxii) is as follows: hear the pain of those at the edges of perceptibility; be changed by the listening, but don't speak on their behalf. As above, this attention may be impossible to maintain, but the attempt is still worth pursuing. Indeed, the course run in the pursuit may well yield precisely the sorts of curricular insights needed amid the current environmental crisis. *Currere* might remain the method of such an attention in curriculum studies—albeit a *currere* changed by pursuit.

Currere for the Era of the Porous Self

This paper began by articulating the desire to move away from the "I" while maintaining the autobiographical scope of *currere*. The justification given was that the "I" reduces the myriad others within the human body to non-agentic objects, which simply isn't true according to new materialists. Though gut bacteria and ingested chemicals may not speak in human languages, they do act on and within the ecosystem that is the human body. Is it right, then, to speak for them as part of the "I"? No, has been the answer implied throughout this essay.

Yet, the absence of the "I" herewithin has not perfectly rendered the porosity of the self, nor avoided speaking for others entirely. In the first attempt, the body was unified in order to highlight the way it is continually bound up in the social. In the second, questions were raised about the various beings that constitute and live in or on the body, but those questions did not lead to answers, only a vague weirdness at the edge of human perception. The third attempt brought together the previous two toward a demonstration of the complexity of perceiving divergent scales—the very large socio-environmental effects of climate change and the very small destruction and restoration of cells in the body. In all three attempts, the absence of the "I" opened new possibilities but foreclosed others, and none yet completely show the porosity of the human subject. Indeed, a fourth attempt would offer something else entirely—and a fifth too.

Given the above, this paper and its attempt to write an autobiography without an "I" ought not to be taken as a suggestion of "the right way" to write posthuman *currere*—if such a thing can be said to exist. The "I" remains subversive to the neoliberal and colonial forces that would move education toward objectivity and standardization (Pinar, 2011), as well as a productive space from which to speak of embodied and embedded experiences of social reality (Braidotti & Strom, 2018). This paper has been an experiment with method, an attempt to see what might be possible beyond curriculum studies' latent humanism (Snaza et al., 2014).

While this attempt has surely fallen short in several respects, and it may not seem as focused on the human dimensions of education as some may like, it has offered four key insights into the shape of *currere* to come. First, the boundaries of human flesh are porous and interconnected with other beings, and this necessitates new ethics—listening, being affected, but not speaking for others. Second, the human, no matter how porous or material it may be considered, is always caught up with the social, and those writing educational experience must hold that closely. Third, writing the experience of a porous self requires the development of ordinary expertise (Alaimo, 2010) and, thus, an expansion to the disciplinary scope of curriculum studies. Everything within and touching the classroom becomes a teacher in posthumanism (Ross, 2021) and drawing cartographies of those newly re/complicated conversations (Du Preez et al., 2022) may require reading medical reports, scientific research, and/or science fiction as part of living the curriculum (see also Snaza et al., 2016)—it will move curriculum studies beyond the anthropocentric foundation of education, as uncomfortable as that may be. Fourth, engaging ethically with very small beings requires a careful attention to the privilege of human scale and a willingness to listen at the edges of perceptibility. *Currere* can, perhaps, be the method of such an attention.

The shape of the "new politics of attention" (Snaza et al., 2016, p. xxii) sketched here is a circle of influence (Bennett, 2020) radiating from the subject-assemblage (Braidotti, 2019), where the human is not at the centre but remains a crucial part of the picture. *Currere* tracing the contour of this attention is not concerned simply with the expansions of the subject's interior space (i.e., Pinar, 2023), but also with an expanded mapping of the subject-assemblage and its materiality.

While the writing of that attention in ethical ways may have limits given current language, the attempts will surely create a new paradigm of curricular thinking, a *currere* for the era of the porous self.

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Curriculum Curation
Centering *Mirrors and Windows* in an Inclusive Bookshelf Project

KELLY P. VAUGHAN
Lewis University

> "Story creates culture. It teaches us to feel, think and behave in ways generally approved of by those around us. Story conditions us." (Griffith, 2018, n.p.)

AS AN AVID READER, a mother who carefully selected stories to share with my children, and a former secondary English teacher, I understand the power of stories to teach young people about themselves, our communities, and our world. As a curriculum studies scholar, I recognize that the stories we include and exclude from our classrooms convey our understanding of the knowledge and stories of most worth. As a teacher educator, I know that decades of research support the inclusion of literature featuring diverse characters. In fact, since the 1980s, scholars of children's literature have advocated a *mirrors and windows and sliding glass doors*[1] approach to literature selection, which posits that each student should read books that mirror their own "lives and experiences" and that provide windows into others' experiences (Bishop, 1990, p. ix). Organizations like the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the American Library Association (ALA), and the International Literacy Association (ILA) have all created resources to encourage teachers to include multicultural and inclusive collections of children's literature (see NCTE, 2015; also Crisp et al., 2016.) Yet, I also know that while the concept of a *mirrors and windows* approach to literature has been popular for decades, many classroom libraries have too few books by diverse authors and illustrators that feature diverse protagonists (Tschida et al., 2014, p. 28). Given the continued lack of diversity in school curriculum, there is growing recognition of the need for teachers to share books that help students "meet diverse characters" (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 570; see also Crisp et al., 2016). Teacher educators must encourage preservice teachers (PSTs) to develop critical literacy skills and curate inclusive and multicultural collections of texts.

As a curriculum studies scholar and teacher educator, I constantly strive to help preservice teachers learn specific knowledge and skills while also developing a commitment to deliberative, theory-informed decision-making in the classroom. In this article, I share the results of a year-long project designed to answer the following questions: How did participation in a course project influence preservice teachers' ideas about multicultural and inclusive literature? Did participation

in a course project influence preservice teachers' attitudes about curriculum curation? To answer these questions, I analyze PSTs' surveys and selected class work, reflect on my experience as the course instructor, and discuss implications for future practice. This project is significant because it illustrates an approach to praxis for future teachers, provides an example of *curriculum studies in education,* and supports more inclusive curriculum curation.

Literature Review

In this article, I join ongoing conversations about the importance of inclusive multicultural literature and teacher educators' role in preparing preservice teachers to promote critical literacies and curate multicultural and inclusive literature collections in their classrooms.

Expanding Notions of Mirrors and Windows

Many scholars have documented the need for literature that provides *mirrors and windows* within the context of race, ethnicity, culture, language, sexual identity and orientation, and disability (Bishop, 1990; Braden & Rodriguez, 2016; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Frey, 2017; Tschida et al., 2014). As Bishop (2012) explains, the concept of *mirrors and windows* is part of a larger multicultural education movement, which includes a focus on social justice and equity with a focus on including "the voices that had been underrepresented or misrepresented in the traditional canon" (p. 9). While Bishop initially utilized *mirrors and windows* to describe multicultural texts focused on characters from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, the term has been applied to many different forms of diversity. For example, McNair (2016) notes that "as there are multiple aspects to our identities, there are also a number of ways to see ourselves reflected" (p. 379). As such, books should represent cultural diversity, including "race, class, and disability," and cultural markers, "such as language, sexual orientation, and religion" (McNair, 2016, p. 375).

As argued by Buchanan et al. (2020), the avoidance of topics and stories that include a focus on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) characters "perpetuates the heteronormative view of family and marginalizes students whose families are 'othered'" (p. 179). Books with LGBTQ characters "disrupt heteronormativity," which could benefit not just students who are part of the LGBTQ community but also "heterosexual students who do not conform to gender norms and children of LGBTQ parents, particularly in the elementary setting" (Buchanan et al., 2020, p. 170; see also see Knoblauch, 2016; Smolkin & Young, 2011).

There is also a growing focus on including diverse representations of characters with disabilities (Doering, 2021; Pennell et al., 2018). Kleekamp and Zapata (2018) argue that inclusive stories that feature characters with disabilities can provide *mirrors and windows* for young readers while "challeng[ing] ableist discourses, or narratives that champion normative standards for the body and mind" (p.589. The need for authentic, empowering, and "humanizing" stories of young people with disabilities (see Kleekamp & Zapata, 2018) also includes a focus on disability as a part of a child's identity rather than a problem to overcome (see Emmerson et al. 2014, p. 13). Further, literature can talk back to stereotypes associated with disabilities (Dolmage, 2014; Dunn, 2010). By using "strength-based" stories, children's literature can "promote attitudes of acceptance and strengthen perceptions of self-worth among students with disabilities, as well as their typically-developing peers" (Hayden & Prince, 2020, p. 236).

Critical Literacy

There is a growing focus on the need to prepare readers to become skilled readers with critical literacy skills, which "encourages readers to question, explore, or challenge the power relationships that exist between authors and readers" (Norris et al., 2012, p. 59.) The implementation of critical literacy praxis is based on the practitioner's essential philosophical beliefs, students' experiences, and the context in which this interaction takes place (Vasquez, 2017). While there is not a "universal model of critical literacy," in this project, I have adopted the four common dimensions of critical literacy outlined by Lewison et al. (2002): "(1) disrupting the commonplace, (2) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (3) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) taking action and promoting social justice" (p. 382).

Engaging with the Literature

While multiple studies support the curation of multicultural and inclusive children's literature and the need to prepare teachers to develop critical literacy skills, this project explores a *curriculum studies in education* approach with a strong focus on what texts are selected and how and why they are selected. In this article, I do not seek to add to our notions of critical literacy or multicultural literature; instead, I strive to help PSTs use insight from this research to become curators of inclusive collections.

Theoretical Framework

While this project focuses on curating children's literature, it is, at its center, a curriculum studies project. By integrating curriculum studies with critical literacy, I seek to move the conversation to include what stories we are teaching and focus on the decisions by which we select stories, with a recognition of the political nature of such decisions. Within the multidisciplinary field of curriculum studies, "curriculum" is not merely the textbook, standards, or lesson plans; instead, curriculum is a broad contemplation of the knowledge of most worth. Curriculum studies scholars seek to understand curriculum by addressing the field's fundamental questions: What knowledge is of most worth? Who decides? Who benefits? (see Schubert, 1986). In this project, I draw from frameworks that focus on literature as curriculum studies, curriculum curation, curriculum studies *and* disability studies, and *curriculum studies in education*.

Literature as Curriculum Studies

Beyond selecting novels or texts as part of curriculum maps or scope and sequence charts, many curriculum studies scholars have written about literature as a site of curriculum theorizing. For example, curriculum studies luminary Maxine Greene (1995) exemplifies a tradition of aesthetic inquiry in which she draws upon literature to understand schooling, education, and imagination. More recently, Edward Podsiadlik (2021) posits that "understanding literature as

curriculum provides the means for individuals to continuously reflect, reconstruct, and reconceptualize their public and private life" (n.p.). Podsiadlik further argues that while literature as a subject matter "is generally regarded as a prescribed set of texts to be received, studied and assessed," literature as curriculum "embodies lived experience and provides the means for individuals to continuously reflect, reconstruct, and reconceptualize their public and private lives" (n.p.). In this project, preservice teachers learn from children's literature and think through key curricular studies questions by reflecting upon children's literature.

Curriculum Curation as Curriculum Studies

Drawing from the work of Huckaby and Ackels (2010), I embrace the notion that curriculum can serve as "a *mirror and window"* and that our curricular choices (as well as literature selection) are always in relationship with the "implicit curriculum, hidden curriculum, and null curriculum" (pp. 139–140). As such, curriculum curation focuses on the explicit curricular choices in determining which books will appear on their curated bookshelf. However, it also asks curators to consider how such explicit decisions contributed to an implicit curriculum and a null curriculum. Because there are too many stories to include in a library, teachers must continuously exercise their critical literacy skills and evaluate their choices to determine the curriculum/stories of most worth.

Within the framework of curriculum theorizing, I expand upon Eeds and Peterson's (1991) work on teachers-as-curators as a model for both theorizing and action. Eeds and Peterson argue that a teacher is similar to an art curator who "knows art, collects it, cares for it and delights in sharing it with others, helping them see it in ways they may not have discovered if left on their own" (p. 118). By positioning critical curation as an act of praxis, I highlight the "conceptual, pedagogical as well as political consequences" inherent in curation (Vella, 2018, p. 294). Within this project, I examine how selecting, organizing, and presenting stories and books to share with students can serve as a theoretically informed decision directly impacting students.

Curriculum Studies as Integrated with Disability Studies in Education

As part of curating multicultural and inclusive collections of children's literature, I intentionally asked PSTs to include characters with disabilities in our classroom libraries. This work is inspired by Disability Studies in Education (DSE) scholars, who embrace "intellectual and practical tools, forms of thought and action that nurture a deeper awareness among educators about disability rights, inclusive participation, and disability identity" (Danforth & Gabel, 2008, p. 2). Yet, DSE scholars also inform my theoretical framework as DSE is a field dedicated to "investigating *what disability means*; how it is interpreted, enacted, and resisted in the social practices of individuals, groups, organizations, and cultures" (Danforth & Gabel, 2008, p. 5). DSE draws theoretical inspiration from the larger field of Disability Studies but focuses on "translating theory into practice and, alternatively, allowing practice to inform theory," the field has been moving toward the ways that theorizing can impact practice in teacher education, curriculum theory, and policy (Danforth & Gabel, 2008, p. 6). Buffington-Adams and Vaughan (2019) have argued that there are many similarities between DSE and Curriculum Studies, including that each field "focused less on prescriptive solutions/treatments and more on understanding, theorizing, and

re-imagining personal, political, and social contexts of education" (p. 5). In this project, I take seriously the need for PSTs to engage with theories and practices to help curate more inclusive classroom libraries.

Curriculum Studies in Education

In our 2023 edited book, Nuñez and I (2023) articulated a *Curriculum Studies in Education (CSE)* framework for curricular work. Influenced by the work of DSE scholars and the long tradition of praxis within the Curriculum Studies field, we conceptualize CSE as a framework of praxis that integrates curriculum theorizing and direct action/practice within schools and communities. Of course, this focus on praxis or the practical is not new (see Freire, 1968/1997; Schwab, 1969); in fact, this journal (*JCT*) and its sponsored Bergamo conference both seek to highlight intersections of curriculum theorizing and classroom practice (Miller, 2020, p. 1). Yet, despite the longstanding commitment to praxis within curriculum studies, the divide between theory and practice in recent decades seems to have grown wider, and the field of curriculum studies is often disconnected from practices in K12 schools (Vaughan & Nuñez, 2023).

Curriculum studies in education (CSE) work continues a line of inquiry on classroom practice by focusing on projects that enact theory in classrooms, not as a prescriptive approach but as a deliberative one. This call for a *re/turn to praxis* (Jupp, 2012, p. 76) is urgent—in fact, I agree strongly with Muhammad's (2020) assertion that "we live in a time where there's no time for 'urgent-free pedagogy'" (p. 54). This urgent re/turn to engage with classroom practices (both pedagogical and curricular) is not a call to re/turn to curriculum development but instead to use the robust theoretical tools from curriculum studies to create projects that help us critique existing practices and imagine new practices, engage dialectically with teachers, students, and communities, and focus on impacting change in places where teachers, students, and families spend time.

