(Un)building the Wall
Reinventing Ourselves as Others in the Post-truth Era

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Background: Out of Comfort Zones

IN MY SYLLABI, I write for my students (future teachers) that, unlike many teachers who romanticize teaching and learning,

> learning is not always fun. Sometimes we need to feel pains and share our pains to learn. Hopefully, this will make all of us better teachers to lift a bit of a burden from our students' shoulders and make our pedagogy more accessible.

Thinking and writing about post-truth is quite uncomfortable, as it requires self-criticism, critical reflection, and confession. We are trained as professionals to present our arguments tactfully—in a way that would not offend anyone. However, positioning my scholarship in the (post)critical camp, I find this problematic. How can I be critical and not disrupt the unjust structures? How can I challenge the normalized meta-narratives and expect *all* readers to be happy with my writing? I realize that this professionalism leads us to professional tribalism where we write for those who agree with us and expect recognition from them, which is counter-transformative. How could we make a difference if we only engaged in conversations with those who are already in agreement? bell hooks (1996) has eloquently made the case for why and how education should be transformative. How can I, as an educator, work for transformation and yet be afraid of making myself and my readers uncomfortable?

In 2016, I wrote to my #bad_hombre and #nasty_women friends that Trump is old news. Trump, as president or not, has been ruling all of us for a long time. This might be offensive to many of us, but Trump embodies *our* values as a collective, those values that we practice, not those that we preach. We live in a world that recognizes models more than philosophers. Our society spends much more on liquor than on books. Even in academia, football players are more popular than scholars. Thus, it is not surprising that a populist wins the presidential election… We are so

forgetful about the fact that less educated voters still have an equal right to vote as everybody else. This concern is actually as old as the history of ancient Greek philosophy.

Everyday Practices of Dehumanization: An Intruder Incident

The following is a narrative from a doctoral student at an urban university, which was distributed in a faculty meeting:

> At 9:00 PM during class, a non-[university] woman, who appeared homeless and deranged, gained access to [the college's] building and found her way up to the floor and our classroom. As a student enrolled in this evening class, I felt very vulnerable and frightened when this unexpected intruder found her way straight into my learning classroom without anyone else like security, police, front office, etc. knowing of her entry. Upon the woman's entry, the classroom of one instructor and 16 students were completely speechless, shocked, and unsure of how to restrain or push the intruder out of the classroom. The woman was yelling of blood and death around her and her need to get in contact with a detective. While all of this was going on, she blocked the only unlocked exit of the classroom, for the other two exit doors that opened up to the fourth-floor offices were locked. At that moment, I had no idea if she was armed and how we would be able to exit the classroom. I wanted to be home, safe, and far away from [the] university. After being subjected to the intruder for over 15 minutes, campus police finally arrived to our classroom. As a student paying for a safe learning environment, I definitely felt unsafe and vulnerable at the hands of a deranged woman for such a long period of time. I would expect [the university] campus police to be in charge of checking on classrooms and buildings when they know late night classes, especially the 7:15-9:45 PM classes, are in session. It shouldn't have taken them over 15 minutes to arrive at the scene. Even after the woman was removed from the classroom, nobody (security, campus police, etc.) came to check on us. I was still shaken up by incident and didn't know that the woman was removed from the building. Assuming she was gone, [the instructor] ended class since everyone wanted to get out of the building. As we all left the building, we spotted the same deranged woman on the street right outside of the building. I was surprised and concerned to see her on the street when she could have followed us to our car mad that we didn't seek help for a "detective" for the killing she described earlier. I would have thought we might have escorts awaiting us especially after being exposed to such an incident not even five minutes before.

After this anecdote was shared in the faculty meeting, people endorsed a proposal that the building needs more security measures. No one questioned the very problematic message that the narrative conveyed. This made me wonder: How do we know that this person is a non-university individual? How do we know she is homeless? Why do we think she's dangerous? How would people have reacted if she had been a well-dressed, White, middle-class person? How could we educate teachers to teach the *intruder's* children, who probably go to a public school in the neighborhood, and yet be afraid of her presence? How is it that socioeconomic status, which is entangled with race, gender, and so many other things, justify the incrimination of this person? And, last but not

least, why are we content with how easily we put *our* safety first at the cost of dehumanizing *others*?

To provide some contextual information, I should add that quite a few unsheltered homeless people live in the parking lot next to the college building. To me, these people are our neighbors, and the fact that they do not have a home does not make them less legitimate as neighbors. However, apparently to many spectators, they are seen as less human, dangerous, and criminals who make the city ugly and unpleasant.

I was pissed. I was annoyed about the very normalized discourse that perpetuates the hierarchy of privilege by incrimination of people of color and those of a lower socioeconomic class. To most of my progressive colleagues, we shall spend more on security to prevent *intrusion* incidents. This mindset is very familiar. It reminds me of the wall along the U.S. southern border to prevent border crossing—i.e., intrusion. This is the same xenophobia that exists in the rhetoric that justifies building a border wall as a national emergency that produces our bodies as vulnerable and potential victims and *others'* bodies as smugglers, criminals, bad hombres, dangerous, and potential violators. Indeed, the rise of Trump as a sociopolitical phenomenon is a true result of the everyday practice of power and privilege in this country.

Living a Post-truth Life

Post-truth as a socio-political phenomenon became a hot topic in 2016. The Oxford Dictionaries named it the 2016 word of the year after a 2,000 percent growth in its usage compared to 2015 (Midgley, 2016). This has been attributed to the rise of right-wing populism and its manifestation in the Brexit and the U.S. presidential election. The Oxford Dictionaries define post-truth as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Post-truth, 2019). Like many other *posts-*, it is equivocal whether the prefix "post" is meant to indicate the idea that we are either "past" truth in a temporal sense or that truth has been eclipsed, dismantled, deconstructed, and/or made irrelevant. According to Fuller (2018a), post-truth is more about justification than truth—meaning that, in the post-truth era, we are puzzled by the conditions of possibility in which truth is determined, rather than truth itself, which is what Kant called transcendental arguments (Stroud, 1968). Fuller (2018b) uses the metaphor of astrologers who correctly predict a person's fate, a natural disaster, or more generally, a causation that is claimed on the back of correlation:

> In the history of modern philosophy, 'sensation' or 'sense perception' has been the catchall term for all these simulacra of knowledge, with the stress placed on what people receive passively from the world rather than actively construct for themselves. Following Hume, a skeptical spin on 'induction' cast these simulacra as a pseudo-method. And in our more explicitly 'cognitivist' age, the same phenomena provide evidence of 'confirmation bias'. (para. 12)

Indeed, the post-truth is not about whether the Southern border situation is a national emergency, the 2017 inauguration was the biggest political demonstration of the past decades, global warming is a hoax, or the crime rate has declined, to mention a few. Rather, post-truth is about the conditions of possibility of accepting alternative facts as true. The post-truth condition is about how beliefs are justified, rather than whether the beliefs themselves are true. This

discourse, however, is typically obstructed by a reductionist attempt to distinguish *rational* and *irrational* paths to inquiry. The many efforts, starting with Descartes in the early modern era, to define a *method* that, in principle, might justify any true belief are the culmination of this line of thought. In the 16th century, Descartes (1993) rejected contingency, quantified science, privileged individual reason, justified rationalism, and established essentialism and the mind/body distinction in his manuscript, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*. Descartes claimed the unity of science and its knowledge and, further, stated that only knowledge produced by science can be true. In summation, St. Pierre (2014) wrote that Cartesian epistemology reorganized knowledge as science. Descartes coined the modern subject of knowledge, *cogito*—the unified, conscious, coherent, stable, rational, unassailable, knowing individual who existed ahead of knowledge and culture. Later, Nietzsche argued that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything" (Nietzsche & Hollingdale, 1989, p. 45). In his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1984) explained that Descartes "broke with this when he said, 'To accede to truth, it suffices that I be *any* subject which can see what is evident'" (pp. 371-372).

For many of us who have studied "post" theories and have found value in utilizing them as analytical tools in our scholarship and personal lives, "post-truth" is a challenge. McIntyre (2018) wrote, "Even if right-wing politicians and other science deniers were not reading Derrida and Foucault, the germ of the idea made its way to them: science does not have a monopoly on the truth" (p. 141), citing the same arguments and techniques of postmodernism to attack the truth of other scientific claims that clash with their conservative ideology. McIntyre quoted Bruno Latour (2004) and used a metaphor of an arms dealer who learns one of his weapons has been used to kill an innocent:

> Do you see why I am worried? I myself have spent some time in the past trying to show *the lack of scientific certainty* inherent in the construction of facts. I too made it a "primary issue." But I did not exactly aim at fooling the public by obscuring the certainty of a closed argument—or did I? After all, I have been accused of just that sin. Still, I'd like to believe that, on the contrary, I intended to emancipate the public from prematurely naturalized objectified facts. Was I foolishly mistaken? Have things changed so fast? (p. 227)

The irony is that the *post-* theories have been intended for "radical openness" (hooks, 1989), and now, they have become dangerous tools and techniques in the hands of right-wing populism to challenge liberal values, as well as the establishment. Admitting the manifestation of post-truth in public as a challenge for the posts, I should make explicit that this prologue must be understood as written "*sous rature*" (Heidegger, 1995) or what Derrida (1976) has elaborated on as "under erasure" (p. 60). Writing under erasure requires writing my argument for and against the idea of post-truth. As Parks (2009) has put it, "writing under erasure can be deployed when the concept under consideration is both necessary and rejected" (p. 16). Lather and St. Pierre (2007) used "deconstruction" as the general goal for post inquiry. In other words, all post theories, like genealogy, archaeology, marginality, performativity, and concepts like assemblage, bodies without organs, intra-action, and others, are forms of deconstruction. In this sense, my writing under erasure should be deconstructive. According to Derrida (1990), deconstruction is a way of reading, and it is especially useful when the researcher wants to trouble a normalized, taken-for-granted structure and break it apart. But, more than that, it is an attitude, a way of listening, reading, thinking, and living. Those who studied deconstruction easily identify binary logic, hierarchies,

and structures that appealed to foundationalism and transcendentalism. Since we live in these structures, we are constructed by and through them, and we might have gained advantages from the very structures that we criticize. All structures were created at some point and there were some advantages in the structures—at least for a group of people. However, the perpetuation of the structures and the normalization of them is problematic. Thus, Spivak (1967) defined deconstruction as "persistent critique of what one cannot not want" (p. 28).

> Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all; it does not settle for methodological procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail; its writing is not only performative, it produces rules—other conventions—for new performativities and never installs itself in the theoretical assurance of a simple opposition between performative and constative. Its process involves an affirmation, this latter being linked to the coming in event, advent, invention. (Derrida, 1989, p. 42)

This does not mean that everything goes or that one could do anything as deconstruction. Unlike positivist research methodology, in which a tightly structured method guarantees the reliability and validity of the study, in a post analysis, like this, theory is key. Theory makes what Sandra Harding (1992) called "strong objectivity" thinkable. In other words, as Donna Haraway (1988) rejected fundamentalism and believed that there was no "god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (p. 581), our *standpoints* (Harding, 1991) are the beginnings of seeing the world from where we are. In this sense, I am methodologically in the same camp with those post-truthers/science-deniers/conspiracy-theorists who believe Google is not *neutral* and is "suppressing voices of conservatives" (Trump, 2018), which is an uncomfortable place to be.

Problematization of Post-truth: Ideological Supremacy, Identity Politics, and Reductionism

Acknowledging that post-truth is not about truth but rather about the conditions in which truth is decided, I am not worried about the existence or abuse of *alternative facts* or *fake news*. Post-truth conditions have existed for a long time and were even identified by Plato in *Theaetetus* (Burnyeat, 1990). It is not even my main concern that the post-truth has given power to those who have an opposing political perspective that is capable of threatening my personal life as a minority—and, to some extent, have already terrorized it. What makes me worried, and indeed has been my biggest motivation to start this project, is ideologic supremacy. Whether we are liberals or conservatives, we all have our own standpoints and generate "situated knowledges" (Haraway, 1988) that can lead to post-truth. "One should not assume that post-truth arises only from others, or that its results are somebody else's problem" (McIntyre, 2018, p. 164). What is problematic is the alteration and segregation that is associated with post-truth, which "amounts to a form of ideological supremacy, whereby its practitioners are trying to compel someone to believe in something whether there is good evidence for it or not" (McIntyre, 2018, p. 12).

Nieto (2017) reflected on how multiculturalism has been perceived as merely ethnic diversity among American educators, and she called for intersectional and multi-dimensional implementations of multiculturalism, which is a third-wave feminist contribution (Crenshaw, 1990). Indeed, some aspects of diversity have been addressed more than others partially because American scholars and activists tend to reduce their ethical work to identity politics activism—i.e., a tendency for people of a particular religion, race, social background, etc., to form exclusive

political alliances to advocate for their own interests. I have been asked by several colleagues and friends why a man—referring to me—should initiate a feminist organization, which to me is a ridiculous question. To me, it is problematic that I was the only male student in almost all of my Women's Studies courses, as it suggests that men do not care about sexism. This is not an unproblematic assumption that one should only advocate for their people (*Self*). While American activism discourages fighting for the *Other*, it is ironic that those advocates who most definitely have read critical theories and studied mechanisms of alteration and othering create the same dichotomy of Self/Other. As long as this identity politics activism is the mainstream activism, there is no surprise that we should fight battles of representation.

Educational scholars have researched and written extensively about issues of equity, including women who use feminist theories, people of color who use critical race theories, members of LGBTQ+ communities who use queer theories, indigenous people who advocate for indigenous funds of knowledge, immigrant scholars who work on issues of inclusion for immigrants, to mention a few. I argue that there is a limit to this type of work. There are categories of identity politics that are inherently excluded from academia. For instance, many of us have studied issues of representation and yet forget a simple fact that we can never represent the poor. We can have a woman, gay, Black, Muslim, and/or immigrant scholars or elected officials, but we can never have a homeless or even a poor one. This is not merely an issue of social mobility, but it is about identity transformation. That is, even if we have experienced poverty in our lives, as soon as we become a representative (scholar or elected official), we do not belong to that socioeconomic class anymore. We cut our ties, we change our lifestyles, neighborhoods, cars, homes, shopping patterns, expenditures, etc. because we seek welfare. Who does not know of scholars and/or activists who work around issues of poverty but only frequent upscale stores and classy restaurants?

This is one reason that I am critical of identity politics activism, and Sandra Harding (1991) has discussed this much more eloquently. Being from a lower socioeconomic class is not the only absent category from academia. Academia also lacks political diversity. Over the past year, while job hunting, I was asked several versions of the following question in explicit and implicit ways: How could a feminist/progressive/queer/person of color/Muslim be a successful teacher educator in a conservative/White/rural/Southern community? And my response has been "this is the same essential question that I try to address in my multicultural education classes for my preservice teachers; i.e., "How can we teach those who are different from us?"

My multicultural approach to addressing post-truth conditions is to acknowledge political ideology as a diversity factor in the same way that race, class, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, etc. make people different. Similar to racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, and homophobia, ideological supremacy is dangerous and creates an oppressive structure. I realize that it is hard work to advocate for the *Other*, especially when it is the political rival or enemy. I feel this into my bones, how uncomfortable it is to speak up for an unpopular conservative student who expresses anti-immigrant sentiments in my class while a presidential executive order (i.e., Travel Ban[1]) has separated me and my children from the rest of my family. However, the ethical work of multiculturalism is not to increase representation for myself and *my people*, rather it is to advocate for all minoritized and marginalized people as Rosa Luxemburg (1961) wrote *Freiheit ist immer Freiheit der Andersdenkenden* translated as, *freedom is always the freedom of dissenters*.

> If we are to be emancipated through power, we shall master ourselves. Otherwise, we risk exercising an undue power which is the opposite of liberty, an abuse of power. Undue

power is a power through which we impose on others our judgments, appetites, or desires. In other words, the absence of mastery of our self implies the abuse of power over others. (Aghasaleh, 2018, p. 105)

Connectedness or Segregation: Digital Tribalism

Another aspect of post-truth conditions that educators should worry about is the creation of *alternate realities*. In the second presidential candidate debate of 2016, Clinton said Trump lives "in an alternate reality" (Transcript of the Second Debate, 2016, n.p.). Although I agree with her, I realize that he is not alone. In fact, more than 60 million American adults live that reality, and the problem is that *our* reality does not intersect with *their* reality. That is what made the 2016 election a wake-up call and a painful learning experience as we learn about the polarization and tribalism that is a post-truth feature.

At a time when technology is being celebrated for encouraging connectedness, cross-cultural communication, and facilitating access and inclusiveness, a strong and growing countertrend is also identified as digital tribalism. Digital technology and social networks enhance ties to family and close friends. They also serve to find those with whom we share important affinities, ranging from genomes to beliefs to lifestyle choices (Brown, 2011). Social networks, driven by artificial intelligent algorithms, are strong vehicles to create safe spaces for users, but they also nurture confirmation biases (Nickerson, 1998) that give the delusion that *everybody* thinks and acts like the users. The social network feeds are intelligently designed to show users the type of content that is more likely to be *liked* (bought) and posted by those like-minded people with whom the users tend to interact. This is a slippery slope of creating segregated realities and digital tribalism.

This segregation and disconnectedness did not happen overnight. This trend was predictable as we continued to push our *professional* agendas and is also fueled by our pragmatist and utility-oriented tendencies. It is an unquestioned assumption among scholar-activists that they should pick their battles. Over the past few years, my teachers, comrades, and mentors have told me several times that I could not fight *all* battles and needed to pick *my* battle, ignoring the fact that the battles are as agentic as I, and they would pick me as well. This mindset guided us to focus on specific issues—most definitely those that directly affect *us*, as individuals. I have been asked why I call myself a feminist and why I care about forms of oppression that do not directly affect *my* own life. In fact, we have been trained to advocate for *our* own interests in a nicely wrapped shell, so-called *professionalism*. There is no guarantee that being professional and acting professionally will protect us from post-truth. On the contrary, this professionalism has contributed to segregation and disconnectedness, which is hand in hand with post-truth. Also, as activists, we trusted the sectarianism fed by professionalism and called ourselves LGBTQ activists, Women's Rights activists, Immigrant Rights activists, etc. Indeed, post-truthers did not defeat us; we failed ourselves. We nurtured post-truth when we, as an LGBTQ community, assumed that assaults on the community of color were merely *their* problem. We contributed to post-truth when we, as the Black Lives Matter movement, thought oppression against the Muslim community was just *their* issue. We fueled post-truth when we, as religious minorities, felt that equal marriage rights were not *our* problem. We perpetuated post-truth when we, as men, thought objectification of women was only *their* problem. We created scattered, disconnected, and defenseless islands and ignored the fact that, when tides come, all islands will be drowned. We became post-truthers when we did

not get engaged in the conversation, argument, and/or fight with our family members, acquaintances, students, teachers, colleagues, and neighbors when uncomfortable topics arose. We enacted post-truth when we did not speak up when we saw and heard sexist language and norms in our workplace. We embodied post-truth when we saw racist acts in our towns and kept silent. We entertained post-truth when we pretended that we did not hear "locker room chats." We were defeated when we did not fight for the underdog because we did not want to risk our positions, welfare, or relaxing times.

But more than that, we were guilty when we dismissed those who expressed or practiced sexism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, etc. and called them "deplorable" instead of finding a way to educate them. We assumed our educational privilege would protect us. We acted so *professionally* that we did not engage in the conversation with residents of the *other* realities because they did not speak *our* language. We should feel guilty of dismissing this population. Remember! These are the same essential questions that I had in my multicultural education classes for my preservice teachers; i.e., "How can we teach those who are different from us?" This has become my new project—to address children of the Trumpsters who are not rare. I had told many of my colleagues before the 2016 election that, even if Trump lost the race, we would still have a big group of people who relate to him and that it is on us to educate them. What are their "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2006)? How should we understand a woman in a rally who wore a shirt that, in bold font, reads, "Trump can grab my," followed by an arrow that points to her vagina (Jacobs, 2016)? Where should I start the conversation with her if I am supposed to create an inclusive education for all students, including perhaps her own children? It is our weakness that we only know how to communicate with those who want to hear us and would agree with us. We are afraid of disagreement, and we appreciate compliments and likes. We have been trained not to express our disagreement, which leads us to this delusion that most people agree with us. We are very smart to keep ourselves safe in our sanity islands, secret networks, and/or safe spaces. We perfectly utilized denial mechanisms of blocking, unfriending, and sheltering in Pantsuit Nation safe spaces to suit ourselves and perpetuate the delusion that we are safe.

During her concession speech, Clinton said the nation is "more deeply divided than we thought" (Clintons, 2016), but it was too late to confess. She was right; looking at the election results breakdown, racial, gender, faith, class, and educational disparity is vivid (Tyson & Maniam, 2016). Indeed, education has the strongest correlation with 2016 voting patterns. I do not believe that love trumps hate. I rather think education trumps fear and terror. And, education is not doable without interaction and understanding. Let's come out of our caves. The storm has already come, and all of us have been struck. "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now" (attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr.). Let's acknowledge the reality of the Other (whoever the Other is) and try to intersect with their reality. It is totally fine to fight and argue with them. It is even normal to be angry at them and feel they are the enemy—enemies of justice. However, it is not ethical nor helpful to ignore, belittle, or dismiss them. Please, feel free to respond, comment, disagree, talk back, speak up, but please, do not dismiss. As Audre Lorde (2012) wrote,

> My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you. But for every real word spoken, for every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths for which I am still seeking, I had made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed, bridging our differences. (p. 41)

Acknowledgments

Disclaimer

Notes

1. Executive Order 13769, titled "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," often referred to as the Muslim ban or the travel ban, was an executive order by United States President Donald Trump. Executive Order 13769 lowered the number of refugees to be admitted into the United States in 2017 to 50,000, suspended the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for 120 days, suspended the entry of Syrian refugees indefinitely, directed some cabinet secretaries to suspend entry of those whose countries do not meet adjudication standards under U.S. immigration law for 90 days, and included exceptions on a case-by-case basis. Homeland Security lists the following countries as in that category: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

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We are All Donald Trump
Dis/entangling from the Us/Them Binary in Education

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DONALD TRUMP'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN and administration have brought to the forefront of our collective attention a white supremacy, xenophobia, and sexism that for many years endured unchecked in the shadows of American society and its political structures. Racism and hatred existed as fringe perspectives that were disallowed from mainstream political discourse, and it was unacceptable to most people to voice these opinions aloud or to enact them openly. Yet, with Donald Trump's flagrant xenophobic and misogynistic statements, such as Mexicans are "rapists" (Trump, 2015), Haitians "all have AIDS" (Shear & Hirschfeld Davis, 2017), Haiti and African nations are "shithole countries" (Dawsey, 2018), and insulting women as ugly (Shear & Sullivan, 2018) or objectifying them as merely sexual objects that he could grab "by the pussy" (Trump, 2005), some took his openness to offend as permission to speak and do as he did and ushered in a *post-truth* world. That is, regardless of the truth of Trump's claims, his emotions and personal beliefs were more influential than objective facts in his suggested public policy (Midgley, 2016). Thus, the violent supremacies that were once seemingly hidden within mainstream society became visible and, to a minority of the American population, acceptable as legitimated post-truths. Since Trump's election, reports of hate crimes to police have risen significantly (Levin & Reitzel, 2018), and Müller and Schwarz (2018) argued that Trump's Islamophobic tweets influenced hate crimes against Muslims. Not limited to private individuals, these attitudes have manifested in official government policies with executive orders such as the ban on immigration from predominantly Muslim countries, a refusal to enforce DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), and the denial of due process for immigrant families seeking asylum that resulted in the separation of parents from their children during detainment. The hatred is visible and tangible.

In addition to bringing forth these once covertly influential views, the election season and the events that followed with the current presidential administration have highlighted ostensibly explosive political, cultural, and ethical divisions in the United States. These divisions, made more distinct with the influence of the two-party system in American politics, have morphed into a discourse of "us versus them" to the point of seemingly irreconcilable differences exemplified with

large-scale protests and marches, Twitter wars, and destroyed personal relationships. The gray area of American politics seems to have vanished, leaving behind the mindset of "you are either for us or against us"—you are either contributing to these attitudes and policies or you are working against them. There is no longer any negotiating territory. It seems almost impossible to have any kind of understanding or compromise within this incommunicable difference.

This binary, or "The Trump Effect," as Costello (2016) called this increased sense of divisiveness, spilled over into schools, and whether teachers brought it up or not, students were "bringing heightened emotion to school along with their backpacks" (p. 6). As educators, this presented a challenge. For one, it created tension among student populations with an increase in racial taunting and violence, such as chants of "Build the wall" referring to a proposed wall at the U.S.-Mexico border (Stafford & Higgins, 2016). Moreover, just as students bring their political views to school, teachers, whether knowingly or not, carry their own figurative backpacks of political opinions. We, the authors of this paper, have struggled with how to teach, or even think about teaching, those students within our classes who hold views so much unlike our own—views with which we strongly disagree. We asked ourselves the question—how do we teach within this historical situation of seemingly irreconcilable divisiveness? Yet, what we realized when discussing this question was that the underlying problem was not the divisiveness itself but rather the "us/them" binary that we reinforced with questions like, "How to do we teach them? How do they learn from us?"

The question we began asking, then, and the focus of this paper is, "How do we move ourselves away from the us/them binary in order to contribute to healing the divisions?" To answer this question, we created the concept *dis/entanglement* to engage with a different discourse. This concept functions to reconceptualize the subject and *relationality*, or the way in which we are connected with the world in general. Dis/entanglement, as we discuss more fully later, is an acknowledgment that "we" are connected to the world—we both are the world and are within the world and, as such, may act with *response-ability* (Barad, 2007). That is, being entangled within this historical situation, we are called to address the cleavages that separate and harm us. As we argue in this paper, it is helpful to imagine a more just future if we imagine that we are all Donald Trump. That is, in relationality, we position ourselves as inseparable from that which we might wish to perceive as nothing like us. Yet, when we consider this possibility that we are Donald Trump, we consider our own contributions to the conditions that create the injustices around us, and we can envision and act towards healing wounds and creating flourishing relationships.

In this paper, we engage in an *ethico-onto-epistemological* imagining of dis/entanglement from the knots that bind us immovably from making change. Specifically, we focus on the gridlock that the us/them binary and the Cartesian subject create to instead real-ize (in the sense of *to make real* and experienced) our interconnectedness, interdependence, and response-ability. We begin by discussing ethico-onto-epistemology, relationality, and response-ability before discussing possible implications of our dis/entanglements in secondary schools and teacher education programs.

Acting Beyond the Binary

Ethico-onto-epistemology, a term coined by Barad (2007), could be described as an approach to acting in relation, being, and knowing in the world that envisages these three as indivisible from one another. As St. Pierre, Jackson, and Mazzei (2016) explain, "how we conceive the relation of knowledge and being is a profoundly ethical issue" (p. 99). This theoretical frame

functions as a doing rather than simply thinking about knowledge, reality, and ethics, or what Barad might refer to as an enactment. Within an ethico-onto-epistemological framework, reality exists as a continuous force of ever-differing, entangled, relational interactions between all types of matter, decentering both the human and the individual. Barad (2010) conceptualizes these entanglements as more than an interconnectedness of matter—entanglements are "relations of obligations" (p. 265). The idea of ethico-onto-epistemology is to turn away from the Cartesian model dominated by a focus on an independent, rational self that "established a new ontological order in which ontology is separated from and dominated by epistemology" (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 114). While previous scholars have critiqued the Cartesian subject (Harding, 1991), ethico-onto-epistemology is an attempt to mend the false cuts made by the dominant Western thought that separate acting in relation, being, and knowing.

Ethico-onto-epistemology renders impossible the Cartesian subject who is a separate, autonomous, and independent rational thinker. Descartes (1637/2017) characterized this subject, the *cogito*, with the phrase, "I am thinking, therefore I exist" (p. 15). In other words, Descartes (1637/2017) philosophized that all he knows to be true is that he is a *thinker* and *only* a thinker. He continued, "This taught me that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature is simply to think, and which doesn't need any *place*, or depend on any *material thing,* in order to exist" (p. 15). This thinker, then, is separate from the body, senses, and emotions and is detached from every other physical thing that is not him. It is an independent, autonomous, rational "I" distinct from the materiality of everyone and everything. Descartes privileged reason over every other faculty. He wrote, "For after all, whether we are awake or asleep, we ought never to let ourselves be convinced except by the evidentness of our reason. Note that I say 'our reason', not 'our imagination' or 'our senses'" (p. 18). This subject, we argue, is so prevalent in Western ontology and epistemology that it is regularly assumed and taken to be "common sense." When thinking about "I," one automatically assumes a Cartesian subject, rather than complex, dynamic, entangled relationships. In ethico-onto-epistemology, the Cartesian subject doesn't work. Yet, this Cartesian conception of the self still performs in the world around us. We are not free from it simply because we think it false. We still live in a world filled with this version of the self built into the fibers of political, societal, and cultural structures. While scholars, particularly feminist and decolonial scholars such as Alcoff (2008), Ani (1994), Bordo (2008), Coole and Frost (2010), Lugones (2010), Oyèwùmí, (2008), and Saez (1999), have challenged effectively Cartesian philosophy and binary logic, we turn to dis/entanglement as a different imagination of how to move away from the Cartesian subject and the false binaries in which we find ourselves.

Dis/entanglement functions as an ethico-onto-epistemological concept in which knowing, being, and acting are not separate but rather are intimately and irreducibly connected. This concept relies on different conceptions of the subject, relationality, and ethics. As an ethico-onto-epistemological concept, it is a call to action rather than a transcendent, theoretical term. Thinking with dis/entanglement, we acknowledge that we live in a Cartesian-dominated world. Yet, dis/entanglement also allows us to imagine how we might lessen its hold on us—we have the ability to pull the strings of the knots as an attempt to create change. This doing of dis/entanglement requires that we think with a different conceptualization of the subject and relationality, which we discuss in the next section.

Relationality

Existence on this planet and beyond is entangled. Nothing exists truly separate from anything else. For example, this table the computer is resting on contains the wood from the tree that was cut down, the sun that allowed the tree to live and grow, the soil that nourished it, the rain that watered it, and the carpenter who made it. Human and nonhuman, living and nonliving, are all essential parts of this table, and dividing them up not only fails to make sense, it is unethical. Without any one of the aforementioned energies, this table in front of us would cease to exist. It only exists in relationality.

Humans too are born literally entangled with their mothers. But birth is a creation of something entirely different than the entanglement of the womb that came before. Birth begins with an actual cut of the umbilical cord. This is a literal disentanglement as the child is physically separated from the mother's body. Yet, it is not that simple. It is not as if the entanglement of mother and child has ended. Rather, it is a different configuration of the relationality with many different possibilities that could actualize from this cut—breastfed, bottle-fed, adoption, surrogacy. And that relationship continues in its reconfiguring as the child grows, life moves, and the mother ages. It is a beautiful process of departure and returning different—of movement and change. This is the complex relationship that we call dis/entanglement.

Barad (1996, 2007, 2010, 2012) borrowed the term *entanglement* from quantum physics to describe an ontology that is not the individual affair that Descartes might articulate, but rather one in which all matter, living and nonliving, exists in an inextricable relationship with one another. As Barad (2007) described it, entanglement is much more than a simple connection with the world: "To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence" (p. ix). In other words, the self is not a singular, independent "I" in an ontology of entanglement. With the application of this concept beyond the quantum level to broader life, Barad (2010) called into question "two-ness, and ultimately one-ness" of an independent self as she argued, "One is too few, two is too many" (p. 251). This idea exists, and has existed, in Buddhist philosophy for two millennia, with what Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thích Nhất Hạnh (2001/2009) called non-self. He wrote:

> Non-self is something miraculous. When we look deeply at a flower, we see all the non-flower elements there, such as earth, sun, minerals, the gardener, and so on. If we look deeply enough, we will see that the whole cosmos has come together to manifest this miracle. The flower is full of all the elements of the cosmos—time, space, the sun, rain, even your consciousness—everything. But the flower is empty of one thing. It is full of all things, but it is empty of one thing: a separate existence. It is empty of any separate entity called self. (pp. 106-7)

We think of the subject as presented in this way as represented by the mathematical equation of $1 < "I" < 2$—the "I" rests somewhere between total individuation and the complete dissolution of individual identity in relation with everything else.