Figure 1

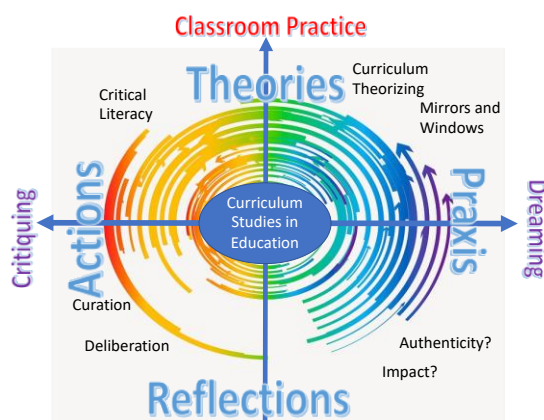*Representation of Curriculum Studies in Education in this Project*

Figure 1 illustrates an approach to *curriculum studies in education*. At the center, CSE includes a cycle of praxis (theory, action, reflection). Each part of this cycle has multiple strands representing a variety of theories, actions, and reflections that impact practice. The cycle of praxis is informed by bidirectional exchanges between classroom instruction and university research, whereas theorizing and practicing influence each other. Similarly, there is a bidirectional relationship between critiquing existing policies and dreaming/imagining new ways of educating/being in community.

Methodology

In this study, I utilize both interpretive and critical paradigms (Glesne, 2011). As an interpretivist, I seek to understand how preservice teachers make curricular choices regarding the stories they include in their classroom libraries. Utilizing critical theory, I embrace my role to prepare preservice teachers to make transformative curricular choices and develop critical literacy skills for themselves and their future students. Specifically, I agree with Flores et al.'s (2019) observation that "in the field of literacy education, many teacher educators (TEs) work to prepare future teachers to be transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1985)—teachers who design curriculum and select resources that 'prepare learners to be active and critical citizens'" (p. 215). One of our central tasks as teacher educators is to remind PSTs that they are intellectuals and curriculum workers whose choices impact the students, schools, and communities.

Participants' Context

To understand the impact of our course project on both the selection of multicultural and inclusive texts and the deliberative curriculum curation process, I completed an instrumental case study with two undergraduate classes of preservice teachers (PSTs) in a public regional university in the Midwest in the 2019-2020 academic year (Creswell, 2007; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Stake, 1995). As this research focused on the impact of a pedagogical project, it was necessary to complete it in my courses with my students. I invited all students in two sections of a children's literature and media class in the 2019-2020 school year. In total, 36 students consented so that I could analyze course assignments. Participation was not required, and no additional work was required of those who participated. Participants' grades were not impacted by their decision to participate or not participate in the study. While I did not ask for demographic information in each class, the midwestern regional institution where this research took place had less than 10,000 students. Within the teacher preparation programs, more than 80% of students identify as White, and more than 80% identify as women.

Overview of Project & Pedagogical Practices

This project was completed in a children's media course for preservice teachers I was teaching for the first time. In this course, designed to support PSTs in studying and evaluating books and media sources for elementary classrooms, I developed a culminating project with two specific purposes. First, I wanted to encourage PSTs to think about the books in their classroom libraries as an act of curation and, in so doing, help illuminate the connection between theory and practice. Second, I sought to encourage preservice teachers to select diverse authors and books for their future classroom library. In week 2 of our 16-week semester, I introduced preservice teachers to their *inclusive bookshelf project*, which included the prompt: "Your central (and culminating) project in this class will be to create an inclusive bookshelf with texts appropriate for students in grades K-6 … [with books that] meet the personal and educational needs of students in elementary schools." Over the semester, PSTs completed a four-part final project: a list of 50 books or media sources representing a variety of genres, reading levels, and interests in ways that serve as *mirrors and windows*; an inclusive bookshelf checklist that they designed with 20-25 criteria used to

evaluate their collection; a reflective essay; and an individual or small group action project to bring inclusive literature to their communities. For this study, I analyzed only book selection as documented in participants' reflective essays and initial and mid-semester questionnaires.

During class meetings, I brought multicultural children's literature to model read-aloud strategies and discuss text selection (see Table 1 for some books we discussed in class.) Each week during the first half of the semester, I also asked students to bring in a picture that featured books that included diverse families and protagonists from a racial/cultural group different than their own, from the LGBTQ community, and with a disability. During the second half of the semester, PSTs read and presented multicultural nonfiction texts, poetry anthologies, and chapter books through book talks, multimodal presentations, and the creation of visual rating systems. While evaluating these books, we discussed the quality of the stories and illustrations and explored how race, culture, gender, and disability were represented within our collections. This means we spent time during almost every class adding to our book lists and criteria and providing time for students to deliberate about which books to include.

While reading new texts, PSTs evaluated existing checklists and developed their criteria. One existing tool used in class was the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL, 2006) *Checklist for Assessing Children's Literature* using the criteria to evaluate texts. In the introduction to the checklist, ADL (2006) writes that because of the lack of diverse texts, "it is extremely important that adults make every effort to ensure that high-quality children's literature by and about these groups is made available to children" (para. 5). PSTs evaluated their texts (and our library collection) using the ADL's checklist, including questions such as "Do characters reflect a variety of cultural groups? Are urban, suburban, and rural settings represented realistically? Are cultural settings represented realistically? Is there diversity represented within cultural groups? Do the illustrations avoid reinforcing societal stereotypes?" (ADL, 2006, n.p.) We also discussed book awards (and the criteria used in such awards) focused on multicultural texts. PSTs were then asked to create 20-25 criteria for evaluative checklists.

One helpful tool in evaluating stories with disabled characters was the "Fries Test," which asks: "Does a work have more than one disabled character? Do the disabled characters have their own narrative purpose other than the education and profit of a nondisabled character? Is the character's disability not eradicated either by curing or killing?" (Fries, 2017, para. 9). As we read books featuring disabled characters, we used the questions from the Fries Test and the guiding questions from Kleekamp and Zapata (2018), which included,

> How is the life of the character with a disability presented as multidimensional?; Whose voice is represented and emphasized in the telling of the story?; How are readers positioned to think and feel about the character with a disability?; What steps has the author taken to create and present authentic relationships? (p. 591)

I also encouraged PSTs to review the award criteria from the Schneider Family Book Award and descriptions of stories on Disability in KidLit.

Table 1
Selected Texts Shared During Class

Picture Books	Poetry Collection and Chapter Books
Love by Matt de la Peña	*Laughing Tomatoes and Other Spring Poems*
Big Book of Families by Mary Hoffman	by Francisco X. Alarcón
Dreamers by Yuri Morales	*El Deafo* by Cece Bell
Thank You, Mr. Falker by Patricia Polacco	*Hip Hop Speaks to Children* by Nikki
And Tango Makes Three by Justin Richardson	Giovanni
and Peter Parneff	*Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
Bee-Bim Bop! by Linda Sue Park	*Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis
A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams	*Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan
Malala's Magic Pencil by Malala Yousafzai	
Short Films	**New Texts** (added during/after the project)
Float by Bobby Rubio	*Milo's Museum* by Zetta Elliot
Hair Love by Matthew Cherry	*Fry Bread* by Kevin Noble Maillard
	The Day You Begin by Jacqueline Woodson
	We Move Together by Kelly Fritsch

Data Collection and Analysis

To explore the impact of participation in a course project on preservice teachers' ideas about inclusive literature and curriculum curation, I conducted a content analysis of three items: the initial questionnaire (week 2), the midterm questionnaire (weeks 7-8), and the final reflective essay. In the two questionnaires, PSTs were asked to describe their ideal bookshelf, list any titles they would include in their ideal bookshelf, and describe the tools they used to select texts. During the final week of class, preservice teachers were asked to consider the same topics in a reflective essay. I then organized data into multiple sections, including characteristics of an ideal bookshelf and specific titles identified as essential to include on their future bookshelf. I then coded the texts using pre-determined and in vivo codes directly from the participants and summary words. In tabulating multicultural texts, I relied upon the definition of multicultural literature developed by the International Literacy Association. I coded any text that featured BIPOC, immigrants, members of the LGBT+ community, and people with disabilities as main characters as multicultural. In-vivo codes reflected positive characteristics about books (award-winning books, feelings, diverse characters) and book collections (avoids single stories, multicultural, diverse characters, multiple genres, book for each student). As I read additional questionnaires, I placed checkmarks next to existing words or phrases and, when needed, added new words/phrases. After analyzing each document, I combined and synthesized codes, removed repeated words, and documented codes to represent critical themes related to diversity, inclusion, and representation. I did not attempt to measure the impact of instruction on particular students but rather on differences in response patterns.

To understand PSTs' ideas about their ideal classroom libraries (and their selection process), I primarily evaluated three items: initial questionnaire (week 2), midterm questionnaire (week 7-8), and final reflective essay. In the two questionnaires, PSTs were asked to describe their ideal bookshelf; identify the tools (checklists, rubrics, awards, etc.) they would use to decide what books to include; and list any specific titles they would want to include in their ideal bookshelves.

During the final week of class, preservice teachers were asked to complete a final reflective essay that asked them to reflect upon the same topics. In their essay, PSTs had more time to write their thoughts, additional questions, and a rubric that may have influenced answers. Answers may be different because of the format change noted in the analysis. To analyze data, I read each document and took notes on a series of matrices. For example, as I read the first PSTs' initial questionnaire, I entered words and phrases (some directly from the words of participants and some summary words. As I read additional questionnaires, I placed checkmarks next to existing words or phrases and, when needed, added new words/phrases. Once I finished note-taking all entries, I combined and synthesized codes and removed repeated words. I repeated this process six times (once each semester for each of the three documents) and shared observations about changes in the most frequently reported answers. I did not attempt to measure the impact of instruction on particular students but rather on differences in response patterns. Also, I do not seek to create causal claims—instead, I note that the conditions in class (selecting and reading high-quality literature) provided an opportunity for students to reflect upon the value of diverse literature and text selection.

Researcher Positionality

I am not a neutral researcher. I embrace the concept of "strong objectivity" and am explicit about my relationship to the research (Banks, 2006). I am a former high school English and US History teacher, a teacher educator, and a curriculum studies scholar who works at the intersections of curriculum studies and disability studies in education. I am a White, nondisabled, cisgender woman committed to preparing teachers to advocate for children and contribute to contesting racist, sexist, heterosexist, and ableist systems.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to the study. First, the sample size is small, and I would need to repeat the work with additional preservice teachers to see if the class patterns remained consistent. Second, this project was completed with two classes of PSTs, one that met in the Fall of 2019 and the other that met in the Spring of 2020. For the Spring class, the instruction was impacted by a shift to online learning due to Covid-19. While we continued to meet virtually, the PSTs taking the course had a different experience than those taking the course person-to-person. Third, and most significantly, I recognize that the preservice teachers were all students in my classes. As they completed course assignments, they were asked to infuse course content, which I was designing. A follow-up study that included interviews after the preservice teachers in my class graduated and were working in schools would be helpful in seeing if changes persisted outside of my class. Despite these limitations, there is value in this work in terms of thinking about projects that infuse theory and practice.

Findings

A few key themes emerged by analyzing PSTs' questionnaires and reflective essays.

Finding One: Greater Commitment to Multicultural and Inclusive Texts

Throughout this project, PSTs expressed a more significant commitment to including multicultural and inclusive texts in their classroom library.

Increased Exposure to Multicultural Texts Disrupts the Status Quo

Within the conceptualization of literature as curriculum studies, Podsiadlik (2021) notes that literature invites the reader to "reflect, reconstruct, and reconceptualize their public and private life" (n.p.). In this project, many preservice teachers discovered or reaffirmed their love for literature and/or belief in its power. For example, one PST commented: "This class helped me take that love for books and think about what I can do to give that love to my students ... . Books have the power to reach students in ways nothing else can." Other preservice teachers discussed how books can "empower" readers and address "serious topics and social issues." For other preservice teachers, this class helped them discover a new appreciation for reading. A PST wrote:

> As a child, I never read many books because I did not have an interest in reading … During this course, I have learned to love literature. … I feel ready to teach my students the love of literature that I now feel.

While it is unsurprising that PSTs in a children's literature and media course would develop an appreciation of children's literature, the selection of texts shared with PSTs also influenced their perceptions of literature. Even though most of the PSTs in this course would have been in elementary school well after the concept of *mirrors and windows* was prevalent in teacher education and literacy education, not all students had access to multicultural texts. As one PST explained,

> I've been a reader my entire life thanks to my mother who encouraged me to read every day. However, it never occurred to me that I was missing something. The books I was reading were mostly windows into other cultures, countries, and genders; very few of the books I was reading were mirrors into my own culture or my own life.

In their final reflection, this PST included more books representing diverse cultural and linguistic communities. PSTs also discussed their exposure to books they "wouldn't have otherwise read." For example, after reading *Love* by Matt de la Pena, one PST commented, "As a twenty-one-year-old college student, I want to read more texts like that."

We also know that too often, preservice teachers are taught about literacy instruction "in connection with what is called 'quality' children's and young adult literature, which too often privileges literature by and about White people" (Gangi, 2008, p. 30; see also Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). In this project and throughout the course, the example of "quality" literature that

featured characters from many different cultures, identities, and experiences was important in disrupting the status quo and helping PSTs apply critical literacy skills to analyze the books we read.

Book Lists Include More Diverse Characters

It is important to note that as part of their 50 texts project, every PST had multicultural texts in their curated lists (per assignment guidelines). However, it is noteworthy that in their questionnaires and final essay, I also asked PSTs to identify any "specific titles you know that you would want to include in your bookshelf." As I explained to PSTs, this list should include those important stories that would always be included in classroom collections.

As seen in Table two, in the initial questionnaire, 26 PSTs identified (one to eight) specific books they wanted to include on their bookshelf. 73% did not place any multicultural texts on their lists. Only one student had identified a majority of multicultural texts. By the end of the semester, only 16% of students did not include multicultural books, and 65.6% of students identified more than half of their texts as multicultural texts. Also, only one PST mentioned a text featuring a main character with a disability in their initial lists; however, more than half of the PSTs included at least one book featuring characters with disabilities by the semester's end.

Table 2
Inclusion of Multicultural Texts

	Initial Questionnaire (n = 26)	Midterm Questionnaire (n= 30)	Reflective Paper(n= 32)
No multicultural texts	73.1%	26.7%	15.6%
At least one multicultural text	26.9%	73.3%	84.4%
Majority of multicultural texts	3.8%	40.0%	65.6%

PSTs Expanded Their Characteristics Of An "Ideal Bookshelf"

When PSTs were asked to identify characteristics of an "ideal bookshelf" or "classroom library," they identified a variety of genres, books that featured diverse protagonists, and books that appealed to different student interests in all three assignments. However, by the end of the semester, there was more specificity about what each of these criteria meant. In their final essays, PSTs were asked to describe their ideal collection of books and explain how their bookshelf represented a *mirrors and windows* approach to curation. As such, it is unsurprising that 85% of PSTs mentioned mirrors and windows as important in their future classrooms. However, PSTs also identified the importance of including characters from various backgrounds/identities, including characters with diverse disabilities, racial identities, sexual orientations, family structures, countries of origin, social classes, and languages. In their final papers, more than 20% of PSTs also noted a variety of genres, a balance between insider and outsider perspectives, texts that

appealed to multiple interests/topics, books at a variety of reading levels, relevant/relatable texts, books that teach values or life lessons, and books that are "fun" or that would bring the child enjoyment. Finally, multiple PSTs focused more on finding at least one text that was a mirror for each of their future students.