As Barad (2007) discussed, entanglement is not an interaction between two separate entities but is rather a complex relationship of interdependence and co-creation between the inseparable individual and the whole. Within this entangled relationship, the $1 < "I" < 2$ is iteratively reconfiguring in its relationality with the world and changing the identity of existence. That is, within this inseparability of the one from the all, there are "differentiatings that cut together/apart"

(Barad, 2007, p. 241)—the 1< "I" <2 is not stable but rather is a fluctuating contraction both affecting and being affected by dis/continuous encounters with the world. The self also continuously differs from itself in relationality with the whole of which it is a part. This is encapsulated in the South African principle of Ubuntu: "I am because we are, and we are because I am." This precept refers to the fact that an "individual" is continually differing through their relationship of co-creation with the entire "community," and reciprocally, the entire "community" is impacted by the words-thoughts-actions of each "individual." There is still an "I" and the possibility of difference within this relationship of interdependence. As the Ubuntu principle insinuates, the self is in constant co-creation through this interdependent relationship. This interdependent relationship also requires that difference and differing among individuations is ontological. The "I" and the "We" are inseparable, as the individual cannot be disconnected from the whole while the whole cannot be without the individual and the difference it brings. Yet, there is a larger self contained in the "We." Within this different philosophy of ethico-onto-epistemology, the idea of an independent, stable, human existence is under erasure. Relationality transforms as we move away from the Cartesian conception of the isolated, individualized man to one of coexistence and co-creation.

In this mathematically different existence of 1 < "I" < 2, there is no "I" that is singular, separate, or autonomous, no matter how invisible we, and the American, Capitalist system, might attempt to make it. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) asserted, erasure of the "I" is not the goal:

> To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied. (p. 3)

The point is a different conception of the "I," one that acknowledges that, in our individuation, we are not independent from one another. This does not mean, however, that we are all the same. Therefore, there can be a "you" and "me," and simultaneously, we are all you and all me, as we explain in the next section.

Response-ability

Nhất Hạnh (1987/2005) wrote about the idea that we are all each other when he chronicled the rape of young female refugees by pirates after the Vietnam War. Nhất Hạnh described how naturally we want to shoot and kill the sea pirates who do this after they horribly hurt these young girls. He reminded us with this story to see too that, because of our entanglement, we are all connected to the conditions that are producing the sea pirates committing these atrocities. Nhất Hạnh wrote, "I saw that if I had been born in the village of the pirate and raised in the same conditions as he was, I would now be the pirate" (p. 66). In this way, there is no essentialized sea pirate. Rather, he is created through his engagement with the world—with the systems, discourses, people, and materiality of his experiences. Nhất Hạnh explained this:

> I saw that many babies are born along the Gulf of Siam, hundreds every day, and if we educators, social workers, politicians, and others do not do something about the situation, in twenty-five years a number of them will become sea pirates. That is certain. If you or I

were born today in those fishing villages, we might become sea pirates in twenty-five years. If you take a gun and shoot the pirate, you shoot all of us, because all of us are to some extent responsible for this state of affairs. (p. 66)

Nhất Hạnh pointed out how each of us is implicated in the systems that create the conditions for some of us to become sea pirates, and how easily it could be us, ourselves, being constructed by these conditions.

We, of course, are not literally the sea pirate. But we are not figuratively the sea pirate either. We are the sea pirate through our relationality, somewhere in between this binary. We are both—1< "I" <2. What we do mean is that, because we are in this entangled relationality, we contribute to conditions that produce the effects of the policies of Donald Trump, and therefore, we can influence changes that create more ethical circumstances for all of us and especially for those of us most disenfranchised. We want to emphasize here that this conception of being one with the sea pirate or one with Donald Trump does not mean that blame belongs to the lives that are harmed. After all, if we are the beings we deplore, we are also those who experience injustice— we are the village girls, too. If we see ourselves in our connections, entangled with the sea pirate, entangled with the village girls who were raped, entangled with Donald Trump, entangled with the four year old little boy separated from his mother, then we have an ability to initiate change—a *response-ability* (Barad, 2010). That is, as Barad explained, response-ability is the ability to respond and act in ways that are mutually life giving and life affirming, in our entangled relations.

Dis/entanglement is what we think of as one opportunity or strategy for being response-able. For one, it is an acknowledgment of the entangled relationality of the world while simultaneously acting as a reminder that we, in our 1< "I" <2 existence, have the ability to hope for a more just future to come and an ability to act on that hope (Barad, 2010). The addition of the '*dis/,'* then, emphasizes the possibilities of creating different relations, perhaps more ethical ones, through which we can move away from and respond to violence and injustice.

This concept of dis/entanglement became, and continues to be, the process of our disengaging from the perceived and experienced separations resulting from the Trump election and towards the entangling of many factors, forces, and energies—material and immaterial, human and non-human, virtual and actual—into something different. In other words, dis/entanglement is our tool to address both the issue of the "I" as 1< "I" <2 and the possibilities for action within that existence. In our decisions and actions, we make the cuts that separate us, but that does not erase the world's relationality. We do not and cannot exist nor think alone, as knowing and being are not separate phenomena—the Cartesian rational and independent man is a falsehood. Dis/entanglement is not just something that happens to us—it is something that we do and something that can be done to us. To be clear, it is not that this concept of dis/entanglement means that one can fully individualize or completely dis/entangle; rather, we exist in ongoing, always already intertwined relations. Dis/entanglement provides us with the possibility of an ongoing process of moving away from stuckness and violence towards something different, towards healing. And it is a process that never ends—it is nothing but unceasing movement.

Nhất Hạnh (2001/2009) wrote about this process of dis/entanglement by describing how, looking deeply, we can see that flowers will transform into compost, but this does not mean we need to despair. We can see ourselves metaphorically as the gardener who has the power of transforming the compost into the flower. The compost is in the flower, and the flower is in the compost. They cannot exist separately. This is why we put a slash in dis/entangle, because we can never completely separate. Again, the Cartesian fabrication of an independent, rational thinker is

a myth. But this relationality is what makes response-ability possible: "If we are very aware, we can change the course of things" (Nhất Hạnh, 1987/2005, p. 69).

Yet, even if we refuse to acknowledge this ontological entanglement, if we try to *disentangle* from our relationality, we are still implicated in ethical, or less than ethical, interactions. This ignorance still acts (Tuana, 2008). One might choose to disentangle from ethical responsibilities like in the example of the sea pirate. As Barad (2007) wrote, we live in "relations of irreducible responsibility" (p. 265). The reconceptualization of the "I" in entanglement establishes that we are inseparable from another in an unbreakable relationship. Our actions, then, may still be our own, but they also become the world's. For example, a tomato farmer may willfully or unintentionally fail to acknowledge our relationality and act in disregard of the effects that certain pesticide use creates for plants, animals, the humans who harvest the fruit, the water supply, the soil, and the air. The farmer's decision around pesticides and farming practices has larger effects—therein lies the existence of "relations of obligation" (Barad, 2010, p. 265). Our agency and free will does not give us the ability to do whatever we want. There is still an "I" that acts, but we cannot disentangle our actions' relations to others. We can't wish them away. Our action is not totalizing; it is multifaceted, but it does act in relation to. Again, there are no dichotomies in ethico-onto-epistemology; rather, we live in both and. As individuations, our actions, when we think we are acting for just ourselves, are always affecting someone and something else in our relationality. We see what happens when we act as if we do *not* live in relationality—the sea pirate had no regard for the lives he was harming in his actions. Dis/entanglement is a neutral term. It does not offer us a once and for all solution, nor is it a guarantee for ethical choices. But it does offer us a space, a possibility, an opportunity for them.

Relationality and Response in Education

We come to this paper as educators of pre-service teachers and high school students. This theorizing on dis/entanglement arose out of our own encounters of stuckness with our students. It was in those moments of pedagogical freezing that we struggled with how to respond when a student makes comments like "I'm not a feminist" or "I don't like having women teachers." We do not like to hear statements like these. When they occur, they seem violent to our minds and assaulting to our goals of pushing back against injustices. In theorizing these difficult moments, we realized that we, too, are those students. There is not a binary of us/them. We are all literally in the same boat, in the same entangled web, on the same planet. We are all our students. When a student says, "America shouldn't allow refugees in the country" or "black people aren't slaves anymore so they should be happy with the rights they have," we are those students, too. When a pre-service teacher says, "those kids can't do that" or "poor people should just work harder," we are those students. In this section, we discuss what we learned and experienced through this inquiry as educators teaching in this political context. We discuss how we found it helpful to dis/entangle, move away, from our own binary thinking. Then, we articulate how we tried to turn towards acting in relationality. Finally, we describe how we practiced *holding space* for our students.

We realized we had to dis/entangle from our own stuckness, our own perceptions of "the other side," and from the discourses that the election has intensified and then entangle with our students whose thoughts left us physically disgusted. To disentangle, as in completely separate or cut off, is a false reality—we are not capable of that kind of disentangling, and if we attempt that, then we're not going to get anywhere. Instead, we remain in two isolated echo chambers,

reinforcing the mythic binary. Yet, the answer is not dis/entangling with consciousness-raising to help our students "perceive their situation correctly" either (Sarachild, 2000, p. 274). If we think of those who disagree with our politics or philosophies of education as lacking the correct knowledge, then we are seeing a deficit in them—we are correct, and they are wrong; we know the answers, and they do not. In other words, this binary of us/them can lead to deficit thinking that encourages the Cartesian stable identity. As educators, we want to move away from that characterization because it seems to create a stagnation and stuckness that maintains and reinforces hierarchies. "My side" is always us and privileged. "They" are always them and lacking. And change never occurs. Yet, as we have discussed throughout this paper, we are all whole, not lacking anything, and we are in the process of constant creation. That is, we are always already complete in a reality, a universe, where change, ongoing differing, occurs. The binary is a falsehood, and remaining in that binary creates violence.

If as teachers we stay in this binary, we too maintain and reinforce the Cartesian logic of decades of education and of our greater society's media discourse. This falsehood, however long it has been in existence, is a part of this post-truth era in which we find ourselves. We attempt to dis/entangle from this idea that there are two sides as a confrontation with post-truth. There are not two sides; there are not multiple sides; there is only oneness in this different conception of the individual as $1 < $ "I" $ < 2$ as we have discussed. The problem with both sides' thinking (i.e., liberals and conservatives) is that we are separable and that we are not responsible for one another. Liberals and conservatives both unfriend people on social media and remove people from their lives over political difference. People can feed the illusion that we can be separate. However, without the acknowledgment that we are all entangled, we lessen the possibilities for ethical futures. We are not trying to convert "the other side to our side;" instead, we attempt to dis/entangle from "sides" and falsities that seemingly spread so quickly and find acceptance too easily.

We found it useful to consider how we might teach with an orientation toward relationality in our goal of dis/entangling ethically from this post-truth of the us/them binary. If we are each other as Valdez and Paredes (n.d.) wrote of the Mayan principle "In lak'esh," *tú eres mi otro yo*, *you are my other me*, then we are also response-able for caring for the whole, including the individuations within it, and for recognizing that my actions do indeed affect you, and yours, me. We are attempting to orient pedagogy towards relationality. For instance, we created a project on immigration for Ashli's high school government class. Instead of having students evaluate controversial issues based on a "pro-con" debate model in which students evaluate "sides" in order to decide which one is "right," we removed the "sides" from the analysis and had students evaluate immigration policy options. In other words, students engaged with the topic holistically by considering the complexity of differences in multiple perspectives in relation with one another and, as such, confronted post-truth "facts" about immigration and the us/them binary—the idea that there is only one right approach to immigration policy from the two choices offered by Democrats and Republicans. Then, after evaluating the myriad policy options, students looked for commonalities in their own policies that they devised. What shocked them was that, despite the common impression that Americans are divided deeply on immigration policy, their peers and the general American population, based on the policies that each student created and several public opinion polls about American attitudes towards immigration, are much more in agreement on immigration than the teenagers would have thought.

Continuing this theme of moving away from the us/them binary, Ashli introduced political ideologies with the goal of orienting herself and the students outside the confounds of a two-party system in the United States that contributes to this falsity that it is us versus them. Students began

by taking a political ideology quiz that mapped political beliefs based on economic and political axes, instead of a liberal-conservative, or right-left, spectrum (Pace News, 2018). Instead of consciousness-raising, which positions students as deficient while the teacher holds the correct knowledge, the lesson aimed to address an American post-truth that there are only two sides from which to choose. This, then, simultaneously created a different orientation towards relationality that not only confronted the us/them binary but also held space for multiple viewpoints on political issues. In taking away the linear leftwing/rightwing spectrum, it became more difficult for students to think of their relationship with their peers as us/them. In fact, the results of the quiz showed that no member of the class ideologically aligned with either liberal or conservative ideology. While these lessons were not meant to solve the political divisiveness, they have been strategies in which we attempted to apply this theorizing of relationality, of Ubuntu, "I am because you are," to practice and dis/entangle, at least for a short duration, from the binary of us/them. As we discuss next, this was an attempt at holding space for students to maintain their political difference without establishing a toxic us/them binary in the class.

Finally, we theorized about holding space for our students. By hold space, we mean being with difference without judgment, without boxing it into binaries or making separate, fixed identities out of it, and reading those on to our students. Difference for us, as Deleuze (1968/1994) argued, "is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing" (p. 57). For Deleuze, this meant that difference is reality itself. That is, life, perhaps the subject, for example, is constant change. Again, this idea of difference is unlike the stable world, including the subject, that Cartesian thought imagines. Difference, as we imagine it when holding space, is normal—it is the way of the universe—and, as such, is not undesirable like negative narratives of difference commonly found in schools that privilege standardization and uniformity might make it seem. We see this discomfort with difference manifesting in ourselves through deep desires to correct, change, or even annihilate Trump-sympathizing perspectives. In this view, political difference becomes a disease to eradicate. Or, it may arise when we simply disagree with students. However, as Deleuze (1968/1994) wrote, "difference must leave its cave and cease to be a monster" (p. 29). We should reconsider our negative views of difference and act as a petard to the seemingly impenetrable fortress in order to make meaningful strides towards living with our diversity ethically.

As teachers, then, we tried to hold space by listening, being with, and opening ourselves both to students' expressions of difference and to the possibilities for them to differ themselves. For example, Shara attempted this with her early childhood pre-service teachers. In a class discussion about the impact of language, a student did not see an issue with jokingly characterizing students as "problem children" to peers. Shara considered this as an unthoughtful comment that negatively affected her perception of the student. Noticing how this interaction slightly biased her against this student, Shara tried to hold space. In other words, she tried to honor her student's difference instead of wanting to *fix* it. So, in their next interaction, Shara listened instead to her student with the question "Who are you?" as if she were learning about this student for the first time. In this conversation, the student discussed that, contrary to grand discourses about the importance of standardized tests and data, she understood that tests can never represent the totality of a student or what they can know and do. In fact, she critiqued the system as harmful to students who may develop deficit narratives of themselves because of the emphasis placed on high test scores. Through the process of holding space, Shara saw that, indeed, her student did care about the children with whom she was working. By holding space, Shara didn't develop an entire opinion of this student based on one comment that she had made; perhaps Shara did not understand where

she had been coming from in the first place. If Shara had let that one interaction create a single narrative of who this pre-service teacher is, she may have made it impossible to see different, multifaceted aspects of this complex and always changing student. Instead, by holding space, Shara allowed for a relationality of difference.

By considering our entangled relationality and our response-ability, we were able to begin to dis/entangle from the stuckness and judgment in order to traverse towards an orientation of empathy and openness for change. We have a response-ability to not only help our students think through those statements and actions that they make and where those thoughts originate, but we also have a call to consider our own roles in constructing the circumstances around us, perhaps even in reinforcing the seeming political divide in the United States. Like Nhất Hạnh, said, it is a "we"—we are all responsible for the actions that create the sea pirate. Even in our difference, acting in relationality encourages us to act with compassion and the acknowledgment of our co-creation together. Therefore, we should dis/entangle from our disdain for the monster that difference has become.

Conclusion

We created this paper to think about how we can teach ethically in the historical context of a seemingly post-truth era accompanied with the election and presidency of Donald Trump. We theorized that, if we think about being in relationality, then we can attempt to dis/entangle from our knots, our prejudices, and our stereotypes in order to make something different for the future. And as Bergson (1934/2007) wrote, we have "a whole veil of prejudices to brush aside" (p. 108). We wanted to theorize how opportunities could exist for individual action to occur, especially in the ability to move away from or address harmful entanglements with/in this us/them political binary. We may get away from this binary, but we cannot get away from each other. In other words, we make cuts that separate us but that does not erase the world's relationality. We still exist in relationality characterized by a 1< "I" <2 existence in which variation is natural to the whole. Or as Deleuze (1968/1994) wrote so eloquently:

> The beautiful soul is in effect one who sees differences everywhere and appeals to them only as respectable, reconcilable or federative differences, while history continues to be made through bloody contradictions. The beautiful soul behaves like a justice of the peace thrown onto a field of battle, one who sees in the inexpiable struggles only simple 'differends' or perhaps misunderstandings. (p. 52)

Deleuze here described what we think of as response-ability: acting in ethical relation to difference. In this sense, we are all implicated in the opposing perspectives we wish to destroy. Donald Trump is because of us. We are because of Donald Trump. Donald Trump has been constructed because of our complacency in the intersections of anti-blackness, white supremacy, misogyny, Islamaphobia, ableism, ageism, nativism, hetero-normativity, and every other damaging belief that divides us with an illusion that we do not exist ontologically entangled with one another.

These beliefs and divisions already existed before the 2016 election. Yet, Donald Trump has become the face of them by intensifying and mattering white supremacy into a normalized discourse for some. We are because of Donald Trump because his actions create real affects and changes in the way in which we interact in the world—they make us question who we are. If we

see these terrible things he is doing to people—deportations, immigration bans, young children in chain-link fence holding cells, dismantling public education and affordable healthcare, a refusal to address police violence against black and brown people, reducing environmental protections, increasing concentrations of wealth into the hands of a few, starving public servants, and damaging the economy for a wall to continue the illusion that we are separate—he is shaping us by how we respond to his violence. In other words, we have a response-ability to affect the world in ways that dis/entangle from the stucknesses of his affections and to contribute to our mutually thriving existence—what affects one, affects all. We are not suggesting that our turn towards relationality and a different conception of the self will solve political divisions or unjust conditions. We offer this analysis as a suggestion for reconsidering our positions and responses as educators in a divided political climate.

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Education in an Age of Limits

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IT IS NOW EVIDENT the earth's ecology and social systems cannot sustain continued expansion of capitalist productivity, consumerism, and neoliberal notions of progress based on market fundamentalism, the commodification of society, and the privatization of public goods. Neoliberalism has resulted in a war against public values and saps possibilities for democratic solidarity, collaboration, and social obligation (Giroux, 2013). Neoliberal policy, based on an ideology of unbounded self-interest, endless growth, and expansion released from any notions of constraint are environmentally and ethically indefensible. This view of endless growth sees "the world as something that exists only to gratify human desires" (Lasch, 1991, p. 527) and has perpetuated exploitative, colonial-imperial policies and political arrangements that favor dominant groups (Torres, 2017). A view of limitless progress is spread by the influence of big money in media and politics to create a money and media complex (Nichols & McChesney, 2010) that distorts public information, degrades public discourse, and erodes democracy. Unrestrained technological advancement has created a dystopic misinformation system in which "technologies that can be used to enhance and distort what is real are evolving faster than our ability to understand and control or mitigate it" (Warzel, 2018, n.p.).

The post-truth era is characterized by changes in the information system that have created information overload and the wide dissemination of disinformation and misleading information to make it increasingly difficult for citizens to discern reliable information, understand how public policy creates and perpetuates unequal power relations, and find common ground for concerted action (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018). This paper starts with a key premise from author and activist Grace Lee Boggs (1998):

> All over the world today we are obviously living in that in-between period of historical time when great numbers of people are aware that they cannot continue in the same old way but are immobilized because they cannot imagine an alternative. (p. 254)

We argue that this understanding points to the failure of large systems (economic, political, educational, etc.) constructed during the period of modernity that prioritized unlimited capitalist growth, technological progress, and unfettered individual freedom (Foucault, 1977), while *at the*

same time imposing particular limits: by the few on the many; on democratic expression; on access to particular kinds of knowledge; by private interests and corporate power over the public good; and on educational decisions about the knowledge, values, and practices considered worth learning. Curriculum practice has been dominated by nationalist and neoliberal interests (Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016; Gaudelli, 2009; Myers, 2016) that continue to promote colonialist legacies, the interests of powerful technocratic elites, and prescribed forms of knowledge and systems of accountability that perpetuate capitalist interests, rule by the powerful, and social injustice. We draw on the concept of curriculum as "stories-we-live-by" (Stibbe, 2015) to "flip the script" to make limits the central focus of *stories-to-live-by* and curriculum practice. We contend that only by placing limits on state control, corporate power, and the "madness of economic reason" (Harvey, 2018) can curriculum practice more fully confront all forms of inequality and injustice and help young people learn to play active roles in their communities to make our planet more equal, fair, and sustainable (UNESCO, 2014).

We make the case for curriculum theorizing to envision forms of ecocentric and justice-oriented consciousness education that starts from the premise of the need for environmental limits, while emphasizing social justice and democratic practices, to forge solidarity across political movements (Klein, 2014; Mouffe, 2000; Tuck & Yang, 2018; Tully, 2008). Calling for curricular stories of reconstruction and transformation, we offer curriculum perspectives that might provoke new questions about curriculum in the post-truth age. We highlight literacy and social education curricula that focus on ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2015), the creation of genuine democratic learning environments, and democratic alternatives to corporate capitalism that draw on traditions of self-restraint and limits in all aspects of life to develop a sustainable ethical vision (Lasch, 1991).

Curriculum as Stories-We-Live-By

A growing body of literature points to the dominance of nationalist and neoliberal discourses that create and perpetuate their own particular "truths." These "truths" serve as frameworks that shape the everyday vocabularies, values, and social practices that orient people's understandings and actions in the world (Abowitz & Harnish, 2006; Foucault, 1980). Modern educational systems have historically conveyed nationalist discourses that serve nation-state interests. National education systems accompanied the rise of nation-states in the 18th and 19th centuries to support the bureaucratic functions of the state, enhance national militarization, assimilate new immigrants to develop a shared, national identity, and educate and discipline populations for a range of state projects and national agendas (Green, 2013; Scott, 1998). Curriculum has largely socialized young people into the "official" stories of the nation-state to frame student learning in terms of the nation's dominant hierarchies, identities, and economic priorities (Apple, 1990; Spring, 2004).

More recently, nation-states have "reinvented themselves as global entities in order to survive in a global economy" (Gaudelli, 2009, p. 71). Young people are increasingly educated to become conversant in the homogenization and hybridity brought by globalization and to participate in capital, either as investor, laborer, consumer, or entrepreneur (Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016; Gaudelli, 2009). Neoliberalism is evident in curriculum reform as standards-based reforms, high-stake examinations, international comparisons, and discourses focused on excellence (Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Gaudelli, 2009). Recent international educational reforms primarily convey stories about the need for young people to

develop marketable "21st century skills" and capacities to utilize new technologies, along with particular forms of literacy and critical thinking, to solve problems and make informed decisions that will support employability and national competitiveness in the global knowledge economy. We use Stibbe's (2015) notion of "stories-we-live-by" to analyze and interrogate the "truths" conveyed by these discourses and everyday language patterns. According to Stibbe (2015):

> the stories we live by are embedded deeply in the minds of individuals across a society and appear only indirectly between the lines of the texts that circulate in that society. They are therefore not immediately recognizable as stories, and need to be exposed, subjected to critical analysis, and resisted if they are implicated in injustice and environmental destruction. (p. 5)

The notion of stories-we-live-by not only provides a useful analytical tool; it also helps us consider different kinds of *stories-to-live-by* that may be more just, equitable, sustainable, and satisfying. The idea of curriculum as stories requires curriculum theorists to consider the consequences of particular stories embedded in curriculum—the extent to which they may be destructive (in terms of their impact on particular communities and ecological systems), ambivalent (i.e., mixed in their consequences), or beneficial (to promote more sustainable and just outcomes), as well as consider other kinds of stories that might offer different possibilities for curriculum and social futures.

Stibbe (2015), writing from an eco-linguistics perspective, draws on a range of scholars to highlight the ways stories as myths, metaphors, paradigms, and mental models shape how we perceive the world and behave in the world. He uses critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2014) and frame theory (Lakoff & Wehling, 2012), among other perspectives, to identify several forms that stories can take through ideological articulations, the frames and metaphors we use to talk about social problems, evaluations about whether something is good or bad, identity formulations, and stories that convey particular convictions (e.g., moral, political, ideological, etc.) and notions of what is important in life. He also argues that stories have to be analyzed for what is erased, omitted, or marginalized and deemed unimportant. These stories shape how we think about ourselves and our roles and obligations in the world, the nature of social problems, and the nature of progress (economic, technological, social, moral, etc.), as well as how we think about curriculum and educational practice. Stibbe elucidates a guiding ecosophy based on principles of well-being, care, environmental limits, and social justice to help us consider how we relate to the natural world and each other (in our social relations) and how we might understand and address the social and ecological challenges of the 21st century.

Stibbe's work is aligned with others who have identified the ways stories perpetuate injustices and ecological destruction, including stories of progress based on the dominance of society and nature by humans (primarily white men), wealth acquisition, and endless economic growth that structures our language and shapes how we understand ourselves and the world (e.g., Harding, 2008; Klein, 2014; Korten, 2007; Monbiot, 2017). These stories perpetuate notions of limitless growth, consumerism, competition, unfettered individualism, and opposition to government regulation (to support limitless freedom to expand, plunder resources, and exploit labor) that have legacies going back to early capitalism and colonialism. They provide a "logic of domination" (Warren, 1990, p. 125) with hierarchized binaries that inform "how we conceptualize relationships and therefore justify our actions" (Wolfmeyer, Lupinacci, & Chesky, 2017, p. 58). Part of this story is racial neoliberalism (Enck-Wanzer, 2011; Goldberg, 2009) in which race is suppressed "as a legitimate topic or term of public discourse and public policy" (Enck-Wanzer,

2011, p. 24). Instead, a post-racial story or "anti-racialism" is emphasized (as opposed to anti-racism) that "seeks to wipe out the terms of reference, to wipe away the very vocabulary necessary to recall and recollect, to make a case, to make a claim" about the structural conditions of racism (Goldberg, 2009, p. 21).

Curriculum conveys these stories to limit the ways people might understand increasingly complex social contexts and envision the future. Across curricular jurisdictions we now see new logics of educational policy and practice in which "learning is transformed into a direct form of currency" to serve economic ends (Means, 2018, p. 326). There is remarkable consistency in the story curriculum offers young people across the world about how society works, what their roles will be in society, and how they are expected to relate to others and their environment. It is largely a story of economic instrumentalism, driven by the logics of nationalism and neoliberalism. These dominant curricular stories mask problematic features (such as unequal labor relations) or misrepresent the possibilities available to people (Anderson, 2017). They perpetuate the logic of domination and continue to "justify the domination of humans by gender, racial or ethnic, or class status" as well as the domination of nature (Warren, 1990, p. 125).

We Already Live in an Age of Limits

The neoliberal story of limitless economic growth is also a story of limits. It is a story of global corporate power and private interests limiting governmental capacities to regulate multinational corporations (MNCs) and protect the public domain from private capture. The few have sought to impose political and public limits on the many in the name of "expertise," austerity, deregulation of business, law and order, security, blame, and "winners and losers." While examples of the domination of wealthy elites and "big money" interests in public institutions are too numerous to elaborate on in this paper, we live in an era of private interests striving to limit democratic participation. Public services have been taken over by private enterprise for profit (e.g., outsourced military/security operations, privatized prisons, etc.). The *Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission* Supreme Court case in 2010 gave special interests even more power over individual citizens (MacDougall, 2018) while gerrymandering, voter ID bills, and other efforts have combined to restrict voter participation (Roth, 2016). Attempts to raise issues of inequality, poverty, social injustice, and more sustainable economic development are sullied, cast as socialist or communist bête noire in the neoliberal story, thereby, discrediting theoretical and empirical insights that could address a range of social problems.

Perhaps the most important limits have been imposed on citizens' access to critical perspectives. Six corporations—Viacom, Disney, the News Corporation (Fox News), General Electric, Time Warner, and CBS—own most of the media (Shaker & Heilman, 2008). The new online behemoths of Amazon, Facebook, Google, Apple, and Microsoft have created big tech monopolies not seen since the gilded age (Calloway, 2018). These corporations follow the same script; they ignore what the corporate state wants ignored and champion what the corporate state wants championed (Hedges, 2013). There are numerous examples of corporate interests and political advocacy groups blatantly trying to mislead the public about scientific findings related to tobacco use, acid rain, ozone layer depletion, dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane (DDT), and climate change. Corporate interests are able to enlist and pay scientists to frame the science around these issues in terms of debate when there is strong scientific consensus. These efforts aim to "manufacture" doubt and uncertainty and create false equivalencies between established scientific

findings (and consensus) and more extreme minority scientific views about each of these issues (Oreskes & Conway, 2010). Of course, there is a long history of the role of large media and advertising companies to "manufacture consent" and effectively limit or shape the public's access to information (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Lippmann, 1922).

Education in a Post-truth Culture

Information and "truth," like everything else, has been commodified, with corporate interests and market values dominating public life. Although writing some time ago, the historian Christopher Lasch (1978) noted how the rise of mass media had created "a world of pseudo-events and quasi information" (p. 75) to make "the categories of truth and falsehood irrelevant" (p. 74). Anticipating the role of novelty in spreading falsehood faster, deeper, and broader (Vosoughi, Roy & Aral, 2018), Lasch (1991) wrote that, "The value of news, like that of any other commodity, consists primarily of its novelty, only secondarily of its informational value" (p. 520). The post-truth era is not a recent development. We have been living in a corporate-mediated information environment for quite some time.

Kavanagh and Rich (2018) describe this as "truth decay," in which news sources are corporatized, increasingly partisan, and intensely driven by profit motives. The wealthy have been able to "buy an infrastructure of persuasion not available to others" (Monbiot, 2017, p. 147). This has created a misinformation ecosystem of unlimited access to information yet one that continually blurs distinctions between fact and opinion, accurate and inaccurate information, and analytical versus ideological interpretations of information. Politically motivated viewpoints drown out verifiable information, leading to a decline in civil discourse and making it more difficult to effectively address significant social and political problems (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018). The transformation of the media system toward social media, the 24-hour news cycle, and increased competition and shrinking profits have contributed to less investigative journalism and more commentary (which is cheaper and more appealing to viewers), limiting our democratic capacity to get reliable, accurate information to take informed action (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018).

In similar fashion, curriculum has been captured by neoliberal and nationalist interests to limit opportunities for teachers and students to more fully address pressing social and ecological issues or to actively construct meaningful civic identities and forms of engagement (Alviar-Martin & Baildon, 2016). Neoliberalism has been the dominant paradigm of international educational policy and a significant impetus of recent educational reforms (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). The neoliberal curriculum story views education as the key driver of success in the global economy and has resulted in top-down educational policy to enhance national competition on the global stage (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). This is a story of national education standards, testing systems, accountability schemes, and the "quality control" of teaching to regulate education in ways that make it a "sub-sector of the economy" (McLaren, 2007, p. 27). In general, "governments want control over a compliant teaching profession and see that standards regimes provide the regulatory framework to achieve this end" (Sachs, 2003, p. 6). Increasingly, we see educational reform and curriculum policy that aims to restrict and control educational practice. These reform initiatives have had a negative effect on critical and civic education by narrowing curriculum, requiring teachers to focus on preparing students for exams, and reducing the time teachers can spend on vital social issues of interest to their students (Shaker & Heilman, 2008).