More Inclusive Book Selection Tools Were Represented

As McNair (2016) argues, two ways to maintain a diverse library are to "consider where your books are purchased" and "learn about awards," including those based upon cultural diversity or other elements of diversity (pp. 380–381; see also Adukia et al., 2021). In this project, preservice teachers were asked what tools they would utilize to select texts for their classroom libraries. Of the 34 preservice teachers who completed the initial questionnaire, the most frequently mentioned tools were personal characteristics/checklist criteria (59%), award-winning books (41%), educational sources/blogs (11%), and reviews and ratings (11%). By the end of the semester, PSTs identified award winners (50%) most frequently, with book publishers and personal characteristics/checklist criteria at the same rate (41%). While the book selection tools did not change much during the semester, by the end of the semester, PSTs had accumulated several specific websites, publishers, and awards that would help them build multicultural and inclusive libraries. For example, in their final papers, many PSTs mentioned specific book awards that would influence their text selection, including the Caldecott Medal, Schneider Family Book Award, Coretta Scott King Book Award, Newberry Medal, and recommendations by the American Library Association. The diversity of awards notes is crucial because an overreliance on a few mainstream awards could lead to an overrepresentation of books by White authors. As Gangi (2008) asserts, many of the more popular book awards are decided by "librarians who, like teachers, are mostly Whites and middle class," which can influence text selection (p. 31). By utilizing a greater variety of book awards, PSTs could move closer to the goal of "honor[ing] all children by equitably providing both mirror and windows books for all" (Gangi, 2008, p. 34).

Finding Two: Curriculum Curation as Praxis

As discussed earlier in this article, a key focus of this project was to make explicit the curriculum curation project. I analyzed PSTs' assignments to understand their views on curriculum curation and how they could infuse curriculum theorizing into their classroom practices. Throughout the project, PSTs expressed growing awareness that curating a classroom library should combine theory and practice.

Curation Is Deliberative Action

Selecting books for inclusion in a library or classroom instruction is a curricular decision. When teachers spend time reading books to students or even when they include titles in their library, they communicate implicit curriculum—choices about which books and authors are most worthwhile. As many critical scholars remind us, there are no neutral choices, and all curricular decisions are political and reflect our understanding of the knowledge of and stories of most worth

(see Freire, 1968/1997; Huckaby & Ackels, 2010; Schubert, 1986). One PST reflected: "I have never thought in this much depth about what books I would have and why, because choosing to include a book is just as much of a stance as choosing not to include the book." By thinking intentionally about what books to include, PSTs recognized their power as curriculum workers. Another PST commented, "Had I never taken this course, I would have provided a classroom library that did not create a mirrors/ window approach. … I did not realize how easy it can be to leave someone out." In the comment above, it was clear that the preservice teachers were not looking for a simple list of what books should be included or excluded—instead, they discussed how they used a theory/concept to inform their thinking. This is also reflected in the comment of another PST:

> Often times, we hear teachers and schools preaching about diversity, but what does that really mean? Throughout this class I have discovered what it truly means to have a diverse bookshelf in regards to cultures, racial identity, genders, sexual orientations, disabilities, language, social classes, countries of origin, etc.

Another valuable element of this project focuses on critically evaluating texts for representation, power dynamics, and authenticity (see Morrell, 2002). In this way, teacher educators can help their PSTs develop the critical literacy skills needed to find and share stories that "disrupt the commonplace," include a multiplicity of voices, and promote more just classrooms and communities (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 382). First, PSTs focused on how characters were represented in stories and problematized the commonplace misrepresentations or omissions of diverse characters and/or characters with disabilities in any book collection. The project also focused on including diverse viewpoints, resisting single stories, and focusing on authenticity. Finally, while some PSTs still resisted efforts to address controversial topics in the classroom, many PSTs had texts that focused on current events, including racial justice, immigration reform, and expanded rights for LGBTQ people.

This project allowed students to combine theory and practice to make deliberative and intentional choices about classroom literature.

Curation Reflects Personal, Political, Professional, And Philosophical Beliefs

As our project progressed, PSTs realized they needed to focus on examining their collection of texts. We discussed Adichie's (2009) TED Talk, "The Danger of A Single Story," in which she warns that single stories are created when you "show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become" (n.p.). This marked a fundamental shift in our class discussions—while a book could be valuable, not balancing stories could prove damaging. For example, one text I shared with PSTs was *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi. The main character recently immigrated from Korea and contemplated choosing a new name before embracing her Korean name. Many PSTs thought it was a good story; however, a student was concerned that the only story about a Korean family in the collection could reinforce a *single story* that all Korean Americans were immigrants. We discussed the power of supplementing *The Name Jar* with other books, such as *Bee-Bim Bop!* by Linda Sue Park, an illustrated book about a family preparing a Korean dinner together. This conversation was meaningful because we know that single stories can be dangerous (Adichie 2009) and that "misrepresentation (i.e., broken mirrors

and windows) and underrepresentation (i.e., missing mirrors and windows as well as closed doors)" can cause damage to readers (Botelho, 2021, p. 121).

In another class session, I asked PSTs to bring books about families. We discussed the range of families and moved beyond singular conceptions of a "normal" or "typical" family. After reading *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parneff, a nonfiction picture book about two male penguins in New York Central Park Zoo that raised a baby penguin together, I asked PSTs to justify the inclusion or exclusion of the text in their libraries. I then shared with PSTs that this book was, according to the American Library Association, one of the top ten challenged books in 2017 (see Gomez, 2018). Reflecting on our discussions of families, one PST commented,

> One of the biggest things I liked about the *mirrors and windows* approach is the diversity of families, and even though some parents might not agree; if it is inclusive to a student, then it should be in my library.

This finding is consistent with the work of Tschida et al. (2014), who note the importance of providing an "opportunity to consider, identify, and name those single stories of history or current cultural narratives … and helps them see the need for multiple and non-stereotypical stories" (p. 31).

Curation Is An Ongoing Process

I often told preservice teachers that the curated lists they develop in this class would always be in process. By the end of the semester, more than 20% of PSTs expressed a desire to find at least one text that would be a mirror for each student in their classroom. This is essential because it reflected a shift from a general belief in *mirrors and windows* to more specific realizations that future teachers must be responsive to the particular young people in their classes. One PST noted, "This book project will be with me for life throughout my career as a teacher, and I will be constantly updating it and transforming it in a way that will best suit my students."

Another PST addressed the need to change books to meet the needs of individual students. The PST noted, "The ideal bookshelf is ever-changing and dynamic for all students to come to find the book for them." In their final reflection, a third PT wrote: "I want my classroom library to be inclusive to every student." These conclusions affirm the work of curriculum curation as ongoing praxis.

Discussion

In the last decade, popular movements like #WeNeedMoreDiverseBooks have demonstrated the need for more diverse and authentic texts in our classrooms (see Schmitt, 2020; Crisp et al., 2020). Calls for teachers to include anti-racist books have also been more visible, as has the need to prepare preservice teachers to include anti-racist texts (Lazar & Offenberg, 2011). However, efforts to challenge books that include multicultural characters and perspectives have also been the focus of contested school board meetings and political debates (see recent stories featured by Kameetz, 2021; Nierenberg, 2021). Within this context, teacher educators can

encourage preservice teachers to embrace their role as curriculum specialists who curate collections of inclusive and multicultural stories to share with young people.

While multiple studies document the need for teachers to be intentional about including diverse collections of multicultural texts in classroom libraries (ADL, 2006; Crisp et al., 2016; Henderson et al., 2020; Howlett & Young, 2019), this study is significant because it provides a concrete example of ways to encourage praxis in our classrooms.

In this project, I sought to answer two questions: How did participation in a course project influence preservice teachers' ideas about multicultural and inclusive literature? Did participation in a course project influence preservice teachers' attitudes about curriculum curation? In designing my semester-long project in a teacher education course, I curated (academic) literature by drawing upon studies of multicultural and inclusive children's literature and critical literacy practices. I then infused curriculum studies theorizing in my practice and analysis, with particular attention to thinking about literature as curriculum studies, developing critical curation practices, working at the intersections of curriculum studies and disability studies in education, and developing a *curriculum studies in education* framework.

Impact on Preservice Teachers

While I recognize limitations in the study (including both the small sample size and my involvement as both the instructor and researcher), many PSTs did demonstrate increased commitment to creating inclusive and diverse classroom libraries, access to more tools to find inclusive books, and insight into curriculum curation as curriculum work. PSTs' responses indicate that they gained an appreciation that curating inclusive texts is not only about including texts with more diverse characters but also that the texts they selected must "counter stereotypes and deficit perspectives" (Buchanan & Fox, 2019, p. 193; see also Braden & Rodriquez, 2016). Yet, more than how their specific ideas evolved by engaging with literature, I saw growth in how preservice teachers infused theory into their decision-making. PSTs began to embrace themselves as curriculum specialists with the power and responsibility to curate a library of inclusive, multicultural, and affirming stories to share with young people.

Impact on My Practice as a Teacher Educator

Analyzing student work and writing this article has also provided an exercise in evaluating my practices. I found multiple things I will modify when I do this project again. First, while I discussed the need for authentic texts written from outsider perspectives, two students commented that they still had an overabundance of outsider perspectives in their curated lists. One PST reflected,

> I think in the future, I will check to see if an author represents the culture they are writing about *before* I add it to my bookshelf. It is okay to have both insider and outsider perspectives, but if our bookshelf is so diverse, I think our authors should represent that as well.

In future courses, I will reinforce the importance of diverse authors writing from insider perspectives. Specifically, I will focus on what Bishop (2012) identifies as "culturally conscious books," texts written primarily by Black authors, which

> reflect both the distinctiveness of African American cultural experience and the universality of human experience. These books are set in Black cultural environments, have Black major characters, are told from the perspective of those characters, and include some textual means of identifying the characters as Black, such as physical descriptors or distinctive cultural markers. (p. 7)

Inspired by Bishop's (2012) focus on culturally conscious books, I hope to extend this concept to other books about BIPOC characters, characters with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ characters. Second, in future classes, I will be more explicit about including anti-racist and anti-ableist children's literature and develop more specific models of anti-racist and anti-ableist criteria. As we discussed in the course, representation is essential, but not all representation is positive. By introducing clear criteria for work that challenges racism and ableism, PSTs can be more explicit about developing frameworks that challenge oppressive systems. Third, I will focus on the connections between curricular and pedagogical work. As Botelho (2021) explains, "teachers and teacher educators must attend to not just what to read but also how to read" (p. 123). While text selection is a component of critical literacy, I will be more explicit about how a mirrors and windows approach to literacy should complement culturally relevant pedagogy (see Ladson-Billings, 1994) and a theoretical/ideological commitment to anti-racist and anti-ableist practice.

Impact on the Field

By asking preservice teachers to make deliberative and ongoing curricular decisions about which texts to include in their classroom library, this project provides an example of *curriculum studies in education* (CSE) framework. In this CSE project, I sought to infuse theory into classroom practice by conceptualizing the role of a practitioner as "a good decision maker" whose deliberative choices are informed by theory and practice (Kelly, 1981, p. 350; see also Vaughan & Nuńez, 2023). PSTs grapple with which knowledge (and stories) are most worthwhile, critically analyze how books are selected, and recognize the work of text selection as curricular, pedagogical, and political. By centering the idea of curriculum curation to help PSTs contemplate and select the stories of most worth to their students, this work will provide a concrete example of ways to encourage praxis and engagement with curriculum studies in our classrooms. I hope that CSE can provide a framework for curriculum theorists to highlight the urgent curriculum work based on praxis and action in our schools and communities.

Statement of Support

Notes

1. This metaphor has been extended to include telescopes (Toliver, 2021), compasses and kaleidoscopes (Low & Torres, 2022), and a variety of other metaphors (see Dorr, 2022.)

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Peeling the Orange and Spitting Out the Seeds
A Metaphorical Introduction to Curriculum

HOLLY E. MARCOLINA
State University of New York (SUNY) Potsdam

CURRICULUM IS AN EVOCATIVE and multi-faceted term. It can be what is outright taught in school, while simultaneously being that which is unconsciously disseminated or even "hidden." Curriculum is more than tangible school purchases, such as a set of textbooks or a new educational technology program. It is passed on at home by parents, who appropriate curriculum from their own life experiences. Even the broad mention of curriculum provokes heated emotions about issues related to race, sexuality, and gender, among others. However, there is so much more.

As a high school teacher and school administrator for two decades, my first experience "getting my curriculum" was being handed a textbook and some worksheets by a colleague before school started. As I developed this curriculum and my career progressed, my district introduced curriculum maps in an attempt to guarantee a uniform learning experience, regardless of who taught a course. I went on to work in districts with rigid requirements, including preapproved reading passages and film clips as part of the approved curriculum, and saw others that, like my early experiences, left teachers to entirely grow their own curriculum over time. Well versed in the high-stakes world of testing and teacher accountability, I grappled with how to express the "so much more" of curriculum when tasked with instructing undergraduate teacher education students. While introducing seminal works of curriculum theory, as well as newer voices in the field, I was reminded that the best lesson demonstrations are often found in the everyday stories and items around us. I looked at a bowl of oranges in my kitchen and knew how to introduce such a ubiquitous topic to these future teachers. Curriculum is framed by society, evaluated and monitored by political and commercial interests, and transmitted through the biases of the teacher to its ultimate destination: the student. As seeds are the most important, yet discarded, part of a fruit, so are students and their own lived experiences (Pinar, 2015) the most important, yet often disregarded, part of curriculum.

Curriculum is composed of many parts. For this conceptual paper, I will draw parallels between an orange and curriculum. The word *orange* is not just the name of a fruit, but it is also a color with many hues. From the vivid hue of traffic cones, the delicate wings of monarch butterflies, or the rusty image of a penny, these depictions constitute variations of orange in the

visible spectrum. As a fruit, oranges are widely consumed for their health benefits. These delicate fruits are susceptible to weather events and invasive diseases and require intensive manual labor for cultivation (Jacobs, 1994; Munch, 2023). When an orange is consumed, there is ostensibly much waste. When people desire an orange, they are seeking the fruit inside. However, all parts of an orange (the rind, the pith, the juice wedges, and the seeds) give the fruit its flavor. Likewise, individual curricular experiences involving teachers, local schools, accountability measures, and greater societal narratives shape every student's education. Curriculum need not be a scary or forbidden word, but a term which encapsulates the systems in which teachers and students work, learn, and grow. Therefore, let us begin to unpeel our mental image of an orange as a metaphor for the many dimensions of curriculum.

Rind

Wafting from the rind, one can smell the residue of citrus oils. The rind represents the hard, unyielding beliefs, widely held ideologies, accepted societal conceptions, and the narratives surrounding and framing curriculum. These ideologies encompass the fruit of curriculum and intend to protect its quality. The "smell" of societal status quo persists in the cultural and historical narratives passed down by families and teachers to students (Dewey, 1938/2022; Gottesman, 2016), just as the smell of the rind can linger long after it is discarded. Public familiarity with the K-12 school system in the United States causes widespread stakeholder input and involvement, but rarely do people agree on what the essential elements of curriculum are (Kliebard, 2004). The condition of the rind need not dictate the internal condition of the orange. Though curriculum may become damaged in the eyes of some, we are all products of our curricular experiences.