The Need to "Flip the Script"

Government officials, business interests, socioeconomic forces, and parents have always played a greater role in shaping curriculum than curriculum theorists and education professors (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). However, there are practitioners who continue to create curriculum that challenges official curriculum. This curriculum offers counter-stories to official and corporate-sponsored curriculum that tends to serve the interests of domination, privilege, and power to offer curricular stories of reconstruction and transformation. They "flip the script" to present more hopeful *stories-to-live-by* by making justice and ecological sustainability central features of teaching and learning.

Educationalists of all stripes have to find ways to bring this curriculum into classrooms as part of a new reconceptualizing process that makes critical curriculum practice and development central to educational change. There is a need to *enact* critical and creative approaches to reclaim the field, approaches that are explored and developed in the spirit of contestation, challenge, playfulness, and paradox to "select, reshuffle, combine or synthesize already existing facts, ideas, faculties, and skills in original ways to serve new social, economic, and civic purposes" (McWilliam, 2009, p. 283). Creating new curricular stories-to-live-by is first order business—it gives teachers and their students new vocabularies to understand themselves, their social conditions, and possibilities to change "the way we talk, and thereby change what we want to do and what we think we are" (Rorty, 1986, p. 20). Rorty (1986) makes the case for "re-description" in which "the method is to re-describe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behavior which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it" (p. 9). These new patterns are critical and creative, justice-focused, grounded in greater awareness of how language can be used for destructive, ambivalent, or beneficial social and ecological purposes.

A Renewed Urgency to Reconceptualize Curriculum

The work of Prádanos (2018) provides an example of the reconceptualizing process to challenge the dominant growth paradigm of neoliberalism. Prádanos calls for postgrowth imaginaries that provide a conceptual anchor for carrying out diverse, decentralized, and alternative post-capitalist experiments and models. Creating post-capitalist imaginaries in educational practice would similarly require contestations, re-descriptions, and aesthetic-creative work that references postgrowth narratives, decolonizing practices, and new vocabularies and visions for the future to displace mainstream discourses of growth and human exceptionalism. Prádanos (2018) highlights how this process of reconceptualization is being enacted in Spain:

> New independent media outlets are challenging corporate media accounts (good Spanish examples include *eldiario.es* and *Saltamos*). Artists are striving to make visible the slow violence that neoliberalism manufactures and hides. Students are demanding not only a public education, but one that is transformational and decolonial as well. Medical staff and patients are turning to counterhegemonic medicine and mindfulness in order to detach their physical and mental health from growth-driven, disempowering, energy-intensive, and technocratically managed mainstream corporate medicine. Transition towns, slow cities, ecovillages, urban community gardens, and repair cafes are thriving. (pp. 235-236)

He concludes by suggesting that dominant imaginaries can be disrupted and replaced by enlarging the space for "what is visible, thinkable, intelligible, perceptible, sayable, and, more importantly, desirable" (p. 237).

Fuller (2018), in his book on post-truth, argues that a "metalinguistic" standpoint is necessary in order to decide which language to use in the post-truth game. His concept of modal power refers to our "capacity to decide what is and what is not possible" and requires us to question "who controls the scope of the possible" (p. 139). For Fuller, it is possible to create new rules of the game, but we must be committed to "play them in advance of their formal ratification" (p. 140). In terms of curriculum, the notion of modal power helps us think about developing curriculum and curriculum development as a "possibility space" (p. 145) that helps create new realities in classrooms and society.

While challenging the power of corporations, government officials, and school administrators to set educational agendas in the neoliberal order seems to be a daunting task, there are signs that teachers are resisting the austerity and privatization driving neoliberal economic and educational policy for the past few decades (Karp & Sanchez, 2018). Teachers' strikes in 2018 have spread across several states. Such examples of solidarity and collective action inspire hope that educators can similarly challenge neoliberal and nation-centric curriculum practice to engage in what Sørensen (2016) refers to as "constructive resistance" (n.p). Constructive resistance in educational settings would include not only challenging, criticizing, and struggling against particular discourses and concrete policies and initiatives at school, district, state, or national levels; it would also include creatively refusing to participate in these discourses (Žižek, 2006) and constructively working with colleagues within schools and across educational settings to develop the commitments and courage to either create or draw on alternatives. This requires dialogue and community building among like-minded educators, who are fed up with existing discourses that structure current educational practice, to develop teacher-initiated curriculum projects, enact critical pedagogical approaches, or utilize existing critical and transformative curricula (such as those suggested in the next section). Such work must "inspire others to actions that partly replace or lead to the collapse of the dominant way of behaving and thinking" (Sørensen, 2018, n.p.).

There is an urgent need for curriculum stories that speak back forcefully and directly to the limits outlined in earlier sections. These would be stories that feature the ways policy, institutions, power structures, and structural conditions perpetuate logics of domination and limit opportunities to create more just, equitable, and sustainable realities. These stories need to help learners understand how capitalism, neoliberalism, racism, sexism, inequality, environmental degradation, and other forms of injustice are interconnected. But they must also offer concrete stories of resistance, hope, and possibilities for change. In the following section, we offer curricular stories of race and climate change that might enable us to more fully consider "how we live and together build communities using our best visions of what is beautiful, good, and true, [so] the unreflective reproduction of what we find around us, including some if its injustices, might be tamed and changed" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 186).

New Curricular Stories about Racism and Climate Change

With our goal to attend to curricular stories of reconstruction and transformation, we turn to the work of two leading scholars and intellectuals, Ibram X. Kendi and Naomi Klein. Ibram Kendi is Professor of History and International Relations and Director of the Antiracist Research

and Policy Center at American University and has done groundbreaking work on the history and development of racist ideas and racial discrimination. Naomi Klein is an acclaimed journalist, author, filmmaker, and social justice advocate and has contributed significantly to helping shape work on climate change and environmental justice.

With his book, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, which garnered the 2016 National Book Award for Nonfiction, Kendi challenges the prevailing, core idea that racist ideas lead to racist policies. Instead, he argues that racial ideas were and are manufactured in order to legitimize and make possible racist policies that yield economic, political, or cultural benefits for those in power. Put another way, the strand of American racism runs in the opposite direction to the way we normally presume. A core racist idea is about black inferiority and the placing of blame for American racism on the alleged inferiority of African Americans. As Kendi argues, biological racism is largely considered unacceptable and unscientific today, yet there has been a shift to pin blame on African American culture (i.e., living in a culture of poverty). With a culture deemed to be inferior, legal and political practices, such as those leading to the mass incarceration of young black men, are more easily justified and rationalized.

Curricular implications of Kendi's analysis are significant. Because racist ideas stem from discriminatory policies, instead of the inverse, there needs to be clear-eyed engagement with policies that create and maintain inequalities, and Kendi points to six areas to focus this work: criminal justice, education, economics, health, environment, and politics. The racial and environmental injustices linked to the Flint Water Crisis present one curricular opening. In addition to listening to the stories of Flint residents, another text to consider is the report from the Michigan Civil Rights Commission (2017) that examined the crisis and concluded that "historical, structural and systemic racism combined with implicit bias" (n.p.) played a prominent role in the crisis. Kendi demonstrates that the real foundation of racism is not hate, fear, or ignorance, but economic, political, and cultural self-interest, which means that efforts to highlight exemplary black people or focus on helping white people overcome ignorance and hate is not the curricular road to travel to end racism, because the necessary emphasis on policy and power structures and institutions can be lost.

One invaluable resource that promotes systemic and structural analysis about racism and other social injustices is the Zinn Education Project, a joint effort of two long-time justice-focused educational organizations, Rethinking Schools and Teaching for Change (2019). The Zinn Education Project, namesake derived from the noted historian and civil rights advocate, Howard Zinn, offers a wide array of critical, justice-centric curricular and teaching materials across a wide range of themes. One curricular example that aligns with Kendi's argument is an activity called "The Color Line," in which veteran social studies teacher and curriculum author, Bill Bigelow (2019), draws from Howard Zinn's (1980) book, *A People's History of the United States*, to help students understand how the origins of racism and racial inequalities in the U.S. are linked to colonial laws that benefited wealthy property owners. Through a series of prompts, Bigelow guides students to make predictions about what laws or policies might have been adopted to prevent Indians and blacks from uniting, to discourage or punish black slaves and white indentured servants from running away together, and to keep blacks and whites separate. Through class readings and discussion, students can come to understand how wealthy landowners used the construct of race (and racism) to, for example, thwart attempts of white indentured servants and enslaved Africans from combining forces in a shared struggle for economic rights and to lead white servants to believe any discernible gains of blacks were due to their loss. The podcast series

"Seeing White" (Scene on Radio, 2018) can serve as rich companion resources with historical examples and analysis of white supremacy and racial discrimination. Rethinking Schools and the Zinn Education Project (2019) also offer resources to engage more present-day racial inequalities, such as how to teach about the Black Lives Matter movement. Additional media resources about the Black Lives Matter movement, especially the stories of the on-the-ground leaders and activists, can also be harnessed for empowering curriculum (e.g., Khan-Cullors & Bandele, 2018).

Another set of resources to help students understand the complex legacy and continuing force of white supremacy in the U.S. come from the Unitarian Universalist Church (2019), which offers a curriculum with sections on: The History of White Supremacy in the United States, The Emotional Lives of White People, Racial Identity Development, Racial Identity Journey, White Power and Privilege, and Developing a Positive White Identity. This type of resource locates the work of naming and dismantling white privilege with white people (Brown, 2018; DiAngelo, 2018). It provides a curricular example of how a crucial aspect of the logic of domination can be challenged.

In terms of new curricular stories to grapple with climate change, Naomi Klein's (2014) book, *This Changes Everything*, provides a comprehensive starting point. A companion website to the book *This Changes Everything* (Klein, 2014) and the documentary film (Lewis, Barnes, & Lewis, 2015) offers curriculum materials that aim to "help users look critically at the idea of how our economic system's push for continual growth impacts both the environment and quality of life for all people" (This Changes Everything, 2019). These materials, for example, guide learners to carefully analyze the global economy's impact on the planet and how wealthier countries, whose economic growth has adversely impacted poorer countries, owe a "climate debt" to these affected countries. These types of resources set the stage for exploring examples and stories of forward-looking justice work, which includes stories about how communities can change the world and create cleaner and more just economies by connecting to their core values in ways that engage civic participation and move toward more equitable economic and social opportunities and outcomes.

In one activity called "Reinventing a Clean and Just Economy" (This Changes Everything, 2019), teachers can guide learners to examine the case study of Henry Red Cloud, who left a job in the steel industry to launch his own solar power company that provided jobs for an Indian Reservation in North Dakota with a larger goal to help First Nations people achieve energy independence. With this type of case study, learners glean insights into how both economic and non-economic factors shape the decisions of an entrepreneur and how it is possible to create mutually beneficial outcomes for the environment, economy, and the community. The *This Changes Everything* website also includes examples of "beautiful solutions" (This Changes Everything, 2019), an archival resource of empowering strategies and programs that promote climate justice work in the world. A related project is the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice (2019). Robinson, the first female President of Ireland, also launched a podcast called "Mothers of Invention" (Robinson & Higgins, 2019) with an emphasis on feminist perspectives and solutions for climate change.

Additional curricular resources offer teachers guidance in working on climate change issues. For curricular resources that dive more deeply into the science of climate change, Stanford University (n.d.) offers middle school and high school teachers and students global climate change curricula. Beach, Share, and Webb (2017) map out four curricular areas including indigenous and postcolonial perspectives, capitalism and consumerism, environmental literature and ecocritical teaching (e.g., cli-fi), and human based systems. While the target audience for this book is English

language arts teachers, the ideas and activities are multidisciplinary. The book, *A People's Curriculum for the Earth* (Bigelow & Swinehart, 2014), is another comprehensive collection of teaching ideas and activities for teaching about climate change and environmental justice. Along with this book, Rethinking Schools also offers a "climate justice resource kit" to promote school-wide efforts to create climate justice curriculum. The Choices Program from Brown University (2019) has also published curricular materials about climate change and justice. Situated in mathematics, Rethinking Schools also offers a comprehensive set of teaching materials, including activities that focus on environmental racism, to help students learn "social justice by the numbers" (Gutstein & Peterson, 2013). Stepping outside of more developed teaching materials, there are additional pro-justice resources to consider using to develop curriculum with learners of different ages. There is no shortage of inspiring, impactful work led by youth and young adults in the area of climate change. For example, *This Is Zero Hour* (Zero Hour, 2019) is a movement that provides training and resources with and for diverse youth and engages in direct action to confront environmental justice.

The book, *When We Fight We Win! Twenty-First Century Social Movements and the Activists That Are Transforming Our World* (Jobin-Leeds & AgitArte, 2016), chronicles the struggles and successes of intergenerational activists, artists, and educators to mobilize and advance the LGBTQ movement, reclaim public education, end mass incarceration, challenge economic inequality, and strive for environmental justice. In another book, *The Revolution Where You Live: Stories from A 12,000 Mile Journey Through a New America*, Sarah Van Gelder (2017) documents a range of innovative ideas and solutions people in local communities are enacting to confront poverty and inequality, racism, and the climate crisis. As with *When We Fight We Win!,* these stories can serve as *teaching texts*, providing opportunities for teachers to guide students in understanding the challenges and possibilities of shifting from more individualistic, isolated, and consumer-driven lives to more connected, purposeful, and more meaningful lives.

In addition to curricular work in the areas of racial justice and climate change, there are stories of youth and young adults doing empowering work in the world. Consider the efforts to end gun violence led by students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida after the mass shooting in February 2018. The "March for Our Lives" initiative, which included a 2018 summer tour to change public policy, outlined a core set of practical goals, including: universal, comprehensive background checks; making the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives accountable with a digitized, searchable database; providing research into gun violence in the U.S.; and instituting a high-capacity magazine ban, as well as a ban on semi-automatic rifles.

There are many more examples of curricular work in the areas of racial and environmental justice, as well as stories of empowerment and transformation that could be added to the few we offer. Just as Wolfmeyer et al. (2017) have noted "the emergence of a new program in curriculum studies that attends to both the social and environmental issues we face today" (p. 53), there are signs of a growing body of curriculum work that empowers teachers and students to engage with these issues in meaningful ways and to challenge logics of domination.

Conclusion: Theorizing and Developing Powerful Curriculum in an Age of Limits

Lies, misinformation, disinformation, falsehood, and the post-truth condition are not something new (Fuller, 2018). Regimes (whether political, ideological, or economic) are held captive to their own lies, pretensions, and falsehoods (Havel, 1978), yet "where there is power,

there is resistance" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95), and people have always created "forms of informal cooperation, coordination, and action that embody mutuality without hierarchy" (Scott, 2012, p. xxi). The curriculum "stories" outlined above that we, as educators, can live by are stories of resistance, struggle, and transformation of social injustices. Stories of everyday resistance—historical and contemporary—can become a more integral part of educational practice and provide the space to imagine and plan for a better world.

The post-truth era is just another symptom (of the systems and logics) that makes concerted action to address pressing issues facing humanity and the planet increasingly difficult. However, we have reached an age when the ecological limits of neoliberal hyper-capitalism call for urgent action. The modern economic, political, social, educational, and communications systems of modernity are being challenged on many fronts. The logic of domination, premised on anthropocentrism, patriarchy, white supremacy and racism, and other "value-hierarchized dualisms so central to Western industrial culture" (Wolfmeyer et al., 2017, p. 56), has continued to impact the planet and communities in ways that can no longer be tolerated. As educators, we are called to respond.

To counter the neoliberal story of endless growth, we propose a story of limits. It is a story that conveys the need for human beings to recognize ethical limits—the limits to behavior necessary to care for and share the planet with other living beings, of the need for individuals to learn the self-restraint necessary to control their impulses—and to understand that democracy itself is premised on the idea of limits (to power, the influence of big money, to private interest, the exploitation of labor and resources, etc.). And curriculum is necessarily limited, requiring curriculum developers to make decisions about what to include and exclude, such as the need to more directly and honestly deal with the history of racist ideas and practices in our country (Kendi, 2016). As Danielle Allen (2004) argues, "The manifestations of limitation...must be met with an ethical framework and treatment techniques that are proper to our limits" (p. 91). Curriculum must embody an ethical framework and provide a range of techniques that help us recognize the role of limits in our personal and public lives. Acknowledging and establishing acceptable limits are central to living in society.

The curricular stories we highlighted in this article suggest particular kinds of limits: ecological limits that necessitate more sustainable visions of life; limits that are needed to challenge and undo racist policies and dismantle white supremacy; limits that manifest themselves in multiple forms of critical investigation and resistance in order to confront structural and systemic conditions that perpetuate racism, inequality, and environmental destruction; and the limited capacity of fragmented school curriculum to understand and address the interrelated issues of racism and climate change. In their recognition of the limits of current social, economic, and political conditions, these curricular stories offer the potential for "beautiful solutions" and vital resources, empowering strategies, and justice-oriented perspectives to create new stories of reconstruction and transformation in communities. These curricular stories offer stories of constraint and hope, of progress grounded in an ethical vision of limits and justice.

In doing so, these curricular stories provide foundational principles for curriculum theory and development in the post-truth era. The first is an unwavering belief in the equality of all people. This is the cornerstone of Kendi's book, perhaps best captured in his statement that nothing needs to be done to black people to create equality because there is nothing wrong with black people. "The only thing wrong with Black people is that we think something is wrong with Black people…[and] the only thing extraordinary about White people is that they think something is extraordinary about White people" (2016, pp. 10-11). This does not mean race is suppressed in the

name of equality, but rather the legacies and structural conditions of racism are directly confronted. Any curriculum that does not take a strong stance with this principle is not to be pursued. A second guiding principle is the deep integration and unity of all living things. Perhaps the most limiting, damaging, and fundamentally misguided perspective is that human beings are separate from the environment. This dualism, which externalizes human experience, is the fundamental factor of our Anthropocene era. Moving toward a redescription, Kalmus (2017) argues for a linguistic shift for how we talk about climate change. This includes replacing "environment" (which implies a separation from human beings) with "biosphere" which is inclusive of all life. Both principles point to the need for greater awareness of how our language can limit the ways we think about the world and our relationships with others.

The stories-we-live-by play a central role in helping people orient themselves in society, develop a sense of identity and agency, trust one another, and envision possible futures. We agree with Fuller (2018) that the post-truth condition provides what the Greek sophists termed *kairos*, an opportune moment or a tipping point when the rules of the "knowledge game" can be recast, re-imagined. Curriculum for a post-truth age must be directed toward ideas of social and environmental justice if we are to break from the logics of domination rooted in capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. In doing so, new teleological imperatives can be articulated, new capacities "to decide what is and what is not possible" (Fuller, 2018, n.p.). The curricular examples we have provided are intended to stimulate further curriculum work in these directions.

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Curriculum, Empiricisms, and Post-truth Politics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Experience as Curricular Dilemma

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

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

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

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

Our Inherited Empiricisms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Empirical Underpinnings of Curriculum

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

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

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

Empiricism, Colonialism, and Racism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dewey's Philosophy of Experience

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

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

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

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

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

Rehumanizing Dewey's Empiricisms: Curricular Possibilities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Post-truth Politics and Curricular Possibilities

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

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

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

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

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

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MeToo and the Problematic Valor of Truth
Sexual Violence, Consent, and Ambivalence in Public Pedagogy

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Introduction: The #MeToo Movement

THE PHRASE "ME TOO" was coined in 2006 by activist Tarana Burke as a way to signify the pervasiveness of sexual violence to other survivors, particularly young women of color living in poverty (Me Too, 2018). #MeToo became a viral social media phenomenon in 2017, when actress Alyssa Milano re-Tweeted a friend's suggestion that "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem" (Milano, 2017, n.p.). The movement has precipitated ongoing public discourse highlighting the ubiquity of rape, assault, and sexual harassment of women, and some men, around the world. The revolutionary action of #MeToo is not necessarily a call to protest, but the "uncovering of the colossal scale of the problem" (Gilbert, 2017, n.p.). Burke (2017) insists that it not be reduced to simply a hashtag, but rather conceived of as "the start of a larger conversation and a movement for radical community healing" (n.p.).

In this paper, we theorize #MeToo as an educational movement, showing how the celebrity cache of the movement, its online, viral nature, and its mission of uncovering and exposing truth all position it as an example of public pedagogy. We argue that, by placing a premium on truth-telling, #MeToo presents a counternarrative to an era, associated in large part with the Trump presidency, when the believability of veneer matters more than facts in history or science.

At the same time, we argue that an analysis of #MeToo as an educational movement reveals certain challenges. For example, and perhaps foremost, #MeToo has shown, through its lack of palpable sequelae on the political stage, that sometimes truth does not lead to change. The confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court of Brett Kavanaugh following accusations of sexual violence is one piece of evidence that truth, laid bare via public pedagogy, has limited reach when

it comes to the disruption of embedded power structures. We will argue that precisely these limits, combined with and sometimes facilitated by the celebrity and viral cache of #MeToo, reveal a disconnection between public pedagogy and legislative, political, and cultural change. There is only so much, in other words, that truth-telling can accomplish.

We further argue that #MeToo as a public pedagogical movement reveals the inevitably complex relationship between education and consent. Public pedagogy, and ultimately much of formal education as well, occurs absent the consent of the reader or student. It is nearly impossible to turn away from the headlines, and that is both the power and the paradox of the movement. We discuss the ways that #MeToo forces itself upon audiences, including how this might ultimately limit its uptake and power. We use this discussion to show that education actually has a precarious relationship with consent, since it actually relies on compulsory participation. A student might resist but cannot really say no. Recognizing that, in this way, both formalized education and public pedagogy subvert the primacy of consent, we assert that a public pedagogical movement oriented around consent is inevitably ambivalent in outcome and reach.

This paper begins with a more detailed overview of the #MeToo movement, including its history and its ongoing, shifting goals and implications. We discuss our own underlying assumptions about #Metoo and education, defining the terms most central to our argument and articulating our positionality. Next, we offer a brief literature review of scholarship about sexual violence, particularly related to consent, and we discuss the most central public pedagogy theory that we draw on. We go on to offer up two key texts linking #MeToo with education for analysis. Finally, we discuss our two overarching conclusions about the relationship between #MeToo and education. We show how the ambiguous power of #MeToo exemplifies some impotence to truth and public pedagogy in the face of monolithic extant power structures. We further argue for the need for educators—including public pedagogues—to examine our inevitable complicity in overriding consent, portraying, via the complex and problematic public pedagogy of #MeToo, the lack of a binary distinction between what is and what is not permitted entry to public consciousness.

An Overview of #MeToo

In this section, we offer an overview of the #MeToo movement and its predecessors. We also examine the celebrity dimension of the movement and consider the implications of the movement's digital presence and virality.

The #MeToo movement is described as being intended to catalyze cultural and legislative transformation around sexual dominance and violence (Me Too, 2018). The mission describes the power of speaking out and truth-telling in contributing to such a catalysis.

> The me too movement has built a community of survivors from all walks of life. By bringing vital conversations about sexual violence to the mainstream, we're helping de-stigmatize survivors by highlighting the breadth and impact sexual violence has on thousands of women, and we're helping those who need it to find entry points to healing. Ultimately, with survivors at the forefront of this movement, we're aiding the fight to end sexual violence. We want to uplift radical community healing as a social justice issue and are committed to disrupting all systems that allow sexual violence to flourish. (CMSW, n.d., n.p.)

What begins as words of empathy and solidarity evolve here into a rallying cry for a radical anti-violence movement. By drawing public attention to the prevalence of violence against women, #MeToo works first toward destigmatizing survivorship, then creating pathways for individual healing, and only then, for some, undergirding radical, political change.

#MeToo has precedence in other online movements promoting solidarity around gender-based violence with similar political aims. In 2014, the hashtag #YesAllWomen began trending in response to the misogyny that motivated the mass shooting in Isla Vista, California (Lovett & Nagourney, 2014). In this incident, Elliot O. Rodger killed six people in a rage directed against women for rejecting him sexually. As some Twitter users distanced themselves from the systematic violence underpinning the killer's online rants and manifesto by suggesting that "not all men" participated in gendered violence, others used the hashtag #YesAllWomen to shed light on the ubiquity of misogyny and violence against women in their daily experiences. In her 2014 *New Yorker* article on the #YesAllWomen phenomenon, journalist Sasha Weiss shared the fear and anxiety she experienced when a man began to masturbate in front of her in a subway station. As she made sense of this experience while the hashtag began to trend, Weiss came to understand that the structure of a Tweet specifically makes it an impactful tool for activism. Weiss (2014) noted,

> There is something about the fact that Twitter is primarily designed for speech —for short, strong, declarative utterance—that makes it an especially powerful vehicle for activism, a place for liberation. Reading #YesAllWomen, and participating in it, is the opposite of warily watching a man masturbate and being unable to confront him with language. #YesAllWomen is the vibrant revenge of women who have been gagged and silenced. (n.p.)

Weiss proposes that, if sexual violence silences women in the moment, online spaces create the conditions under which that silence and its concurrent shame can be overturned because they are, at least ostensibly, safe. If one cannot call out their assailant in the darkness of a subway station for legitimate fear of physical violence, one can do so publicly on social media, backed by a chorus of women who have lived through the same. The digital environment is anonymous enough to create a semblance of safety yet offers just enough exposure to allow for the formation of a meaningful community for many.

The prevalence of hashtag activism in response to sexual violence reinforces Weiss's theorization; strong, clear statements of the truth of sexual violence can now be read, and easily searched, in the hundreds of thousands on the internet. Communications scholar Lokot (2018) explains, "Affective resistance discourses…emerged in opposition to discursive silencing and normalization through frank, personal, lived stories shared freely" (p. 814). This line of thinking, reiterated in both popular and scholarly discourses, creates the sense that #MeToo and its corollary movements proliferate the truth—affective as well as event-based truths spoken openly and with a clear and meaningful purpose for speakers as well as audiences. In other words, the fact that #MeToo emerged and became strengthened specifically via the tools wrought by the digital age is not accidental. As Lokot (2018) points out, the digital environment allows for a particular kind of conversing: posts, reposts, comments both short and long, and quick branching off into peripherally related topics. Earl and Kimport (2013) have discussed the significance of online activism, pointing out that digital movements are often lower cost in both time and money than in-person organizing. They also describe the ways in which online movements can gain traction

quickly, even in the absence of physical proximity. This potential for physical remove, if not anonymity, has been especially important in #Metoo, as survivors may not want to be "seen" as they share traumatic stories. It has also enabled the movement to proliferate across geographic and, to some extent, racial and socioeconomic boundaries (Haynes & Hangyu, 2018; Soliiman, 2018).

In spite of this, of course, celebrity has been an undeniable part of #MeToo's rise to prominence. As a well-known actress, Alyssa Milano was able to leverage her status and followership to make a decade-old message by an African American community organizer go viral. Her Tweet also came about a week after a litany of female celebrities publicly accused film producer Harvey Weinstein, creating an online buzz about sexual violence that informed the success of Milano's tweet. The 80 women who came forward to accuse Weinstein of rape, harassment, and assault, while certainly victims, had louder, stronger, and more publicly honored voices than many precisely because of their celebrity status.

While online movements like #MeToo and #YesAllWomen have originated in the United States, they have both garnered international attention and echoed other international efforts, often also digital, towards solidarity among survivors of sexual violence. In the year after the #Me Too movement went viral, it was searched for on Google in 196 countries around the world (Langone, 2018). Other movements have originated elsewhere and echo the same shared truths. For example, in 2016, Russian activist and journalist Nastya Melnychenko started the Facebook hashtag #IAmNotAfraidToSayIt to share her own stories of sexual violence and to encourage others to speak up about theirs in an effort to make the problem more visible. Melynchenko wrote in her original post:

> I want us, women, to talk today. To talk about the violence that most of us have lived through. I want us to stop making excuses and saying "I was wearing gym clothes during the day, and still got pawed." We don't need to make excuses. We're not to blame, those who violate us are ALWAYS to blame. I am not afraid to speak out. And I do not feel guilty. (Melynchenko, 2016, n.p.)

#MeToo as a movement relies on the same ideology of "the personal is political" (Hanisch, 1969/2006) that has been fundamental to much late-20th and 21st century feminism, while also creating the conditions to move these conversations, albeit imperfectly and with a tremendous privileging of Western sensibilities, towards a more international, intersectional, and inclusive dialogue. Rodino-Colocino (2018) suggests that, rather than thinking of digital feminist activism as reflecting new issues in the lives of women, a new "wave" of feminist discourse, we might consider them as an opportunity to highlight sexual violence as a persistent, intersectional issue and, by extension, an opportunity to problematize "grounding feminist solidarity in white, middle-class, US-centric, heteronormative privilege" (p. 1113). This formulation echoes Earl and Kimport's (2013) notion that, in some ways, digital movement building can be more accessible than other kinds of organizing and change.

So, is a #MeToo post an act of protest exactly? Social media can be a means by which individual experience bleeds into social experience. This tension is not only between the personal and the political, but between the personal and the collective. On these lines, Lokot (2018) would argue that the digital movement certainly has the power of protest. Her theoretical work takes up the belittling of social media or of personal experience stories as acts of resistance. She argues that conversations about the everyday reality of sexual violence, occurring in the networked, affective, and public space of social media "can emerge as viable forms of networked feminist activism and

can have a discernable impact on the discursive status quo of an issue, both in the digital sphere and in society at large" (Lokot, 2018, p. 803). Similar consideration of the transformative potential of social media for contending with sexual violence has found that these digital social spaces can be read as "counterpublics" that serve both an educative and a critical purpose for young women beginning to encounter the reality of rape culture (Sills et al., 2016).

#MeToo answers to many of these characteristics; testimonies of individual women have spiraled into a movement, one steeped in affective resonance that has arguably led to social, but not legislative and political, change. For example, power structures in Hollywood and in many American workplaces have been reexamined as a result of the movement, more women have gained positions of political power as male perpetrators have been ousted, and workplaces across the country have more seriously taken up the need for sexual harassment training (CNN Business, 2018). As Lokot (2018) points out,

> everyday talk about politics and rights is powerful because it relies on framing political narratives around people's own experiences, shaping how social media users might discuss political events or issues in highly personal ways. Crucially, citizens on social media are not only able to hear or see others' stories, but to add their voices to those already present in these spaces. (p. 807)

#MeToo has functioned as an example of social media's tremendous reach—and pull.

Clark (2016) and others in affect theory (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Berlant, 2011) show that, for feminist activists and issues, narrative form and dramatic, affective performance and testimony are and always will be central to the practice of resistance. Thus, as feminist hashtag movements weave intimate truths into wider social stories, those who reflect on the impact of these movements see them as operating on two fronts. First, as acts of "vibrant revenge" against individual perpetrators of sexual violence, #MeToo has provided a space for public language in response to private acts where language may have been unavailable to a victim in the moment or rendered inaccessible in response to trauma (Salvio, 2017; Weiss, 2014). The impact of these public acknowledgements can be seen in the legal and social actions taken against those individuals accused of violence and the precipitous downfalls of celebrity perpetrators like Weinstein. Second, #MeToo as a broad movement creates conditions under which responsibility for sexual violence can be understood as a social and institutional problem.

The movement has the potential, as Rodino-Colocino (2018) reminds us, to work from the ground up to "challenge the systems of power that underlie harassment, discrimination, and assault" (p. 96) through the promotion of affective solidarity amongst survivors and a public truth-telling that "counters the othering, distancing, and ultimately the unequal relations of power that sexual assault symptomatizes and reinforces" (Rodino-Colocino, 2018, p. 99). Within this paper, we focus, as the #MeToo movement itself has focused, on violence against women and, specifically, sexual violence. At the same time, we acknowledge that the definition of "women" is utterly contestable (e.g., Butler, 1990) and that the kinds of power-laden violence exposed most vehemently by this movement affect people of varying genders and sexual identities.

Statement of Positionality: #UsToo

As feminists and as curriculum scholars, we believe in the significance of positionality, understanding where we fit in relation to our subjects or subject matter (e.g., Lather, 2001). Positionality is connected to but not synonymous with subjectivity; while both concepts underline the importance of personal experience and voice, positionality deals specifically with the need to render (albeit limitedly) conscious the ways personal subjecthood impacts scholarship, interpretation, and overall relationship to research materials. In addition to describing our positionality, we also use this section to clearly define some of the terms we use most often throughout the paper.