Our world is ripe for a shift in curricular mindsets. With the rapid growth of distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, education for today's youth cannot and should not look the same as it has in the past. In our changing world, pedagogy and curriculum that promoted "mere memorization of verbal statements of facts … the cloistral activities of the past" (Bobbitt, 1918/2022, p. 11) no longer work. Yet, have we seen this transformation? As we move forward (Apple, 2019; Gottesman, 2016), education needs to be "interrupted and reconceived" (Au et al., 2016, p. 4) to awaken its true emancipatory potential, as if peeling the rind off the past. We must face curricular ghosts by addressing and working to remedy the long-lasting damage done by decades of inequity and silenced histories.

When the curriculum ignores students and communities, a chasm widens between those in positions of power and the "other" (Darder, 2023). Curricular practices that widen this chasm are not productive. Throughout the world, Indigenous peoples have experienced the "sustained assault on their land, resources, and communities" (Marker, 2006, p. 489), leading to enduring colonialist legacies (Freire, 1968/2003). When students from marginalized backgrounds are unable to connect to their curriculum, what does that say about the place of all students in the future? These exclusionary practices continue, as evidenced in recent memory in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans and Washington D.C. (Buras, 2011), examples of what occurs when local political and business interests make educational decisions. Harmful policies and practices resulted in the "appropriation and commodification of black children, black schools, and black communities for white exploitation and profit" (Buras, 2011, p. 304). Sometimes peeling the rind gets messy, but so does confronting systems of oppression. Addressing issues of inequity in the places where we live and work, including dismantling long-standing systems of racism, is laborious (Anthony-

Stevens et al., 2022). The rind can get under one's fingernails and squirt acidic oils into the eyes. Much work is required before the edible portion of the orange is even reached.

Sometimes rinds are not pleasant to look at; yet, oranges have rinds. Business, money, and competition are central to American culture (Counts, 1932/2022), even when it comes to education. These form the bumps and bruises marking the rind of our curricular orange. Today's curricular leaders must answer questions about what type of skills, knowledge, and experiences students have amassed upon their graduation from the public education system. It is educational neglect to ignore current student demands only to trade them for the anticipated needs of our society in the future (Casey & McCanless, 2018; English, 2010). Curricular leaders must keep an eye on the future while balancing the needs of the present. Administrative hegemony in the public school system often requires a focus on business and economic viability, rather than the socioemotional health of those in the system. Though education has always been connected to personal and societal future economic security (Apple, 1986; Dewey, 1938/2022), ultimately the purpose of curriculum should be to prepare current students to harness "the power of intelligent action to change things for the better" (Kliebard, 2004, p. 21).

Pith

Below the rind is the bland, pale, flavorless pith. It is the peeled off and discarded point of contact between the rind and the juice wedges. Likewise, data, assessments, and accountability measures are the less popular aspects of education in the view of practitioners. Measuring staff and student achievement keeps a competitive edge for local districts, but this intermediary "pith" between political and commercial hegemony and classroom practitioners creates a barrier between stakeholders with disparate purviews. Some neoliberal attempts at measuring and quantifying curriculum have even been government sponsored, such as Race to the Top (The White House, n.d.). Education does not exist in a vacuum but is directly influenced by broader society. For many, public schools and their associated tenured educators and powerful unions have become vilified (Herlihy et al., 2014). If only teachers would realize the actual power they have by being in direct contact with students, then they would be able to address the symbolic, positional power of the educational corporate world. While hopes for "state legislatures staying out of the business of regulating curriculum and teaching" (Bohan, 2022, p. 15) are unrealistic, educators have not been using their power to push back against the pith encroaching on their flavorful, nutritious world.

The tasteless pith is as characteristically far removed from the juicy fruit of the orange as possible. Accountability measures for the purpose of school rankings and sacrificing mental health for scholastic achievement are detrimental for students and society (Matthews et al., 2015; Rao & Rao, 2021; Richtel, 2022). If an orange's flavor were based on the taste of the pith, no one would eat it. Letting evaluations and data pervade the field of education ruins the true taste and beautiful essence of curriculum. Attempts to maximize efficiency in schools (Casey & McCanless, 2018) without understanding curriculum nor the everyday work of a teacher is akin to a factory owner demanding more production but having no sense of how the machinery operates. Neoliberal attempts at measurement, standardization, and evaluation should continue to be met by teachers and local schools by actions that provide them with "greater control of the curriculum … greater say in *what* they [teach], *how* they … teach it, and how and by *whom* their work [is] to be evaluated … to defend themselves against external encroachments" (Apple, 1986, p. 76). If one just tastes

the pith, they miss the orange. If one reduces curriculum to quantifiable measures of accountability, they miss the students.

State assessment calendars and corporate testing monoliths should not drive curriculum; they are simply part of the pith. However, neoliberal policy dictates the prioritization of test preparation to preserve teachers' careers (Apple, 2019; English, 2010). This practice perpetuates learned powerlessness in which teachers are unable to make decisions based on what best meets their students' needs (Dewey, 1938/2022). The COVID-19 pandemic was a missed opportunity to transform curricular practices. Instead of exploring flexibility in school structures and practices, educators were pigeonholed by fear and manipulation to force the extant systems into an online format, continuing the fact that the daily efforts of teachers, in many districts, are ultimately reduced to a score (Meyer, 2016). Rather than permitting various expressions of creativity in school (Pinar, 2012), successful students must be experts in test-taking,

On the local level, administration, boards of education, and staff can team together positively and powerfully. As we move away from the rind and the pith, we begin to see the dazzling, juice wedges. Likewise, as we move from the harsh world of economic and political hegemony, discriminatory practices, and the tasteless universe of assessment and evaluation, the local stakeholders offer glimmers of hope. They make decisions on tangible curriculum—the supplies, programs, and devices schools purchase, order, and use. They also implement policies and develop district culture. These are the intangible flavors of curriculum. Local stakeholders should be empowered to enact local policies for what makes sense in their specific context. However, these individuals must understand curriculum writ large and that it is not a weapon for cultural wars. During the early pandemic lockdowns, typically rigid educational policies were amended for local control and discretion, making conditions ripe for thriving at the local level. However, with this freedom came uncertainty. Was it more palatable for teachers to be confined to the predictable measures of the pith versus the delicious freedom of local autonomy? As the pandemic continued, increasing requirements burdened educators. How ironic that those within the freeing field of education are the ones most enchained by its very structure.

Juice Wedges

The local school is represented by the juice wedge. Wedges, also known as carpels, are made of individual juice follicles that are actually single, visible plant cells (Nutritious Movement, 2020). Individual teachers, represented by the unique follicles, are assigned to schools with their colleagues, just as wedges are composed of a number of juice follicles. This is the desirable part of the orange, where the delectable, nutritious fruit is found. Each wedge, like school districts and teachers, has its own distinct flavor and can differ in size, appearance, and taste. Our society, too, has a wide variety of schools and teachers.

Pedagogy drives curriculum and is transmitted through the teacher. The responsibility of protecting curriculum is not limited to students, society, and supplies; it is being mindful of the educator's own inherent biases. Teachers should set the example for their students and be avid lifelong learners themselves. Rather, the misconceptions of the teacher are often passed down to students (Freire, 1972; Monreal & McCorkle, 2021). Teachers need to be soberly mindful of the hegemonic forces operating constantly in and through them in the classroom and not be the "unattached intellectual" (Apple, 2010, p. 172), or one with academic training who does not connect with their current context and students. Montessori (1912/2022) lamented the lack of

scientific training for teachers and hoped to "raise teachers from the inferior intellectual level to which they are limited today" (p. 20). No curriculum can be uniform because no educational experience is uniform; it is flavored by the individual teacher.

The internal state of the educator is one of the most important factors in a classroom. Only when educators are in a healthy physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual state can they give of themselves to the students in a positive, sustainable manner. This is the starting point for a productive conversation on systemic change in K-12 education. Curricular change requires personal retrospection and introspection (Au, 2010). In formal K-12 environments, an electronic device, a politician, or an educational technology company does not know the student like the teacher does. As juice wedges surround the seeds of an orange, the teacher is the package through which the student receives curriculum.

The dynamic relationship between teacher and student is the key ingredient of the curriculum. This relationship is impacted by the surrounding rind and pith, all factors contributing to an increasing number of teachers leaving the field (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Teachers have lost control of the curriculum, their own love of learning, and have become "technicians in service to the state." (Pinar, 2012, p. 2). For most schools throughout the United States, the structure of the school day, pedagogical practices, and even the curriculum have remained untouched for decades. Administration is frequently removed from the daily "process of production" (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 185) in which teachers' generate curriculum for their students. This is troubling, for "children are the ends of what education is about in the first place" (English, 2010, p. 123). A high-quality education system that transforms society is flavored by individual educators who know, love, and care for their students. When you eat an orange, the nutrition and pleasant taste is, in actuality, recalling the juice wedge, not the rind or pith. Likewise, formative, positive curricular experiences are brought directly to students through the efforts of teachers and local school systems, not accountability measures or political ideologies.

Seeds

Once we go through the rind, pith, and juice wedges, we arrive at the seeds. Without seeds, there would be no orange. Without students, there would be no need for curriculum. Their existence is the object of all curricula. Students, like seeds, are gifts for the future, ensuring the forward movement of society. The seeds are situated in the juice wedge as students are surrounded by their schools and teachers but influenced and enacted upon by the whole curriculum or orange. Although seeds are the very reason oranges exist, they are spit out. Likewise, if student learning is the goal of curricular development and reform, why are students' needs often the last consideration by educational stakeholders?

A child's education does not begin in school. Moll et al. (1992) remind us that "only a part of that child is present in the classroom" (p. 137). Speaking to the multicultural nature of public schools, social reformer Jane Addams (1910/2022) validated diverse student histories while imagining more equitable future possibilities for neighborhoods, families, and, of course, young students. King et al. (2020) trace the strong lineage of black curriculum, a legacy under attack in some parts of the United States today. "Valuing, learning from, and passing on a much wider array of knowledge than that which resides in traditional bodies of school knowledge only" (Sleeter, 2005, p. 8) is a result of approaching curriculum from an asset-based, multicultural mindset.

Acknowledging challenges the student may face at home and harnessing the power of a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2016; Yuval-Davis, 2006) and love (Darder, 2023) will validate all students' positions in the schools and connect the curriculum to their lives. Will curricular leaders take the time to nourish the seeds of our students to develop "a culture shared rather than a superior one that hovers" (Leonardo, 2018, p. 17)? Who will dare trade a focus on the rind for care for the seeds? What stakeholder will reject getting caught up in the pith or the juice wedges? Tuck and Yang (2012) make a noteworthy parallel of modern colonialism persisting in dangerous neighborhoods, military recruitment practices, and the so-called "school to prison pipeline" (Heitzeg, 2009), keeping students captive in the very structures supposedly designed to assist them.

Seeds are carefully conserved as they are vital for the future of humanity (Evjen, 2024). Likewise, students hold the future of our society. Seeds cannot flourish without the proper conditions of good soil, sunlight, and water. Children need healthy environments in which to holistically thrive. If any of the conditions are less than ideal, we stunt the growth and potential of our society's future. We need to start listening to what students need and appropriately respond in our curricular decisions on all levels—local juice wedges, tasteless measures of the pithy system, and the powerful, aromatic policies of the rind.

Conclusion

Curriculum encompasses everything that influences a student's learning. Using the analogy of an orange, the rind or peel represents the firm beliefs, ideologies, and narratives that package curriculum. This protective shell is designed to protect the quality of the fruit within. Sometimes, the tough and protective rind gets damaged. However, it still is an important part of the orange, just as power structures surrounding education impact what happens to the internal pieces of curriculum. The white pith of an orange is reminiscent of the data and evaluation methods so prevalent in education. The pith is tasteless and sometimes perceived as an annoyance. Like excessive testing and measurement, the most common interface schools and teachers have with powerful political structures relates to accountability measures. Next, there are the juice wedges. Composed of individual juice follicles, or teachers, each wedge has its own individual flavor. The juice wedges representing a variety of unique local schools, teachers, and classroom experiences give a distinct flavor to the curriculum. Finally, the seeds of the orange are analogous to the students. Influenced by the whole fruit, the seeds are situated near the wedges, just as students are surrounded by teachers and schools. Seeds are the reason oranges exist; without seeds, there are no oranges. Without students, there is no curriculum.

The different facets of curriculum all work together to form a student's learning experience. The seeds cannot exist in isolation from any other portion of the orange. Seeds seem strange without knowledge of their context within the larger fruit; only in viewing the whole orange can we see the dynamic interplay of all the parts. Similarly, a student cannot flourish without all aspects of curriculum working together to provide optimum conditions for learning.

As educators, it is our responsibility to reflect upon our role in curriculum while considering the metaphor of an orange. First, we must recognize how our own personal development, the institution where we work, and the lives of our colleagues and administrators have been influenced by each part of the orange. Even the types of data we collect and are mandated to report are wrapped up in broader politics and ideologies, just as the rind envelopes an orange. Based on our current personal and professional contexts, we must examine the flavor that

we bring to the wedges of the orange as we embody our positions and institutions. Are there aspects of our jobs where the measures of accountability, the pith, have become too dense, impacting the overall flavor of the orange, for not only others, but even for ourselves? Finally, who are our seeds? Are we, in the contexts and structures within our purview, creating good growing conditions for the seeds of our students to bear fruit?

Curriculum encompasses all the factors that could help empower the student for their future. Knowing curriculum is "more than the lesson plan" (Mensah, 2020, p. 2) fosters a holistic view of our role as educators in overall student development. Will our efforts today produce more fruit in the future? It all depends on how we treat our seeds.

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Contemporary Analysis on Curriculum Theorists in Education

JING TAN
Miami University

> I would challenge any scholar or group of students to create their own review project and inform the field about what has been missed or that should be covered better or more completely!
>
> (Poetter et al., 2022, p. iv)

*C*URRICULUM WINDOWS REDUX: WHAT CURRICULUM THEORISTS CAN TEACH US *ABOUT SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY TODAY*, edited by Thomas S. Poetter, Kelly Waldrop, and Syed Hassan Raza (2022), brings curriculum theories of the 1950s to 2000s alive by reexamining them through the transformative perspectives of doctoral students at Miami University of Ohio. It is one of seven books in the Curriculum Windows Series, which engages the "window" metaphor to indicate that our life experiences impact how we perceive knowledge and that we look from both inside and outside our life "windows" to seek inspiration and positive change (Poetter et al., 2022). The 33 emerging scholars in this book contribute to curriculum studies and bring critical perspectives and hope for education by analyzing, connecting, and reflecting on essential curriculum books and their contemporary educational experiences.