Neither of us quite remembers how we came to learn that the other was a survivor or if it was something we just always knew. Maybe this was because a pretty high percentage of women fits that description or maybe because of something about how we participated in discussions, held our bodies, played with ideas? We met as doctoral students in a curriculum theory course, and somewhere, buying snacks before class maybe, one of us might have mentioned it, casually, and the other might have smiled and said—about four years before the phrase went viral—"Oh yeah, me too."

It is a dicey paragraph to write, though. "Rape survivor" is a tenuous identity for each of us. It calls so much into play and into question, and writing an article that publicizes it carries an intricate constellation of emotions and regrets. We write with a certain defensiveness, daring you to question our truths even as we work to critique the movement with which they have become associated. As we write, we long to show that we are not the identity we simultaneously claim. We also understand, based on statistics, that a certain percentage of our readers share this aspect of our positionality, and that may make our work either more or less frustrating to encounter. These contradictions frame our work.

In part because of our own survivorship and long journeys toward sharing our truth with any confidence, we start with the assumption that people who say they were raped are telling the truth. We make this statement explicitly because our discussion also takes up the difficulties and ambiguities of truth, its limitations, and, to some extent, its contradictions. None of these eventual arguments, though, belie our conviction that, in general, people do not lie outright about being raped or assaulted. In fact, we find it disturbing that in the current political climate—that associated with the post-truth era taken up in this special issue—this even requires careful explication.

Another assumption that we make is that, while all people can have aggressive feelings and commit acts of aggression against each other, those who rape and assault others and cannot admit this or even gesture toward reparation ought not to be in positions of ongoing, publicly-sanctioned power. Therefore, though this paper tries to make sense of the legislative impotence of #MeToo, we find it abidingly nonsensical, appalling, and traumatic that U.S. President Donald Trump and Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, among others, have attained and maintained positions of tremendous power even in the face of accusations against them and a refusal to accept their implications (Kavanaugh, 2018; Merica, 2018; Reilly, 2018).

The concept of post-truth in politics predates Trump's election, and it initially implied a political era "in which politics (public opinion and media narratives) have become almost entirely disconnected from policy (the substance of legislation)" (Roberts, 2010, n.p.). Harsin (2015) further describes post-truth politics as associated with strategic application of rumors and emotive appeals to manage economic and political outcomes. Trump's election, the Brexit vote in the UK, and the rise of right-wing and nationalist politicians globally have all been theorized as related to

post-truth politics (e.g., Cassidy, 2018). Many of Trump's arguments, for instance, are utterly disconnected from facts, so his appeal is based in capitalizing on emotional response and the human capacity to believe a person with power. *New Yorker* writer Cassidy (2018) sums it up succinctly, "Donald Trump has been lying for so long now, and on such a regular basis, that it is easy for people to get blasé about it" (n.p.). The post-truth era, then, is one where facts no longer matter, and we show how #MeToo has tried to re-center truth in public pedagogy while retaining the post-truth era's highlighting of emotions as their own sort of (highly compelling) truth.

Public Pedagogy and Bearing Witness

The literature on public pedagogy offers evidence for our reading of the #MeToo movement as an example of public pedagogy (Cassily & Clarke-Vivier, 2016; Sandlin, Burdick, & Rich, 2017). In order to engage in this sort of analysis, though, it is first important to delineate precisely what public pedagogy is and why and how #MeToo is pedagogical.

The field of public pedagogy research has a long history, and the term public pedagogy has been applied to a wide range of educational research in curriculum studies, cultural studies, and feminist and other critiques of popular culture (Sandlin, O'Malley, & Burdick, 2011). In an effort to respond to calls for public pedagogy researchers to clearly define their use of the term, and to illuminate the theoretical underpinnings that inform that usage (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013; Sandlin et al., 2011), we begin by defining public pedagogy, situating it in the field of critical culture studies, and reviewing literature related to the understanding of online and other public pedagogical movements that contend with communicating systematic and institutional violence.

Public pedagogy is the educative work that operates in extrainstitutional spaces, sites of learning that operate "beyond formal schooling and…[are] distinct from hidden and explicit curricula operating within and through school sites" (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 338). We build our understanding of public pedagogy on a reading of the literature that frames popular culture and media as places where ideas about sexual violence are both reinscribed and challenged (Burdick & Sandlin, 2013; Giroux, 2000), acknowledging that media artifacts in particular can be linked to "processes of social domination" (Sandlin et al., 2011, p. 343) and, conversely, may be used in counterhegemonic ways.

Cultural theorists like Henry Giroux understand that popular cultural spaces like the internet and magazines described here are sites of socialization, but that our encounters with them do not necessarily yield an acquiescence to the problematic or hegemonic ideas that may be depicted therein (Giroux, 2000). The potential for resistance occurs in both individual and mediated interactions with movements like #MeToo. Simon (1992) and others have described public pedagogy as indelibly political practice. In Simon's work, pedagogy is a deliberate attempt to organize, disorganize, and otherwise influence experience. Cassily and Clarke-Vivier (2016) draw on Simon to further show how public pedagogy in online activist space can involve the telling of new stories to engage marginalized voices and the retelling of old stories to disturb and disrupt familiar narratives.

Narrative is an important part of public pedagogy, as "telling, retelling, and reflecting on stories in a critical way can help us determine who is excluded, who is implicated, and how we can situate others and ourselves and differently" (Cassily & Clarke-Vivier, 2016, p. 14). By extending the concept of pedagogy into the public sphere and across cultural sites, individuals interested in social change might employ a wide variety of texts, including Tweets, in service of

political goals. Cassily and Clarke-Vivier (2016) juxtapose Simon's theory to Zembylas' (2014) work on "affective solidarity," arguing that vulnerability is what allows individual subjects to see ourselves in the other and have the courage to engage in a "collaborative struggle" (Simon, 1992, p. 63) within a "community of solidarity" (p. 65). Simon defines a community of solidarity as a mutual project of "something not yet but could be," in which participants live "as though the lives of others matter" (p. 65).

In order for encounters with disruptive, marginal, or difficult stories to be impactful, however, individuals must encounter them in a way that both preserves the individual narrative of the story and the potential for attention and concern towards the story. Simon (2014) argues that, when thoughtfully curated, public, educative experiences that contend with systemic violence create the possibility for moving individual feeling and thought away from a personal or reactive response towards one of "critical engagement, advent, and hope" (p. 9); the past impacts the present without collapsing in on it. When traces of the individual life persist through the difficulty and intensity of the disorienting encounter with publicly shared information, the possibility for shared transformational experience occurs.

The public nature of the #MeToo campaign creates the conditions for this sustained attention, which Simon (2014) calls "witnessing." The ubiquitous, digital, and ongoing nature of the movement make it near impossible to turn away from, even when witnessing it is difficult. Witnessing creates the potential for transformative change, allowing for the traces of individual lives to persist through what can be a troublesome encounter with their stories without becoming frozen in an emotional response that precludes connection and action. What Burke calls "affective solidarity," Simon might describe as witnessing's potential to acknowledge both individual suffering and the structural forces implicated. The challenge here, as in all places where difficult knowledge is taken up in public pedagogical space, lies in tension between personal experience—largely private, unseen, and heretofore unspoken—and public definitions of truth related to the crux of the issue of sexual violence: consent.

Sexual Violence, Consent, and Education

One trouble with consent as a concept is that it is simultaneously central to discussions of sexual violence and difficult to define. Fenner's 2017 review of definitions of consent in educational and social science literature found that, even amongst researchers drawing on theoretical frameworks in gender, feminist, and sexuality studies, there was little congruence in definitions of the term. In educational contexts, which we focus on here, consent is most frequently represented as a communicative act between partners that is socially mediated in ways that sometimes result in ambiguity resulting in miscommunications related to consent between partners (Fenner, 2017). This idea is the underpinning of many sexual assault intervention programs, where individuals are taught that unambiguous expressions of consent like "yes means yes" and "no means no" are central to preventing sexual violence.

Harris (2018), a communication scholar, contextualizes these communication-focused interventions as well-intentioned but seriously limited in the way they shape common consent discourses. By implying, directly or indirectly, that communication can and should be unambiguous during sexual encounters, Harris argues, anti-rape activists "lower the standard for communicative competence, disconnect it from its historical-cultural context, and miss opportunities to politicize consent" (Harris, 2018, p. 155). When direct communication of "yes"

or "no" is what is used to define consent, not only are woman frequently positioned to bear the burden of being "gatekeepers and responsible for not being raped" (Garcia & Vemuri, 2017, p. 14), but problematic implications about how individuals will behave when clearly communicated to are smuggled in. That being said, the argument in favor of privileging a version of communication that emphasizes the simple, clear, and universally understood meaning of words like "yes" and "no" hinges on the fact that the subtlety and ambiguity of language is often used to justify sexual violence (Harris, 2018). The challenge of this view of consent—that words "reflect an unambiguous reality" (Harris, 2018, p. 165)—is that it suggests that words, and the interactions in which they are exchanged, exist absent broader personal, social, and historical contexts. A focus on individual communicative exchanges and sustained inattention to these contextual variables, in turn, contributes to the perpetuation of rape culture.

Definitions of consent that extend beyond the "yes" and "no" rhetoric are present, though less common, in educational literature. Fenner (2017) describes feminist research traditions that trouble the idea of consent by bringing it into conversation with concepts like desire and willingness to engage in sex, where "internal intention to engage in sexual activity is contrasted with consent as the external communication of consent to a partner" (p. 458). Similarly, she traces a tendency in social science research for discussions of consent to be framed largely in terms of nonconsent and violence. This focus on nonconsent as existing in exclusive relationship to rape has the potential to create conditions under which individuals are less likely to be able to identify ambiguous sexual experiences as sexual violence.

"Consent," Harris (2018) argues, "is anything but simple. It is laden with the broad social context in which people utter 'no' and 'yes.' A person who refuses sexual activity navigates many cultural, historical, and personal complexities" (p. 159). How do we address the paradox of consent—its simultaneous centrality and ambiguity—through education? What do we do as educators doing work in this context when the issue of sexual violence is both so ubiquitous and so politically and culturally charged?

Educational research suggests that the answer to these questions is to present the concept of consent as a "complicated conversation" (Pinar, 2011). First, work aimed at ending sexual violence should begin with the establishment of a definition of consent that acknowledges the range of contextual information required for understanding a consenting act. This may mean eschewing simple legalistic definitions in favor of those that privilege context (Brady, Lowe, Brown, Osmond, & Newman, 2018). For example, in order for consent to exist, feminist scholars argue, the concept of refusal must be possible (Pateman, 1980). To understand how, why, and under what circumstances refusal is or is not possible requires a historical knowledge of gender, power, consent, nonconsent, and coercion that highlights the ways these concepts have played out socially and politically (Harris, 2018; Fenner, 2017; Garcia & Venmuri, 2017). Fully understanding consent, particularly in relationship to educational contexts, requires that educators address sexual violence "as a cultural, political, and historical problem that pervades the same legal, social, and educational institutions that seek to eliminate it" (Garcia & Vemuri, 2017, p. 3).

Fenner (2017) reminds us that educational efforts intervening on sexual violence also require developing an understanding of consent as a "deeply personal and inter-personal" process (p. 468). She suggests that this work begins when students are encouraged to discuss a range of consent scenarios in contexts of consent, nonconsent, coercion, and desire. Harris (2018), too, suggests that, in addition to historical information on consent, educational efforts should address the complexities of interpersonal communication, particularly cultural variations on directness and the importance of metacommunication. Each of these emphases highlights the importance of

understanding both consent and sexual violence as existing not as binary or dichotomous variables, but as rather as continuums from choice through coercion and force (Coy, Kelly, Elvines, Garner, & Kanyeredzi, 2013) upon which individual acts are positioned through broader social and cultural forces (Brady et al., 2018).

As is so often the case, pressure for social change in relationship to complex issues is placed on the lap of K-12 education. Scholars who study issues with sexual violence in post-secondary contexts call on elementary and high school teachers to join forces in educating students early, and in the subtle and nuanced ways suggested above, in an understanding of the concept of consent (Garcia & Venmuri, 2017). This request is made with the acknowledgement that existing sex education programs are ill equipped to do this work, emphasizing instead a moralistic or clinical approach that does not leave space for the historical, contextual, or political conversations required to make full sense of what it means to be a consenting sexual being (Appleton & Stiritz, 2016; Garcia & Venmuri, 2017).

Interestingly, research suggests that, despite these shortcomings in sex education, adolescents understand the complexities of sexual consent, acknowledging that it is an embodied process "difficult to define, talk about, or practice uniformly" (Brady et al., 2018, p. 35). Educational efforts that take as a beginning place this understanding and its enactment are both meaningful to young people and impactful in relationship to their understanding of the complexities of consent and their agency as sexual decision makers (Carmody & Ovenden, 2013; Cense, 2018; Coy et al., 2013).

Documents of #MeToo

In this section, we describe two major public documents from the #MeToo era; we return to these pieces for deeper analysis in our discussion section. These are the 2017, *Time Magazine*, "Silence Breakers" article and documents from #MeTooK12. The first piece represents codified recognition of #MeToo as a movement with cultural cache. The second piece helps us think about the impact of a large-scale pedagogical movement on school curricula in ways that function as both politically progressive and simultaneously sanitizing, even occluding, of the "truth" of the social movement against sexual violence.

"The Silence Breakers"

On December 8, 2017, *Time Magazine* joined the conversation about #MeToo by publishing "The Silence Breakers" (Zacharek, Dockterman, & Edwards, 2017), an article naming many of the primary speakers in the movement as their 2017 "Person of the Year." By grouping many different individuals together under the title "Person," *Time* begins by making an implicit statement about what it means to be a collective voice. In their "How We Chose" explanation, the editors wrote, "The galvanizing actions of the women on our cover…along with those hundreds of others…have unleashed one of the highest-velocity shifts in our culture since the 1960s" (n.p.). They credit the speed of the movement to social media, imagining a hypothetical Rosa Parks Twitter account and how much this would have sped up the Civil Rights Movement.

The article is one of the key texts we draw on because it explains the #MeToo movement and stands as a representative of how the movement is understood, read, and explicated in

mainstream cultural publication. The article centers on the narratives of the celebrities involved in the movement, but also includes stories from other sexual assault survivors who spoke out on Twitter as part of #MeToo. Movie stars, the article explains, are important culture bearers in this movement insofar as they represent what we all wish to be (Zacharek et al., 2017). When celebrities don't know what to do, the article states, "what hope is there for the rest of us?" (n.p.). The article argues that, by speaking up against the egregious and repeated actions of Harvey Weinstein, for example, the Hollywood cadre involved has paved the way for women of all walks of life to tell their stories: "When a movie star says #MeToo, it becomes easier to believe the cook who's been quietly enduring for years" (n.p.). The article both assumes and explicitly states that telling these stories is, in and of itself, social change. It is a movement.

"The Silence Breakers" insistently paints #MeToo as a movement that transcends and even nullifies social boundaries (Zacharek et al., 2017). While it draws on the allure of celebrity so central to the movement's earliest spread, it describes the photo shoot for the Person of the Year article in terms of its diversity. A group of women "from different worlds" met up for the *Time* interview: actress Ashely Judd, Mexican farm-worker Isabel Pascual, an Uber engineer, a corporate lobbyist, and a hospital worker. Zacharek et al. (2017) describe the optics and the underlying economic realities of their meeting:

> These women could not have looked more different. Their ages, their families, their religions, and their ethnicities were all a world apart. Their incomes differed not by degree but by universe: [the corporate lobbyist] pays more in rent each month than Pascual makes in two months. (n.p.)

In this way, the experience of sexual violence is portrayed as equalizing, and the differentials that remain between these women and how their experiences are read remain uncritiqued.