This unique book not only reconsiders 32 essential curriculum books in the field, but also introduces new perspectives from 33 emerging scholars who examine the books by connecting the past with the present. This book is powerful because you learn that education can truly transform lives. It is a great starting point for scholars to engage curriculum studies because it provides a clear overview of the field through different lenses and helps readers to understand the important issues around it. This book can also serve as the starting point for a mini curriculum library by helping scholars to identify and utilize curriculum theories and books based on their needs. The 33 chapters cover everything from curriculum issues to teaching practices. Some focus on early childhood and K12 education, while others focus on higher education. The authors of this book connect their identities and experiences with the 32 curriculum books written by important curriculum theorists. Together, they provide a comprehensive picture of curriculum studies.

However, readers of this book might feel overwhelmed by such a rich text since it has 33 chapters and reflects on 32 different curriculum books. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that there are numerous critical curriculum books in the educational field that are not included in

this book, for example, Gay's (2018) *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* and Schiro's (2013) *Curriculum Theory: Conflicting Visions and Enduring Concerns.*

To help the audience better understand the contents in this text and effectively review the book, the following sections divide the first 32 chapters into three main categories based on their topics and focus: curriculum issues; teaching practices; and early childhood, K-12, and higher education. This book review ends with Williams' (2022) final chapter and a discussion about the main methodology of the book, *currere*, and how it can empower educators in their research.

Curriculum Issues

Tammy Yockey reads Walker and Soltis' (1997) *Curriculum and Aims* and discusses the relationship between curriculum and its aims. Yockey (2022) stated that curriculum and its aims change based on students' needs at different times and that teachers have the responsibility to advocate for high quality curriculum that matches the intended aim. When curriculum opens a window for change, it is an opportunity for educators to hear students' voices and put students' "academic, functional, and emotional needs" (Yockey, 2022, p. 389) in the center when making curriculum decisions. An example is seen in the first chapter where Shanna Bumiller reflects on Dewey (1956) through a combined reprinting of *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902) and *The School and Society* (1899/1915). Bumiller uses the Shadow a Student Challenge and her own teaching experiences to reimagine education through the student perspective. This chapter argues the importance of breaking the cycle of Zombie education by connecting curriculum with students' experiences, creating students' ownership in learning, and transforming the learning environment. Educators can disrupt the traditional "surviving" style (Bumiller, 2022, p. 2) of learning and teaching by listening to students' voices and co-constructing knowledge with them.

Curriculum changes over time, but the fundamental principles from existing literature can still provide insightful guidelines to current practices. Brittany Buhrlage analyzes Tyler's (1949/2013) *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* by connecting the book with Tyler's educational experiences and considering the importance of his work in curriculum studies. This part of the book starts with the historical context that Tyler lived through and how the Great Depression and World War II connect with Tyler's rationale, including the four fundamental questions in his curriculum development and instruction plan (Buhrlage, 2022). Despite the various scholarly analyses in the field addressing Tyler's focus on educational purposes and objectives, Buhrlage applies Tyler's curriculum elements to the current educational landscape and shares a few school practices through "the window Tyler presents," such as developing work study opportunities for students so that students have better options after graduation (Buhrlage, 2022, p. 26). She argues that Tyler's work is still significant in the curriculum planning process (Buhrlage, 2022).

Jonathan Cooper uses the metaphor of climbing to the summit to write about the urgency and the struggle for a "learner-centric global curriculum" through connecting Kliebard's (1987/1995) *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* with current curriculum issues (Cooper, 2022, p. 50). Cooper writes how this book offers many different perspectives about education by categorizing curriculum historians and theorists into four different groups and explaining how these four different pathways overlap with the present struggles in education, such as giving students more ownership and personalizing students' experiences in learning. Tracy Davis suggests an optimal worldview mindset, which applies a holistic and interrelatedness perspective, to fight

against educational inequalities, such as school funding, in order to bring in the community and ethic of care after reflecting on Kozol's (1991) *Savage Inequalities*. Kozol's book reminds Davis (2022) of "how far we have not come," which includes still-segregated education, and asks us to do something different (p. 52).

For example, Marilee Tanner (2022) mentioned that "we need representatives for people of color in every facet of the educational arena" (p. 132) after reflecting on Delpit's (1995) *Other People's Children*. Delpit (1995) addresses the cultural struggles of minority students in classrooms due to "the code of the culture of power" (Tanner, 2022, p. 122) and "miscommunication between cultures" (Tanner, 2022, p. 126). Therefore, Tanner (2022) argues that it is essential for schools to have diverse representations, including among teacher bodies, and to involve everyone in the educational process to make the curriculum more engaging and relevant and reflect the values and interests of marginalized children in schools.

But how can educators make positive changes in education? Rhonda Phillips reads Meier and Wood's (2004) *Many Children Left Behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is Damaging Our Children and Our Schools* and analyzes how the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act left both students and teachers behind. NCLB focused on "one-size-fits-all testing" (Phillips, 2022, p. 359), but it overlooked the inequity outside of school, such as child poverty rates and lack of health-care coverage. It caused a lack of trust for teachers, a lack of curriculum development, and a lack of diverse assessments to meet the needs of individual students (Phillips, 2022).

Melissa Wipperman's chapter talks about educational reform using Fullan's (1991) *The New Meaning of Educational Change*. Wipperman (2022) states that education needs changes and that changes can be approached or coped with more effectively by multilevel responsibilities, teacher-principal collaboration, cohesive structure with support systems, and a culture with the capacity for change. Elaysha Wright studies systematic oppression and racism in education using Laura's (2014) *Being Bad: My Baby Brother and the School-to-Prison Pipeline*. Wright decries how our current education system labels, dehumanizes, pushes against, and pushes out Black children through zero tolerance policies and the school-to-prison pipeline. Students need "faith, love, hope, energy, time, and a personal investment/commitment" from their educators (Wright, 2022, p. 212). Educators need to "meet children where they are" and practice culturally responsive teaching in order to teach students with different backgrounds and experiences (Wright, 2022, p. 213).

One of the authors, Kristine Michael, examines White privilege in education using Delpit's (2012) *"Multiplication is for White People": Raising Expectations for Other People's Children*. Michael states that not only racism but also socioeconomic conditions impact students' educational experiences. It's essential for educators to be aware of the "multilayered challenges" and "how our view of curriculum is colored by our very personal experience with curriculum" in teaching and learning (Michael, 2022, p. 303). Tanya Moore reflects on Hunter's (1982) *Mastery Teaching* and indicates "there is no fix-all solution for all educational concerns" (Moore, 2022, p. 317). When educational change happens, Moore encourages educators to consider and determine the quality of the idea by investigating "the company or person promoting the strategy," "the feasibility of implementation," and "progress monitoring and timelines" (Moore, 2022, pp. 313–315).

Because of the equity issues in curriculum studies, Andrea Townsend advocates for a multicultural education that is rooted in social reconstructionism and views differences as strengths after reading Sleeter and Grant's (1988) *Making Choices for Multicultural Education*. The book identifies gaps among social sub-groups in our society and guides Townsend to address the purpose of public education as serving humans "by equipping them to think critically, problem solve, and

express their individuality without harm to their identity" (Townsend, 2022, p. 142). Townsend (2022) states that individuals with special needs, such as learning differences or poverty, need social reconstructionist curriculum for all students in order to desegregate education and celebrate students' different identities. Nathan Warner also studies multicultural education but from a different perspective with J. A. Banks'(1997) *Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society*. Warner considers multicultural education as part of the idea of freedom, justice, and democracy from the curriculum, pedagogy, and school environment lens. In order to fight against stereotypes, racism, and discrimination, Warner asks educators to support students, challenge traditional education through critical and transformative perspectives, and practice equity pedagogy, which needs "more scholarly educational leadership and a commitment to link scholarship with practice" (Warner, 2022, p. 157).

These 13 chapters holistically discuss student-centered curriculum related topics from different lenses, such as curriculum aims and principles. However, education transforms students' lives not only by centering their needs in the curriculum but also by empowering students to take responsibility for their learning. For example, one of the ways to empower students in curriculum studies is to motivate students to identify opportunities and "take actions that produce the power needed to influence organizational or community conditions that affect well-being" (Peterson et al., 2014, p. 633).

Teaching Practices

Misty Cook indicates the importance of connecting school with students' lives and of teacher lore in education, which bridges school and community, places "teachers at the core of the curriculum rather than predetermined standards," and "emphasizes the experiential knowledge of real teachers in real classrooms" (Cook, 2022, p. 31). She draws these conclusions based on her own teaching experiences and Schubert's (1980) *Curriculum Books*. Cook (2022) also critiques standardized tests as the only means of assessing students' learning and teachers' teaching by reflecting on her experience as a high school student, where she discovered that skills that "cannot be measured in an objective way" are as important as academic skills (Cook, 2022, p. 36). Later, in Chapter 22, Louis Hacquard III also studies *Curriculum Books* but from a different lens. Hacquard (2022) indicates that it is essential for educators to go back and look in the right place in order to develop a curriculum for the scholars of the future. He further emphasizes that curriculum studies is not an isolated area of academic focus. To connect teaching with other disciplines, Debra Amling reflects on Duckworth's (1987) *"The Having of Wonderful Ideas" and Other Essays on Teaching and Learning* and shares the importance of connecting children's intellectual development with classroom practice. Amling (2022) asks teachers to be willing to cultivate and welcome children's ideas, provide a setting that suggests wonderful ideas to children, and allow time for confusion, learning, and reflection so that students constructing meanings are the heart of the classroom.

Education happens in classrooms in many different ways. Britzman's (2003) *Practice Makes Practices* guides Ashley Warren to reflect on a few stories that happened in classrooms that led teacher candidates to question their own identity formation. Warren reveals the importance of being provided with a variety of opportunities in diverse situations during student teaching so that teacher candidates can better determine their identities as teachers and human beings. These opportunities will also help student teachers "test who they want to become rather than what

society has already dictated as essential" (Warren, 2022, p. 164). Through reflection on Britzman's book, Warren shares that only educators can assign meaning to our own teaching experience, and effective instruction needs teachers to "speak actively, teach actively, and care actively" (Warren, 2022, p. 168). Curriculum is also important for teaching practices. Erica O'Keeffe shares that curriculum has knowledge and power and that it reflects the community's cultural norms and values, with the support of Sears and Carper's (1998) *Curriculum, Religion, and Public Education*. O'Keeffe's teaching experience demonstrates "the influence of society on curriculum and curriculum on society" (O'Keeffe, 2022, p. 321). O'Keeffe (2022) also asks educators to transform curriculum to provide diversified and critical points of view for students to develop in-depth learning, especially when controversy happens.

In addition, Lauren Gentene argues that "teaching cannot be the center of our schools, learning must be" (Gentene, 2022, p. 78). She advocates for child-centered, student-owned, and balanced curriculum through effective personalized professional development for teachers and learning environments for students after studying Rugg and Shumaker's (1928) *The Child-Centered School*. Erin Owens studies the different versions of Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde's (1998) *Best Practice*. Owens (2022) learns that growth is experienced by all, including the authors of the book, and that's why the different versions of the book vary so much. This book provides seven structures for more meaningful engagements in classrooms, and it challenges Owens's belief in focusing on one single best practice as a curriculum leader by encouraging teachers to freely choose among multiple approaches to effective instruction. It is essential for teachers to transform into "researchers of practice" by studying and implementing more instructional strategies in education (Owens, 2022, p. 104).

More importantly, as a class social worker, Rebecca Wilson studies Kohn's (1996) *Beyond Discipline* and questions the control and manipulation of educators in classrooms in order to overemphasize compliance, following instructions, and obtaining the correct answer. Wilson (2022) proposes building caring relationships with students through healthy and deep conversations so that educators and students can effectively co-construct meaning and knowledge in classrooms together. Furthermore, Thomie Timmons studies West's (1994) *Race Matters* and indicates "the urgent need for the White educator to actively participate with other like minded educators" (Timmons, 2022, p. 380) to confront truths, challenge and change racialized curriculum through honest open dialogue, and examine personal prejudices and institutional racial biases. Timmons states that curriculum as a racial text can perpetuate ideologies that put marginalized students at a systemic disadvantage, and White educators need to intentionally overcome such ideologies by identifying internal prejudices and addressing racial issues so that curriculum can empower "the greatness in all students while honestly reflecting the challenges and faults which would rather be ignored" (Timmons, 2022, p. 379).

Michelle Banks suggests a window of potential to keep education and knowledge alive after reading Whitehead's (1929) *The Aims of Education and Other Essays*. Educators can connect daily practice with hope and balance between freedom and discipline "through inquiry and discovery, guided by the parameters set by the standards and curriculum objectives" (M. Banks, 2022, p. 231). Banks asks teachers to educate "whole children," teach for "greater understanding and real application to students' worlds," create opportunities to support ongoing love and interest in learning, and keep students engaged and passionate about the "discovery of truth and knowledge" through the community of education (M. Banks, 2022, pp. 232–237).

While these 10 chapters focus on teaching practices in classrooms and advocate for a more critical learning environment for students, they do not introduce the importance of intersectional

pedagogy in teaching, which is needed to understand complicated and intersecting identities (Berry, 2014) of current students and educators before analyzing how to effectively teach and learn at schools. Moreover, intersectionality, as a curriculum theoretical paradigm, can inform best practices, community organizing, and advocacy strategies that "transcend traditional single-axis horizons" (Cho et al., 2013, p. 785).

Early Childhood, K-12, & Higher Education

Kelly Wilham analyzes Paley's (1992) *You Can't Say You Can't Play* and argues that storytelling and story acting curriculum is critical for early childhood education in order to create an inclusive learning environment for the limitless growth of young children. This curriculum allows children to "construct meaning in their worlds, meaning that carries through into their adult lives" (Wilham, 2022, p. 184), and includes all the students in the cooperative learning process through play. Wilham also expresses concern that if the focus of Kindergarten education switches to preparing students academically and socially for first grade, it will close off opportunities for children to be developmentally ready. Another chapter considers the student motivation essential for K-12 education. Jeremy Froehlich critiques Gagné and Driscoll's (1988) *Essentials of Learning for Instruction* by sharing educational experiences from childhood. Froehlich's mother combated poverty through education, sparking his motivation. Therefore, Froehlich (2022) argues that student motivation comes not only from curiosity, achievement, or self-efficacy, but also external motivators outside of academics.

Another perspective on K-12 schools is from Jennifer Penczarski, a superintendent, who reflects on educational leadership, supervision, and teacher evaluation based on Sergiovanni's (1982) *Supervision of Teaching*. Penczarski teaches us that principals are leaders of leaders (teachers) who need to eliminate dissonance and create harmony between standards and requirements and the core beliefs of the community so that teachers can have a safe space to share their perspectives instead of using the "hierarchical chain of command" (Penczarski, 2022, p. 337). To balance the power of the K-12 leadership team, teacher unions offer another way for teachers to advocate for their needs. Kasey Perkins recommends that teacher unions not only stand up for teachers' rights, but also recognize and advocate for "the rights of the students they represent every day" (Perkins, 2022, p. 348). Perkins recognized teacher unions' significance in creating a socially just education system and combating the privatization of public education after reading Weiner's (2012) *The Future of Our Schools*. Perkins (2022) argues that a socially just union can collaborate with teachers, parents, administration, and other stakeholders to promote positive changes in education and lead to a democratic learning environment for all.

Then, Jason Fine uses a student's story to demonstrate the importance of cultures in Bennett's (1986) *Comprehensive Multicultural Education*. Fine (2022) mentions that it's essential to challenge cultural racism, be mindful and respect cultural differences, and connect with different ethnic groups and local resources when developing intercultural competence for educators. Later in the book, Kimberly Halley reads Darling-Hammond's (2010) *The Flat World and Education* and analyzes the intertwined relationships between poverty and education. To achieve equity in education, Halley (2022) emphasizes the importance of equitable funding and a balance between support and accountability for marginalized groups, including "poor and under-resourced children" (p. 274) in K-12 schools.

Mindy Jennings also talks about equitable funding by analyzing charter schools in K-12 using Fabricant and Fine's (2012) *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education*. Jennings first introduces how charter schools intend to provide a better education for marginalized groups, then discusses how corporations begin to control charter schools in order to make more money "at the educational expense of children" (Jennings, 2022, p. 290). Charter schools lack funding oversight, which leaves room for corruption and switches the intention from serving students to serving their own personal interests. Hence, Jennings (2022) argues that we need to invest more in our public school system to make major improvements for all children instead of putting public funds into charter schools.

As for higher education, Craig Myers examines the balance between teaching and research and applies those reflections to K-12 teaching based on Boyer's (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Myers (2022) asks educators to embrace three R's: rigor, which is to challenge students for further growth; relevance, which is to engage with the needs of society; and relationships, which is fostering connections to better meet the socio-emotional needs of students and provide more supports for academic success. Jaime Ranly also discusses the lack of real-world teaching scenarios in undergraduate education and the fact that "teachers are often unprepared for the realities of teaching" (Ranly, 2022, p. 109). After studying Goodlad's (1994) *Educational Renewal*, Ranly (2022), as a teacher mentor, urges us to transform the way we prepare and support new teachers by creating partnerships between school districts and universities through communication and collaboration.

Although these nine chapters offer specific analyses for different age groups, including early childhood, K-12, and higher education, they only center their arguments in the U.S. educational context. The lack of consideration for curriculum internationalization means the impact of global education, such as the "pressure for accountability in internationally competitive test results" (Carson, 2009, p. 146), is often overlooked. This can lead "educators to succumb to the institutionally internalized conceptions of curriculum as standards, leaving behind reconceptualist notions of the autobiographical nature of curriculum" (Berry, 2014, p. 4).

Conclusion

At last, Tiffany Williams ends the book with hooks' (2000) *All About Love* and shares her stories to demonstrate how critical race feminist *currere* intersects with race, gender, and the curriculum. When understanding the socially constructed self through *currere*, it can "be used as a model for women of color to make meaning of their schooling and non-schooling experiences" and it offers a scholarly path to critical healing and critical self-love in order "to be free, to live fully and well" (Williams, 2022, pp. 402–404). In fact, every author in this book uses *currere* because their scholarship in curriculum studies involves reflecting on their own educational experiences. Each chapter provides a contemporary and valuable analysis on important curriculum texts in education. The readers of this book can gain a holistic understanding of the curriculum studies field and learn more about different perspectives on education.

This book is about power sharing and knowledge producing in that it empowers the 33 graduate student scholars. Graduate students are our hope and the center of future educational change. Each advanced doctoral class is a community of scholars. They have experiences, and their voices matter. Poetter and Googins (2017) stated the following:

> Our lives become curricula, guided, influenced and honed by our sense of our relationship to a number of things in the world, including our relationship to practices, influences, and ideas, and especially to the world of the social where we are in relation to peers and other citizens engaged in projects for social reconstruction, especially toward equity and social justice, and especially in public education. (p. 9)

Every author of this book provides a rich text that centers the scholar, connecting curriculum issues in education with their social experiences (Poetter & Googins, 2017). The interactions of our past, present, and future are all curriculum, so we study them and engage with them. By standing on the shoulders of curriculum theorists, emerging scholars can add new knowledge to the current curriculum and instruction field. This book does not offer all of the critical curriculum theories and practices; for instance, culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) and intersectionality (Cho et al., 2013) are not addressed. Furthermore, most of the contents are based on the U.S. educational context. However, if you are looking for books to learn or learn more about curriculum studies in education and don't know where to start, I would recommend this book. It has a variety of relevant topics and multiple lenses of analysis for all the featured texts. When you read this volume, you can get an overview of each of the 32 curriculum books, contextualize them in the current educational environment, and decide which ones you are interested in exploring further based on your needs.

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Remembering the Architects of *Sesame Street*
Biopolitics, Blackness, and Preschool in the 1960s

NICOLE WEINBERG
Texas Christian University

S EVERAL INFLUENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS have endorsed mass media educational initiatives, also known as "edutainment," as a cost-effective strategy to address learning loss during the pandemic (Catellani, 2021; Haßler et al., 2020; Nugroho et al., 2020). Drawing from discourses within international development and education, the term "edutainment" or variants thereof can be traced back to colonial radio education initiatives in the 1960s. It is important to acknowledge the pre-existing performative, entertaining methods of education that have existed across the world for centuries; as such, the term "edutainment" here is critiqued, not as a means to deny storytelling as a pedagogical approach, but rather in relation to use of technology to both entertain and educate mass audiences by Western geopolitical powers. Such initiatives are typically characterized as a cost-effective approach to addressing social inequalities. In relation to the pandemic, it seems that edutainment has more potential today than ever before, as funding for education dwindles and pressure for accelerated learning increases.

In considering the future of edutainment, *The SAGE Handbook of Early Childhood Research* (Farrell et al., 2015) claims that *Sesame Street*'s early research "demonstrated the power of well-crafted educational media" and recommends future initiatives to follow their lead (p. 403). A recent British evaluation of an African edutainment initiative echoed *Sesame Street*'s traditional evaluation model by estimating cost-effectiveness, defined as "the least cost approach to … raising [attainment]," to be less than one cent per child per year (Watson et al., 2021, p. 648). The framing of edutainment, and specifically Sesame Workshop, as a cost-effective part of the solution to the global "crisis of learning" during the pandemic has been echoed by UNICEF (Nugroho et al., 2020), global non-profits such as EdTech (Haßler et al., 2020), and such media as *The Wall Street Journal* (Catellani, 2021). The most critical response to this excitement from those who study education might be to review and learn from what is already written about historical edutainment programs.

Texas Republican Senator, Ted Cruz, epitomized our national misunderstanding of *Sesame Street* by recently criticizing Big Bird. On his podcast, *The Verdict*, Cruz (in Cruz & Knowles, 2021) regarded the fictional character's tweet suggesting he was vaccinated against COVID-19 as

"government propaganda, for your 5-year-old" (n.p.). Among the liberal backlash to Cruz's comment was film executive Franklin Leonard's (as quoted in Rahman, 2021) tweet that Cruz "thinks HBO Max is the government" (para. 9), referring to the 2016 re-homing of *Sesame Street* from PBS to HBO Max (Pressler, 2016). Contrary to the common misconception that *Sesame Street* is a program of the federal government, the bulk of its initial and continued funding are private donors; government funds have historically played an intermittent and subsidiary role (Fandom, n.d.).[1]

Current funding of Sesame Workshop is difficult to assess due to the complex network of affiliated for-profit and international entities; for example, the audit of Sesame Workshop and subsidiaries for the 2020 fiscal year reports about $360,000 in net assets (Grant Thornton, 2021), while the self-published annual review reports net assets at $361 million for that same year (Sesame Workshop, 2020). The annual review also lists major supporters, the largest of which are the LEGO Foundation and MacArthur Foundation, having contributed at least $25 million each.

Toward the aim of looking backward to the history of edutainment prior to moving forward, the current analysis is structured firstly through a conceptual framework and overlay of historical context, and then through a narrative history of the construction of the *Sesame Street* curriculum from 1966-1969 chronologically through key figures, or "architects," of the program. Next, I summarize the prospects of Sesame Workshop in 1970, after the premiere of the first season. The summative analysis describes three ways the architects of Sesame Street both contributed to and subverted national trends in education leading up to the 1970s in terms of their constructions of the "disadvantaged child," roles in establishing the neoliberal centrality of the private sector in education, and influences on federal funding for public preschools. The concluding section poses questions and possible considerations for academics in education to consider when "the next big thing" in edutainment inevitably begins to surface.[2]

Conceptual Framework

My current approach to the field blends Daniel and Laurel Tanner's (1990, as cited in Pinar et al., 1995) curriculum studies as "collective memory of the field of curriculum" (p. 124) and MacDonald's (1971, as cited in Pinar et al., 1995) curriculum theory as "committed to human fullness" (p. 181). And yet, remembering" the history of curriculum also necessitates a limitless number of choices in *which* historical frameworks to apply to *which* sets of memories; specifically, I believe that Black education must be remembered in a way that is polyphonic both in framework and narrative, an ambition I attempt in the current analysis through layered methodology, theory, and structure. Working from and beyond this understanding of curriculum, I take an expansive look at the curriculum of *Sesame Street* in order for this work to be relevant to a wide range of professionals who all have different types of investments in curriculum. My current methodology interprets what Pinar et al. (1995) refer to as a commitment to "human fullness" within Barad's (2006) concept of ethico-onto-epistemology, an acknowledgement of the "intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being" (p. 185).

I understand childhood as historically situated and socially constructed in its meaning and function, in Western modernity associated with young children requiring active guidance to develop their abilities and needing protection from various environmental threats (Aries, 1962). Borrowing from the work of Amartya Sen (1999), I view educational goals such as cognitive development and school readiness as *means* to overcome "intergenerational transfers of poverty"

rather than *ends* in themselves (Ballet et al., 2011, p. 31). In this perspective, quantitative analysis is an incomplete representation of the ethical value of early childhood education interventions. As the literature base on *Sesame Street* and similar edutainment initiatives often comprises of publications that are informal or otherwise not peer reviewed, I undertake this analysis through a synthesis of interdisciplinary scholarship, documentaries, primary sources, and other "grey literature." Despite grey literature being in many ways an academic taboo, the story of *Sesame Street* is one that has been primarily documented outside of academic scholarship. Following the precedent of others (e.g., Govender, 2013) who critically examine edutainment initiatives, especially within the intersections of philanthropy and education, grey literature within their limitations have been integral to this analysis as providing key information about the timeline, design, programmatic goals, and evaluation of *Sesame Street.*

Drawing upon Winfield's (2007) work, I consider *Sesame Street* a cultural artifact "imbued with scientific language" of developmental psychology to appeal to the American "cultural perception of value" in the late 1960s (p. 34). The historical narrative I seek to unravel takes structural inspiration from Watkins's *The White Architects of Black Education* (2001). By organizing my analysis of the formative years of *Sesame Street* in terms of the specific, named, "white architects" of "Black education," I tell the story of how several elite, powerful white men— and one woman—took the principles of social efficiency, eugenics, mental measurement, and deficit narratives of Black families to mass produce a curriculum for America's "inner-city" preschoolers in the late 1960s.

The Architects of *Sesame Street*

Andrew Carnegie might perhaps be considered the first architect of *Sesame Street*, a ghost, or even a phantom architect, for although he was not alive during the creation of the show, his philosophy on wealth and philanthropy set the stage for these sunny days. It was through Carnegie's fortune in which he was able to continue to impact the material world from beyond the grave, specifically through the private foundation in his namesake, The Carnegie Corporation, which in many ways seeks to bring his political and philanthropic legacy to fruition past the time of his death.

Andrew Carnegie, Founder of the Carnegie Corporation

A person of such wealth and power that he shaped, not only American history in his lifetime, but continued to shape political and material realities from beyond the grave, it is important to know what Andrew Carnegie's political views were. In his obituary, Carnegie's political views were described as somewhat Republican, with the caveat that he was a "violent opponent of some of the most sacred doctrines" (*The New York Herald*, 1919, p. 10). For example, he was known as an advocate for disarmament[3] and was influential in the formative years of the League of Nations; this interest in international affairs would continue in his legacy through the Carnegie Corporation (Stead, 1901). Most importantly, his political philosophy seemed to align most with the defense of the free market, an ideology that heavily influenced his approach to philanthropy and foreshadowed the neoliberal era to come.

In an age in which social issues were not typically addressed through the principles of business, Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth," sought to establish "a new breed of entrepreneurs to prevent problems through early intervention," "use of social science," and "involvement in public policy" (Sievers, 2010, p. 103). Carnegie (1889) advised wealthy "social entrepreneurs" to do for "his poorer brethren" that which "they would or could [not] do for themselves" (p. 662). At a time in which individual excess accumulation was seen as a threat to democracy in America, Carnegie's philosophy of social uplift through charity functioned "in maintaining the established socio-economic order" (Harvey et al., 2020, p. 33). Through the "Gospel of Wealth," wealth was accumulated by white men fairly through hard work and merit, and those who attained very wealthy socio-economic statuses had the duty to use their hard work, merit, and capital to improve the lives of others—not through ethical business practices—but through strategic, restricted charitable donations. Despite the failure of Carnegie to live up to his promise of giving away his fortune within his lifetime,[4] his "Gospel of Wealth" continues to inspire modern billionaires such as Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, or Elon Musk, to make grand philanthropic pledges. Such billionaires claim their philanthropy is for the betterment of society, when in reality it sustains the current social order by creating a carefully-crafted illusion of fairness. In truth, the marriage of private equity and philanthropy results in wealthy white men such as Carnegie haunting society with their undue influence for decades or even centuries after their demise, often having power that should be endowed to the people in a democratic state.

Carnegie's haunting influence on society is made explicit in a statement made after his death in which he left two colleagues as the initial trustees of his philanthropy, granting them "full authority to change policy" as long as they "best conform to [his] wishes by using their own judgment" (The Carnegie Corporation of New York, n.d.-b, para. 7). Since 1919, the foundation has been under the management of a paid, full-time president, who works under the careful advice of the trustees. The Carnegie Corporation has been profoundly influential in the past century, including through the shaping of higher education through the "Carnegie Classification of Institutions of High Education," and despite the ultimate aim being to give away all of the fortune, its funds show no sign of waning, with an estimated endowment of $3.5 billion as of 2018 (The Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2018). The late 1960s were an especially opportune time for private philanthropy to influence public policy, and the acting presidents of the Carnegie Corporation during this period had particularly close ties to American politics.[5]

Alan Pifer, President of the Carnegie Corporation

Alan Pifer served as the foundation's acting president from 1965-67, while former president John W. Gardner served as President Johnson's Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare. Although he was not acting president of the foundation, Gardner influenced the path of *Sesame Street* through his privileged position to facilitate government partnership, as well as his ties to Educational Testing Services (ETS). Alan Pifer had served in World War II, and in the five years before joining the Carnegie Corporation had administered the Fulbright Program in the United Kingdom. These experiences likely shaped his intention to take *Sesame Street* internationally, but perhaps also ties into critiques of *Sesame Street* as an instrument of American cultural imperialism abroad through promoting American values and educational values across diverse cultural contexts.

According to Davis (2008), Pifer responded to popular claims for foundations to address issues of power and wealth through three interlocking objectives: prevention of educational disadvantage, equality of educational opportunity in the schools, and broadened opportunities in higher education. Ironically, Pifer framed these objectives as unified in an overarching goal of improving the democratic performance of government, the irony being that providing for education is a matter of governmental intervention, rather than that of private equity. Pifer also led grants towards government reform, educational litigation, voter education, and initiated a program to train Black[6] lawyers in the South as well as increased foundation activities in South Africa.

We can see that Pifer influenced public policy through his role at the Carnegie Corporation in 1967, in which he and Gardener advocated for Johnson to establish the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, with the philanthropy committing a one million dollar grant to the project as soon as it was established (Davis, 2008; The Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2005b). The founding of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting exemplifies the issue with public-private partnerships of this scale—that being that the Carnegie Corporation provided a significant amount of funds for the start of this program, but the government did not have a long-term plan for sustaining it, nor was the program such a priority as other pressing matters, such as the funding of public education.

Barbara Finberg (1990), who held various positions at the Carnegie Corporation between 1959 and 1997 (The Carnegie Corporation of New York, 2005a), provided insight into the inner-workings of the foundation in a publication entitled "Support for Science From a Foundation Perspective." Finberg previously worked for the U.S. State Department and the Institute of International Education and was integral in the initial planning of *Sesame Street*. Finberg (1990) describes the board of trustees as integral to shaping grant-making efforts, making it explicit that "a foundation's board has final grant-making authority;" she describes foundation boards as "usually self-perpetuating" in which members "reflect the views and values of those who choose them" (p. 58). Finberg describes the grantmaking process as ultimately a conversation between the board and scientific community (p. 60).

Lloyd Morrisett, Founder of Children's Television Workshop

Before joining the foundation, Morrisett taught experimental psychology at several universities. His philanthropic views closely mirrored those of Carnegie's Gospel of Wealth, through what he termed "venture capital for social benefit" (Morrisett, 1997, p. 5). At the Carnegie Corporation, he developed an interest in early childhood as well as desire to reach more "disadvantaged children" to reduce the achievement gap in a more cost-efficient way (Agrelo, 2021). It was at a dinner party at Joan Goaz Cooney's house in which WNDT producer, Freedman (as quoted in Davis, 2008), wondered "aloud what it might take for the network program lords to strive higher for America's children" through intentional children's television programming (p. 14). At the time, TV was often regarded as a "wasteland" inappropriate for children, a concept drawn from FCC Chairman Minow's (2003/1961) speech to the National Association of Broadcasters. As the Carnegie Corporation had just begun to commit funds to the educational achievement gap of preschoolers, Morrisett considered Freedman's comment and asked Cooney about her thoughts on educational children's programming.

Joan Goaz Cooney, Executive Director of *Sesame Street*

Cooney, having completed her undergraduate degree in education, had worked on films addressing poverty for several years; notable of these is her Emmy-winning documentary on children's relief programs entitled *Poverty, Anti-Poverty and the Poor* (Davis, 2008). As Cooney became increasingly interested in Morrisett's question of whether television could educate children, her initial concept for a program was inspired by observations of her grandchild reciting jingles from commercials (Polsky et al., 1974). In 1966, she submitted an initial proposal to conduct a feasibility study; the foundation quickly approved her request, which Finberg (as quoted in Davis, 2008) described as a "chance to find out whether television … can offer all children a head start on their education" (p. 65). While possibly coincidental, the early word play on "head start" indicates the growth of *Sesame Street* in relation to the government preschool initiative, established only a year prior.

To inform her feasibility study, Cooney interviewed psychologists and educators throughout the country who she generally regarded as "supportive of [the] idea … even though no one knew *if* you could do it" (Davis, 2008, p. 66). Among those interviewed was Harvard cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner, who reportedly said "we cannot wait for the right answers before acting. Rather, we should look upon the first year of broadcasting for preschoolers in the nature of an inquiry" (Davis, 2008, p. 66). Cooney (1966) constructed the "disadvantaged child" as coming from a disengaged family, "inadequately stimulated and motivated," and requiring "adequate compensation" (p. 13). She reflected Bruner's earlier mention of the urgency of the issue, commented that an expanded Head Start will not happen in "foreseeable future" (Cooney, 1966, p. 14) and expressed a desire for the show to benefit children of the middle class as well (p. 42–43). The feasibility study was formative to the design and goals of what would become *Sesame Street*, Cooney's construction of the "disadvantaged child" was consistent with the rhetoric at the time and heavily emphasized the improvement of "cognitive development" (Bereiter & Engelmann, 1966; Harrington, 1963; Lewis, 1961).

Cooney's report led to two conferences regarding the initial planning of Children's Television Workshop (CTW) in 1967,[7] the first of which discussed production, timetable, and budget and the second, research and evaluation. The primacy of organizational factors before extensive discussion of the *purpose* of the program reflects the problematic top-down creation of such initiatives in "social venture capital." By the second conference, the architects of *Sesame Street* had established a primary goal of increasing cognitive development, which "meant it would be considerably easier to measure its effects" compared to a central affective outcome (Polsky et al., 1974). While the curricular goals ventured outside of cognitive development over the planning of the first season, Polsky (1974) notes that "they never allowed themselves to lose sight of the central objective" (p. 103).

The Ford Foundation

According to Engleman (1996), in the 1950s the Ford Foundation was financing research on television in schools and financing efforts that resulted in the 1952 FCC reservation of 242 noncommercial channels. The last of their explicit programs in noncommercial television was the 1966 creation of, and ten-million-dollar donation to, the Public Broadcasting Laboratory, "designed to be an innovative and controversial national television magazine covering public

affairs and the arts" (Engelman, 1996, p. 151). The program was known for having difficulties in management, controversy, public opinion, and press; it's possible that the "radicalism" that became of the program deterred the foundation by demonstrating that noncommercial TV could "go beyond the confines of its establishment sponsors" (Engelman, 1996, p. 154). In other words, the Ford Foundation was well-positioned to hold mass control of the media through its ability to be assigned noncommercial channels through the government but extinguised their programs altogether due to their dislike of the politics that became featured on these shows.

Luckily for the Ford Foundation's sticky situation with a political affairs show that had seemed to have gone off the rails, Pifer's leadership of the Carnegie Corporation was known for an increased collaboration with that of Ford and Rockefeller. Despite Ford's initial hesitancy to join another venture in television, the foundation decided to commit initial funds to the budding project. Davidson (as quoted in Polsky et al., 1974), a former secretary of the Children's Television Workshop, noted that the Ford Foundation may have concluded that the nature of PBL was "automatically controversial in a way that a '*Sesame Street*' never will be'' given the seemingly apolitical agenda of early childhood education (p. 53). Therefore, this strategic shift in focus for educational television to the early years retained the strong influence of the private foundations but made the project more politically appealing toward the American public.

The success of Children's Television Workshop (CTW) was only possible through an early and strategic partnership with National Educational Television (NET)—specifically, one with terms that financially benefitted the Carnegie Corporation through lowering costs, while retaining total ownership of all content created and educational curricula. Morrisett learned from PBL's apparently difficult relationship between The Ford Foundation and NET president, John White (Engelman, 1996), and handled initial partnership terms himself (Polsky et al., 1974). In the final terms of agreement, NET would coordinate with the local stations to air both *Sesame Street* and CTW's other initial show, *The Electric Company*. The legal department of CTW would be handled by NET, but *Sesame Street* would retain all rights to their content. On the relationship to NET, Cooney explained that reporting to White rather than the trustees was "the primary error that PBL made" (Polsky et al., 1974, p. 54). The terms of this initial agreement with NET had two important implications. First, *Sesame Street* would have the autonomy to eventually part with its public ties, as it did through the recent move to HBO Max. Second, *Sesame Street* would gain some autonomy from the Board of Trustees, who provided partial funding but were not directly managing the direction of the show.

Gerry Lesser, Chairmanship of CTW's Board of Advisers and Consultants

In 1968, Gerry Lesser joined CTW as chairman of its Board of Advisers and Consultants; his involvement in the project may have contributed to the continued specialized interest of the Harvard Graduate School of Education in early childhood education today. Hired along with Head Researcher Palmer and Executive Producer Connell, the three ensured that "the priorities, the chain of command, and the budget had all been determined" and all that was "required of the staff was the creation of a television series that achieved pre-established goals" (Polsky et al., 1974, p. 103). Lesser was the lead author in a 1965 study that studied how class and "cultural groups," which were defined as "Chinese, Jewish, Negro, and Puerto Rican," relate to patterns in "mental abilities" (p. 6). The study suggested natural selection or environmental factors as influences children's intelligence across groups, an implication which is easily traced back to social Darwinism and the

eugenics movement. Lesser's perspectives on the cognitive development of the "disadvantaged child" would shape the show through his leadership in a series of five curriculum seminars in preparation for season one.

The topics of these seminars, created before inviting outside stakeholders, heavily emphasized cognitive learning outcomes[8] (Fisch & Truglio, 2014). In his book, Lesser (1974) recounts that he gave a "utilitarian view of education" during these seminars focusing on how "basic intellectual skills … have broad currency in our society" (p. 48). Lesser describes the goals of the seminars as "extracting" expert opinion as well as exposing the production team and experts to each other (p. 139). His hope was that this seemingly-early involvement of academics would give scholars "a sense of ownership" of the show so that they might be "less likely to criticize the show once it began" (p. 139).

In recounting the curriculum seminars, Ogilvie (as quoted in Polsky et al., 1974) notes that Lesser and White generally steered the group away from defining the term "disadvantaged child," as they believed a construction or model of this term was a "waste of time" that would ultimately disregard the variation across children (p. 75); instead, they asked the group to generally imagine an average four-year-old. Some academics, such as Chester Pierce, showed concern that the show had lost perspective on its target audience and argued that the show must reflect "what it was like to be a kid in the inner city, what kind of horrors they lived with and the dangers of life and the dim prospects of ever emerging from it" (Davis, 2008, p. 141). Lesser's heated response rejected this concern entirely, later commenting that "the show that was building in my mind was absolutely horrible," what Pierce described seemed "hopeless and awful" (Davis, 2008, p. 142). Other "experts" criticized the show for "illuminating the 'destructive fantasies in the child'" (Davis, 2008, p. 141) and Connell described the seminars as an overall "horrendous strain, physically and mentally" (Polsky et al., 1974, p. 76).

The product of these seminars was "The Instructional Goals of the CTW" (CTW, 1968), which emphasized the educational objectives towards the improvement of "cognitive processes" and identified the Educational Testing Service as the evaluator of the project. The report strongly resembled the recommendations for a potential program outlined in Cooney's feasibility study with an interesting addition of social learning outcomes, including "rules which insure justice and fair play" (CTW, 1968, p. 12). Contradictorily, these learning outcomes both aimed for children to "behave according to the constraints of simple rules" as well as show evidence of "evaluating" and "generating rules," including an ability to distinguish "whether a particular form of praise or punishment is or is not appropriate" (p. 12). It is unclear whether these outcomes hinted towards civil rights advocacy in the context of the decade's televised violence against minorities, but this language might have served as a "crack" in the blockade of the show's cognitive focus, which allowed more direct engagement with social and systemic justice in the decades following.

Robert Stone, Head Writer

Stone kept the "disadvantaged child" in mind in choosing both the setting and title for the show. Cooney, keeping the middle-class family in mind, was concerned how they might respond to a setting inspired by the streets of Harlem (Agrelo, 2021). The process of naming the show was parodied in the pitch reel, with one muppet frustratedly exclaiming "why don't we call the show 'Hey Stupid!'" (Agrelo, 2021, n.p.). This comedic line might represent Stone's perspective on the inner-city Black children, whom he understood as needing urgent intervention towards school

readiness that their environments were not providing. Having spent time developing *Captain Kangaroo*, Stone took much inspiration from the project including the integration of puppets and hiring of Jim Henson. The development of characters evolved over time, especially as children increasingly preferred watching the "muppets" over live actors. Initially, Stone wanted the lead of the show, Gordon, to be a Black male holding "responsibility in the community" and the character that would be Mr. Hooper to be "male, Caucasian, and Jewish" to reflect "that time in Bronx sociological history" (Davis, 2008, p. 168). Stone's approach to the show reflected a concerning deficit perspective on Black children and a problematic portrayal of underrepresented communities, revealing a need for critical examination of the biases ingrained in his creative vision.

Sesame Street's Prospects in 1970

As several children's shows began to emerge in the late 1960s, the media generally still regarded TV as a "wasteland" for children's brains and some referred to the vision for *Sesame Street* as "only wishful thinking" (Gowran, 1969, p. A13). After the first episode aired on November 10th of 1969, under the newly inaugurated President Nixon, *Sesame Street* quickly became a household name. The first season was generally regarded as a grand success, as the media portrayed the show to the public as very effective at producing educational results in young children. Based on a diverse sample of around nine-hundred American preschoolers, the first year evaluation from the Educational Testing Service asserted that the show had a demonstrated ability to "reduce the distinct educational gap that usually separates advantaged and disadvantaged children" (Ball & Bogatz, 1970, pp. 7–8).

Contrary to the continued narrative that early *Sesame Street* evaluations undoubtably established evidence of the show's effectiveness, Cook et al. (1975) revisit some of the lesser known findings of the original ETS evaluation. Specifically, Cook et al. cite limited evidence of learning gains in some of the ETS tests, although they note the difficulty in establishing causality in the evaluation of mass media programs as well as the positive correlation of viewership with income. Contrary to the touted low-cost of the show's production per gains, Cook et al. note that "encouragement-and-viewing cost between $100 and $200 per child per year;" the distribution cost of edutainment initiatives fluctuates based on contextual factors and remains cheaper than providing preschool, yet such hidden costs might challenge the show's common return-on-investment claims (p. 20). For the "less positive findings," Cook et al. suggest evidence that the show may have decreased "disadvantage parents reported reading to their children," and claims that the low Black viewership of the show suggests that "'*Sesame Street*' is probably increasing achievement gaps in those domains where it effectively teaches" (p. 20). Cook et al. are skeptical as to whether the target population was served, as they note the show is "selectively used" by advantaged children and emphasizes "the difficulty of pursuing compensatory goals by means of a universalist strategy" (p. 22).

Sesame Street was designed to be positively evaluated, focusing on abstract "cognitive development" and prioritizing an appeal to the white middle-class regardless of its intended audience. As the architects of *Sesame Street* viewed their role as bridging "philanthropy and venture capital," their approach to curriculum planning blended models of efficiency in business (General Motors Corporation, 1946) with the curricular planning of Tylerism. In relation to *Sesame Street*'s early approach to curriculum formation, Fisch and Truglio (2014) claim that CTW was

inspired by a 1967 AERA monograph authored by Tyler, Gange, and Scriven. Specifically, ETS encouraged Cooney and Morrisett to strike a balance between what Scriven (1967) termed "formative research" and "summative evaluation," encouraging Cooney's commitment to "strong in-house" research. *Sesame Street* was undoubtedly committed to rigorous research processes but ignores Tyler's (2017/1949) recommendation of "a comprehensive philosophy of education" to guide the "value judgements" in forming objectives (p. 74). As Finberg (1990) emphasized the authority of the board of trustees in grantmaking, the guiding values behind *Sesame Street*, particularly as they concerned the "disadvantaged child" as they related to school readiness, were primarily established in the initial funding discussions. The architects commitment to "scientific" curriculum planning selectively engaged with research in education within the power dynamics of a private foundation; an apparent hybrid version of "progressivism" resulted in a social efficiency that, as Kliebard (2004) had noted of the 1940s, "appeared to blend smoothly with the claims of the developmentalists that the curriculum ought to meet the common and individual needs of children and youth" (pp. 183–184).

Despite Cooney's earlier concerns, the show most appealed to the white middle-class; still, the first season was not without controversy. Conservative groups encouraged the program to emphasize family values, and the first season was initially banned in Mississippi for showing Black and white children playing together (Davis, 2008). In 1970, Tony Brown (as cited in Sommariva, 2016), serving as the Chairman of the National Association of Black Media Producers, stated that if the intended audience of *Sesame Street* is "Black people and other minorities who need this type of program desperately, we feel you have missed badly," further criticizing the lack of Black people in positions of power for the show (p. 67). Similar criticisms came from Hispanic activists (Davis, 2008) and feminist organizations (Mandel, 2006) regarding explicit discussion of gender and race. While Nixon praised *Sesame Street* (Davis, 2008), his 1970 commitment of two million dollars was about half of previous government contributions (*New York Amsterdam News*, 1970). Morrisett's name apparently appeared on Nixon's infamous blacklist, although it is unclear whether this referred to him or a family member (Mitgang, 2000). The Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation began to pull funding as early as the 1970s, and the future longevity of the program was uncertain.

Remembering the "Disadvantaged Child"

Jackson (2014) understands cognitive development in relation to the thinly veiled Blackness of the "disadvantaged child," as part of the "'science is apolitical' merry-go round" that "worryingly echoes eugenic categories" by ascribing a fixity of pre-black or pre-known risk (p. 205). In his view, *Sesame Street* represents an elitist "dream that children's television could end social conflict" with "a quick and cheap fix" that, in light of Cook et al.'s (1975) criticism of the initial evaluation, might have provided little educational value to low-income children (p. 205). I previously considered Sesame Workshop's curriculum production within Arstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation (Weinberg, 2020), identifying their formative research efforts with target populations as a type of "tokenism" in which "inequalities of power" manifest "coerced or limited" participation at best (p. 26). The narrative history confirms this dynamic within the formative years of the show, in which an approach to racial inequalities sought to retain white-middle class appeal that demonstrably failed to "[believe] deeply in the intellectual capability" of low-income children or their families (Ladson-Billings, 2012, p. 118).

The curriculum of the first season in some ways weaponized a feel-good multiculturalism, appealing to both Black pride and white sympathy, to frame racial justice as a "emotional restructuring" foreshadowing the emergence of "colorblind" racism that overlooks historical or material realities (Sommariva, 2016, p. 215). Drawing upon a rhetoric of accommodation or "uplift," the architects instead "located in the inability of the subaltern group," being Black Americans, "to practice responsible and rational behaviors," such as providing nurturing environments for young children (Dutta, 2006, p. 224). In a 2019 Smithsonian feature entitled "The Unmistakable Black Roots of '*Sesame Street*,'" Chester Pierce claims a role in developing the "hidden curriculum" designed to "build up the self-worth of black children through the presentation of positive black images" (Greene, 2019, para. 4). Pierce, having previously stirred Lesser in the curriculum seminars, describes how the show drew upon the culture of the historically Black community of Harlem through setting, featuring prominent figures, and music (Greene, 2019). In season one, Black characters on the show would in some ways reinforce racial stereotypes, as some argue of the Roosevelt Franklin muppet (Davis, 2008; Morrow, 2006), as well as subvert the stereotypes of "Harrington's 'other Americans'" by depicting Black adults in a "dependable and responsible family unit" (Mandel, 2006, p. 10).

We might perhaps remember the architects of *Sesame Street*'s construction of the "disadvantaged child" as paradoxically perpetuating American ethnocentrism while at the same time moving towards/away from multiculturalism. In viewing the "Black roots" of the show as a paradox, we might find "a fascinating window into how different societies are seeking to address diversity and build intergroup tolerance" (Gardner, 2021, n.p.) or perhaps even a "a reminder of the long-awaited, unfinished goal" of King's "beloved community" (Mandel, 2006, p. 4). Such exploration of contradiction has a renewed relevance in relation to *Sesame Street*'s recent efforts towards racial justice, responding to the Black Lives Matter movement (Sesame Workshop, 2020).

The Biopolitics of Preschool

Given the context of what (Pinar et al., 1995) describes as "rapid and pervasive curriculum change" (p. 165), Jackson (2014) asserts that "the edutainment pioneered by *Sesame Street* was another purported fix that emerged during the 1960s as a solution to social conflict" (p. 191). Yet edutainment, and Sesame Workshop specifically, continues to thrive in an international scope, an industry that often "emphasizes questions of effectiveness" rather than the "ideologies and values that drive E-E campaigns" (Dutta, 2006, p. 221). The pervasiveness of cognitive development in the show might attest to what Millei and Joronen (2016) refer to as the "(bio)politicization of neuroscience" (p. 2), as the creation and funding of *Sesame Street* constructed the child's brain as valuable as society's "human capital."

The biopolitics of "cognitive development" serve the elite in society well, as solutions to inequalities lie within philanthropic innovations rather than related to struggles of power. By 1970, *Sesame Street* had spent ~$8.2 million dollars, half of which were federal funds, from 1968–70 to create 130, 1-hour episodes (Polsky et al., 1974; see Appendix B for budget). The Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation began to pull funding as early as the 1970s, reflecting their shared view that "social venture capital" was meant to "start new things" rather than sustain "one project forever" (Polsky et al., 1974, p. 111). Thus, the state of *Sesame Street* funding was a sort of "paradox" in which the show "had been judged a great educational and entertainment [success]," yet had diminishing prospects for future funding (Polsky et al., 1974, p. 109).

In 1972, the Ford Foundation gave *Sesame Street* a six million dollar terminal pledge, designed to sustain the program through an investment in a variety of commercial ventures (Polsky, 1974, p. 110). As these foundations gradually pulled funding from the massive budget that they designed, the "'non-profit' and educational goals" of the show became increasingly "separated from its commercial goals" (Jensen & Lustyik, 2017, p. 104). In addition to Sesame Workshop's global edutainment empire, related commercial ventures, and licensing of characters, they also have a line of theme parks, Sesame Place Philadelphia which has been in operation since 1980 and Sesame Place San Diego which opened in 2013; both of these parks are under the operation of SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment (Concepcion, 2021). The "latest but not last strategy" (Jensen & Lustyik, 2017, p. 104) in the show's survival is the re-branding to a "public-private partnership" with HBO Max. It seems that the show still airs publicly through public television and online outlets; however, new episodes are restricted to HBO Max subscribers, putting into question *which* children represent the target population today.

Sesame Street, in a time of rapid socio-political and technological change, contributed to the growing global neoliberal regime in which sovereignty was shared between the state and the private sector (Baez, 2005) and a subsequent dispersion of responsibility (Unterhalter, 2017). The idea of accountability, as constructed by the wealthy, related only to a "best effort" towards apolitical science rather than directly answering to the population to be "served." In the neoliberal regime, *Sesame Street* was part of a larger trend of evaluating programs rather than children themselves (Jackson, 2014). Such focus on program evaluation combined with dwindling prospects for funding often discourages the publication of less desirable outcomes or lessons learned and results in "little flexibility for the communication professionals and NGOs to consider process or participation of the beneficiaries" (Govender, 2013, p. 25).

Remembering the Conditions of Possibility

Our collective memory of *Sesame Street* as a victory in education reform forgets the "shadow" of Head Start, the forgotten possibility of significantly expanding federal investments in public preschool. Head Start represents a "shadow" or "condition of possibility" ultimately overcast by the quick fix of edutainment within the education "innovation" cycle (Dussel, 2009, p. 185). According to Zigler, one of the architects of head start, in a HEW meeting (in Zigler & Styfco, 2010), "many participants were enamored with the TV program *Sesame Street* and dwelled on the fact that it was so inexpensive;" it wasn't long before he was asked to "fund *Sesame Street* out of the Head Start budget" (p. 141). When *Sesame Street* was granted a portion of the Head Start funds, however, the Office of Child Development "demanded a clear pledge that the show's producers would direct the program to a poor and minority audience" rather than a larger audience (Morrow, 2006, p. 60).

In Cooney's feasibility study, she described the Head Start program as unrealistic and expensive to justify *Sesame Street* as a "cost-effective" alternative. The counter-argument to this is eloquently explained by economist James Heckman (as quoted in Strauss, 2015),[9] who, when asked about edutainment responded, "promoting school readiness and fostering productive skills isn't simply planting children in front of the television or tablet" (para. 17). Not only did *Sesame Street* directly take funds away from the Head Start budget, but it also overshadowed the budding program through a mad flash of media attention; as a result, *Sesame Street*'s indirect costs to Head

Start might have included a dulling of public interest, redirection of federal and private funds, and a rare opportunity within what would be known as "the preschool moment."

Final Thoughts: What Will We Remember?

In some ways, *Sesame Street* was one of the many "wide pendulum swings" of curriculum fashions; the edutainment industry might represent a shifting position in the curricular "stream with several currents" while also having its own complex and dynamic trends internally (Kliebard, 2004, p. 174). Now in production for over 50 years, the show continues to have grand visions, significant influence internationally, and a colossal budget. Too much has changed over the years to attempt to recount here, but the underlying structure of the curriculum remains within the capitalist schema of "design, implement, and evaluate," often under the guidance of child psychology experts.[10] The question is not whether *Sesame Street*, or even edutainment, should continue on; rather, my purpose of exploring its historical origins is to prompt a discussion regarding what role edutainment should play going forward. To reiterate my earlier point, edutainment likely will, and already has to an extent, arise as a cost-effective solution to the global "crisis of learning" during the pandemic.

On a final note, I hope that my liberal colleagues approach the possibilities of edutainment without recreating the unproductive and tense dynamics of "experts" and "creators." We must approach such conversations with an open mind and creativity, acknowledging the ways in which the aesthetic aspects of the curriculum have historically cultivated joy, connection, and a love of learning. While I discussed various models of participatory edutainment in my dissertation, there are infinite other ways forward in the edutainment industries regarding their form, intentions, organizational structures, and curriculum. Specifically, when edutainment arises again as "the next big thing" whether it be through television, video games, mobile apps, toys, or the "metaverse,"[11] how will we who are perceived as experts in education, respond? Will we be divided as either enchanted or oppositional, or will we spark conversations that subvert innovations as "cure" through historical context and encourage such initiatives, stakeholders, and policymakers to "make new mistakes"?

Notes

1. The *Sesame Street* funding credits listed on the Fandom website are not verified by Sesame Workshop, PBS, or any associated entity. However, the funding timeline was generally consistent with literature included in the current analysis (including Davis, 2008; Jensen & Lustyik, 2017; Polsky et al., 1974).
2. *A Note on Cancel Culture:* My purpose in analyzing the processes of private funding in global edutainment, especially as they relate to issues regarding race and education, is not towards a reactionary "canceling" of *Sesame Street*. Rather, my purpose is to place debates surrounding the show and the wider industry of edutainment into historical context in hopes of what de Oliveira Andeotti (2016) terms opening up "possibilities for new mistakes to be made" (p. 326).
3. In 1910, Carnegie gave an initial donation of ten million dollars to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He also founded the Church Peace Union in 1914, which later became known as the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs.
4. His namesake is remembered by such philanthropic efforts as the Carnegie library, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Carnegie Institution for Science, Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, Carnegie Hero Fund, Carnegie Mellon University, and Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh.

5. Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation in the formative years of *Sesame Street* included Carnegie's only child, Margaret Carnegie Miller, whose involvement with the foundation is unclear; other trustees (see Appendix A) included a nuclear physicist involved in the Manhattan Project, a member of the infamous Ames family, a high-ranking United Nations representative, and several prominent New York lawyers and businessmen (The Carnegie Corporation of New York, n.d.-a).

6. In relation to the capitalization of the words "Black" and "White" to describe racial categories, I understand that these already limiting definitions of the complex ways in which individuals are racialized in different historical and geographic circumstances require intentionality in their use. While "Black" is capitalized throughout this analysis, I have chosen not to capitalize "white" in several instances for both pragmatic and theoretical reasons. On a practical level, one of the central figures in the history of *Sesame Street* that I discuss has the last name "White," and distinguishing the racial terminology from the person in lowercase assists with the following of this discussion. Second, I am informed by the position of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ) (2020), an organization that recommends the capitalization of "White" to emphasize that White individuals are also subject to racialization, rather than the absence of race. However, I make the critical distinction that "white" be lowercased in relation to systems of white supremacy, many of which relate to the current paper. As a White woman in academia, I am committed to continually reflecting and being accountable to my linguistic practices as they relate to systems of oppression and my own positionality to each specific project.

7. Both of which Howe, Hausman, Morrisett, Finberg, and Cooney attended.

8. The five topics included: Social, Moral, and Affective Development; Language and Reading; Mathematical and Numerical Skills; Reasoning and Problem-Solving; and Perception.

9. For further context on Heckman as he relates to early childhood education, see pages 20–21 of my University College London dissertation (Weinberg, 2020).

10. The field of child psychology has also changed much over the years, increasingly crossing into the disciplines of sociology, health, education, and social work.

11. This term has recently been touted as the "word of the year," originating with Zuckerberg's vision for an embodied online experience and integrated internet.

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Appendix A

Trustees of the Carnegie Corporation in the formative years of Sesame Street (The Carnegie Corporation of New York, n.d.-a)

Name	Start	End	
Margaret Carnegie Miller	1934	1973	Lifetime Trustee, daughter of Andrew Carnegie
Devereux Colt Josephs	1944	1966	
Morris Hadley	1947	1967	
Gwilyn A. Price	1953	1967	
Charles M. Spofford	1953	1973	
John W. Gardner	1955	1967	Foundation President 1955-1967
Robert F Bacher	1959	1976	
Malcolm Ames MacIntyre	1959	1976	
Fredrick M. Eaton	1962	1969	
David A. Shepard	1962	1975	
James A. Perkins			
Walter B. Wriston	1964	1972	
Amyas Ames	1965	1975	
Alan Pifer	1965	1982	Foundation President from 1967-1982
Harding F. Bancroft	1966	1978	
Frederick B. Adams	1967	1971	
Louis W. Cabot	1967	1978	
Aiken W. Fisher	1967	1977	

Appendix B
"Funding of Children's Television Workshop 1968-1970" (Polsky et al., 1974, p. 114)

Department of Health, Education and Welfare	Dollar Amount	Percent of Total
Office of Education	$3,325,000	40.6
Office of Economic Opportunity	650,000	7.9
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development	15,000	0.2
National Endowment for the Humanities	10,000	0.1
	$4,000,000	48.8
Other Funding		
Carnegie Corporation	$1,500,000	18.3
Ford Foundation	1,538,000	18.7
Corporation for Public Broadcasting (cash and interconnection)	625,900	7.6
Learning Resources Institute	150,000	1.8
John and Mary R. Markle Foundation	250,000	3.1
Miscellaneous contributions	51,700	0.7
Other income	67,200	0.9
Interest (banks and commercial papers) and other income	8,900	0.1
Total Funds	$8,191,700	100.0

*Children's Television Workshop, statement of income and carryover for the two years and three months ended June 27, 1970, memo, March 29, 1971, CTW archives.