The article also describes some of the emotional commonalities widely believed to be associated with experiencing sexual violence. These include a sense of shame, a desire to hide, anxiety about sexuality overall, fear of retribution, and fear of being identified solely with the experience of victimization. Yet, as part of the movement, the article explains, "What had manifested as shame exploded into outrage. Fear became fury. This was the great unleashing that turned the #MeToo hashtag into a rallying cry" (n.p.). Again and again, the article references this cry itself as a form of action. By saying words, by speaking these "truths," women are ostensibly participating in a movement, and they are important. In this sense, the movement's primary accomplishment is the fact of its own existence. A pleasant side benefit is the infamous, highly-publicized downfall of many perpetrators.

At its close, "The Silence-Breakers" presages some of the arguments that have indeed been lodged in criticism of #MeToo. "While everyone wants to smoke out the serial predators and rapists, there is a risk that the net be cast too far,"(n.p.) it explains. The writers describe #MeToo as transitional, in the sense that it represents as much as it works to create a cultural shift. Overall, though, it is portrayed as a mutual and communal act of strength and bravery. "At least we've started asking the right questions…for the moment, the world is listening" (n.p.).

#MeTooK12

What does it look like when a public pedagogical movement turns toward the formal educational arena? How have schools and teachers begun to take up #MeToo? It was with these questions in mind that we turned toward #MeTooK12, a "campaign" represented on Facebook, Twitter, and via a website called Stop Sexual Assault in Schools (SAIS, 2019). The social media websites function basically as collection sites for media articles and testimonials about sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools. These include articles about employee harassment cases as well as about student experiences of harassment and assault. Commentators on these collected feeds note that such a clearinghouse is "long overdue," implying repeatedly that there has been a historic absence of possibility for talking about sexual violence in the K-12 setting.

The slightly more comprehensive SAIS (2019) website is divided into sections like #MeTooK12 resources, media articles, action ideas, and videos by two different civil rights attorneys with expertise in school sexual violence. The website takes the strong stance that there is a "crisis in our schools" around ignored sexual harassment and assault and is pitched to an adult audience of teachers, administrators, and parents. SAIS also includes a great deal of information about sexual discrimination more broadly and the different ways that Title IX can be brought to bear in K-12 settings.

The #MeTooK12 resources vary from informational pieces about sexual harassment in schools to links to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula like Second Step, which claims to "reduce bullying, peer victimization, and other problem behaviors" (SAIS, 2019, n.p.). There is also a "Share My Lesson" link, where teachers have the opportunity to share lesson plans and resources they have used to work on issues relevant to "critical conversations…on issues of consent, sex education, relationships, and undoing a pervasive culture of silence" (Share My Lesson, 2019). Some of the lessons currently highlighted include, "Fostering Healthy Relationships," "Combating Harassment," and "Gender Equity." The words rape and violence are absent from these pages, as are lessons pitched to students younger than the middle-school age.

A link to the "Toolkit" section of the SAIS site offers a pamphlet that can be downloaded, entitled "Ending K-12 Sexual Harassment: A Toolkit for Parents and Allies." The pamphlet reviews the special relevance of Title IX to sexual violence and harassment in schools. It discusses the increased risk of sexual violence experienced by students of color and LGBTQ+ students, and it encourages parents to familiarize themselves with school and district procedures for complying with federal law. The pamphlet discusses sexual harassment and assault almost synonymously, suggesting that all of these crimes be treated as disruptions to students' equal educational opportunities, based on sex.

Finally, a media page offers links to a variety of articles both about the #MeTooK12 campaign and about sexual harassment and violence in schools. For example, it includes articles about Secretary of Education Betsy Devos' alma mater's noncompliance with Title IX but also about adults discussing their experiences of sexual violence as school children. One of the most salient messages from the articles linked from this page is that schools do not listen hard enough, or publicize the problem widely enough, when sexual assault occurs in schools. A secondary message is the continuing slant that sexual assault disrupts equal educational opportunity, particularly for girls, students of color, and LGBTQ+ students.

#MeToo, Education and Consent

"'What if we did complain?' proposes Megyn Kelly. 'What if we didn't whine, but we spoke our truth in our strongest voices and insisted that those around us did better? What if that worked to change reality right now?'" (Zacharek et al., 2017, n.p.). #MeToo claims to be a movement about truth. It is based on the idea that speaking truth—specifically, this "our truth," a collective yet personalized truth Kelly names—will "change reality," make the world better, lessen the reach of sexual assault, harassment, and violence. What were the mechanisms that allowed this movement, based very much on at least one conception of truth, to rise to the fore precisely during the onslaught of the post-truth era?

In part, #MeToo was lent credence by the very brashness of the comments about women's bodies, and the normalizing of sexual violence, that came to the surface via the now infamous Access Hollywood video of Donald Trump. His "locker room talk" about what he can do to women because he is famous went viral, almost simultaneously sparking outrage and backlash against the outrage. "I just kiss," the President said, "I don't even wait…. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything…. Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything." These words, and their reveal, let people around the world bear witness to Trump's "truth," his way of perceiving women.

Months later, though, Americans elected him President, and that, too, remains a truth with which the world must continually contend. The same truth, we relearn, impacts different people quite differently, with some women proudly wearing t-shirts proclaiming, "He can grab my…" at Make America Great Again rallies (Ellefson, 2016). Here is one of the complexities of #MeToo as a movement of public pedagogy. On the one hand, it illustrates the ubiquity, emotional sequelae, and terror of sexual violence. On the other hand, it shows that, as a society, we can proceed largely undaunted, allowing extant power structures to continue, distributing punishment with the utmost inequity, and colluding in what could cynically be described as the illusion of a movement—one that elicits strong feelings of solidarity but results in very little by way of concrete transformation.

Women who began speaking up about their experiences in relation to Milano's retweet of Burke's (2007) concept for solidarity are praised, when they are praised, for being truth tellers. The definition of "truth" applied here is complex; it seems to have to do with confessing often very painful personal experience, telling the facts of what happened even when you feel like you might be lambasted for doing so, taking a major risk of both retraumatization and ostracization via your confession, and, finally, getting into the details of the matter. Truth in #MeToo is also about joining a community and enacting a pretense of indifference to other social identity categories that so often divide women. As the *Time* piece makes clear, to support #MeToo is to believe that the common experience of sexual victimization bridges otherwise potentially unraveling divides between, for example, the movie star and the hotel cleaning lady (Zacharek et al., 2017). Truth is ugly, but perhaps it can lead to a veneer of beautiful solidarity.

Skepticism aside, however, there are some important ways that #MeToo works to undercut the problematics of the post-truth movement. First, #MeToo insists that the victim does indeed have a truth and, in some ways, that her truth is all the more deserving of an audience because she is a victim. This flies in the face, for instance, of the narratives of climate change skeptics who repeatedly argue that, when a victim speaks, his subjectivity as victim, or loser, undermines his grasp on truth. Second, #MeToo makes use of some of the tools associated with the post-truth era, most specifically Twitter and other forms of social media, to undercut its power. Social media enabled #MeToo to achieve national and then global renown and for sexual assault survivors to

find each other and listen to one another's stories. Third, #MeToo reifies the significance of personal narrative as a route toward solidarity. In the post-truth era, it becomes very easy to rely heavily on neoliberal iterations of individualism that belie the significance of community and communal struggle. #MeToo is nothing if not a communal movement, though part of its tragedy is in speaking to the universality of the experiences it seeks to undermine. It is by raising so many individual voices that #MeToo becomes a movement, and the resulting stories and images we get are collective in struggle and truth.

Perhaps most importantly, #MeToo has been variously credited with opening the doors for truth-telling. Women in the #MeToo era are meant to have easier access to the spoken truth, with less shame surrounding our stories of either victimization or survival. In other words, #MeToo can be read as the truth amidst the post-truth, the storm amid the troubling calm.

Yet at the same time, #MeToo exposes some of the challenges inherent to this kind of public truth-telling. For one thing, the truth, once it is out there, becomes part of a public domain still mired in the same power structures that make sexual violence as ubiquitous as it is. Speaking of one's experiences of being raped suddenly makes a person part of a movement, whether or not that is her desire. The movement in turn makes itself available for commentary, critique, applause, and lewd humor by everyone from celebrities to politicians, from employers to daily interlocutors. To speak some kinds of truth necessitates a particular strength and a capacity to defend internally and collectively against this potentially painful mockery, even when this involves being drawn into a collective you never consented to join.

What really is the relationship between truth and consent? As a corollary question, what is the relationship among truth, consent, and education? Our reading of the #MeToo movement and particularly #MeTooK12 have helped us understand that education cannot claim to fully stand by the primacy of consensual participation without at least admitting to a degree of hypocrisy.

There is a difficult conceptual line to be drawn between consent and choice, but for the purposes of this argument, we will understand consent as the capacity to willfully opt into participation in a particular activity that will affect the course of a subject's life. Overall, in the United States, attending school is not a matter of consent, nor are children considered capable of providing legal consent in the first place. A young person may desire not to attend school, but short of convincing a well-resourced and amenable legal guardian, she does not have choice in the matter. This is generally accepted as part of an overall adult-oriented ethical system, one in which children, as future adults, are not thought to be cognitively or emotionally equipped to make such decisions for themselves (e.g., Silin, 2017). It is reinforced by the needs of an economic system that relies on children being outsourced for care, guidance, and a particular version of education for a good portion of each day. In fact, access to education is also a significant equity issue, so that children who, for reasons of geography, socioeconomics, and gender, do get by without attending school are generally believed to have been wronged, denied access, and, often, made—also without their consent—to play adult roles at too young a chronological age (Lesko, 2012).

Once a child is in the formal educational system, the extent to which she has the right to consent to how the education will play out is also questionable. For example, if a child refuses to consent to what is often called "learning," either unconsciously, consciously, or, most often, via a complex interplay of these two kinds of processes, she is most likely to face diagnosis, punishment, and various kinds of treatment or discipline. Formal education is not, by and large, a consensual experience. (It may also be worth noting that, in the realm of research, children are not capable of providing consent; their parents can and should consent on their behalf.)

The #MeTooK12 curriculum, thus, becomes a way to explore the relationship between truth and consent. As the most explicit attempt to bring the #MeToo movement into the domain of formal education, #MeTooK12 is a hashtag designed to educate "students, families, and schools about the right to an equal education free from sexual harassment" (SAIS, 2019, n.p.). Sabrina Stevens, one of first to coin #MeTooK12, writes,

> I know all too well that the K-12 space is overdue for a #MeToo reckoning of its own. After all, it's hard to go to school every day…when someone is making you feel unsafe by snapping your bra, or if you can't sleep at night as a result of PTSD, or if you're forced to sit in a classroom with the person who raped you, or if you're constantly surrounded by your attacker's friends harassing you in the aftermath. (Stevens, 2018, n.p.)

Stevens argues that, while #MeToo made headway on college campuses almost immediately after the movement began, taboos around discussing sexuality with younger students have made it more difficult to ignite this kind of truth-telling in the K-12 environment. "We have both the power and the responsibility," Stevens writes, "to keep our children safe…. Get started today by reading the resources and reflections shared on the #MeTooK12 hashtag…. Our children deserve safe spaces to learn" (n.p.). Some of the ideas in the action plan for #MeTooK12 include "spread the hashtag… Tweet your experiences of k-12 sexual harassment or assault…post your experiences on the new #MeTooK12 Facebook page" (SAIS, 2019, n.p.). Telling the truth, then, is a form of taking action, and becomes tied up in the discourse of ensuring that children have what they "deserve," that schools become "safe spaces," and that an adult sense of responsibility toward children is assuaged.

Issues of consent as they relate to education are more complex than educational literature has admitted. When it comes to childhood, this is especially true—and looking at #MeTooK12 as well as the movement overall through this lens reveals that pedagogy, which occurs constantly, unconsciously and consciously, and often contradictorily, will never really be able to sustain its identity as destabilizing while making the simultaneous logical claim privileging consent. As discussed, consent is not a simple prospect, and most children, people, and educators have more nuanced and complicating views of consent than those offered up by codified curricula and programming. Part of what makes consent such an elusive concept is the almost unacknowledgeable understanding that each of us violates its precepts sometimes, and it has to be possible to continue belief in an ethical construct privileging consent while simultaneously admitting our own vulnerability and power.

We do not mean to make the excessively provocative claim that there ought to be an opportunity for children to consent to go to school. However, we want to point out that formal education is basically premised on the overriding of consent for participation, because of an ideal that everyone ought to be educated, to participate, to be taught, and in that sense entered into. The extent to which a subject being educated has autonomy is dicey, in other words, and this has potentially profound implications for any "movement" oriented around keeping these subjects "safe" or encouraging them to speak their "truth." If #MeToo reminds us of the importance of truth-telling for creating solidarity and disrupting problematic uses of power, then perhaps #MeTooK12 should remind us that there are some truths that will probably never be tolerated, some versions of aggression and force that we are all complicit in, and some dismantling of safety and consent that we rely on for the perpetuation of society.

It is difficult to argue against safety or even to claim that it is an entirely cultural norm. Safety in its most basic sense is necessary for survival, and by no means do we argue that the physical safety of children in schools should not be prioritized. We wonder whether calling on safety as part of the #MeTooK12 discourse might be little more than a way to bring an uncomfortable topic, like childhood sexuality, into a more mainstream and acceptable parlance. Further, there is a way in which telling ourselves that we are interested in keeping children safe in schools is a deceptive disavowal of what education does, both at its best and at its worst (Silin, 1995). Is not education there to disrupt a sense of safety? Even for Piaget, are not disequilibrium and discomfort necessary for the acquisition and assimilation of new concepts? If not for the lack of safety that led to #MeToo, would we not be missing a movement, an opportunity to truck with the truth?

At the very least, these paradoxes deserve acknowledgement. What, after all, of the child who does not want to know, who desires to look away, who wants nothing more than to remain ignorant of the sounds letters make on a page, of the ugliness of human history, and the complexities of science? As educators, we so often make the determination that this child does not have the capacity or right to make these determinations for himself. Though we, as authors, basically agree with this determination on an ethical level, we also think it contains a degree of aggression, and attendant guilt, that is too often left unacknowledged. Put simply, even in the ostensibly progressive and forward-moving traction of #MeToo, there are decisions being made about who gets to decide what can and cannot be forced onto another, and as long as education exists, this paradox will remain.

Concluding: A Complicated Conversation

Part of the #MeToo movement's power is in its visibility, its very public presence. It would be hard to exist as any kind of media consumer and not know about this movement on some level at this point, and it is fundamentally hard to exist in the world and not be a kind of media consumer. This is what makes #MeToo successful as public pedagogy—one cannot turn away from it.

The incapacity to turn away from horrid truths holds its own ethical power. It is uncomfortable, it is difficult, and it is educational. Faced with #MeToo, we came to the experience of not being able to turn away quite personally. We woke each morning to read the stories of another person's rape: in the newspaper, on our own social media feeds, sometimes in our inboxes. We were discomfited not in the ways we have felt when made to look at those our country has wounded in war, for example, but by being triggered into rehashing traumas, comparing our stories with those of other women, wondering how okay we really were, wondering if from now on we would have to begin every sentence, "as a rape survivor."

To some extent, this precise experience is the power of #MeToo. We were drawn via personal experience into a broader movement. It got us talking to each other just a little more about our stories. At the same time, we question this particular value. Often, at the peak of the movement's vitality, we found ourselves wishing to opt out for a while, to stop being quite so educated, to have a few days' respite. Often, we found ourselves talking about how much detail we really wanted to get into or how disgusted we were by our pride in the ways we felt we were "doing better" than some of the other women on our newsfeeds, or even, ultimately and still, by our wish to write this article. How good is truth, really?

#MeToo has functioned as a curriculum for the United States and then the world. As a curriculum, #MeToo brings politics and education into an impermeable and ongoing conversation about the ways human subjects can and ought to interact with each other. It is a powerful educational force that relentlessly requires its students, whether or not they are willing, to reckon with particular truths: women are raped; women are raped frequently; women who look all different ways, who come from all different places, and who occupy all different rungs of social ladders are raped; men are sometimes raped, too; as people, we misuse power flagrantly and constantly. Does the world now know this truth? Is this a truth that has in any way circumnavigated the complexities of the post-truth era?

If these are the main learning objectives, though, the #MeToo curriculum also comes with other curricular outcomes. It teaches, as we continue to watch, that truth only gets people so far and that some realms of power are so entrenched that truth cannot begin to bend them. #MeToo as a pedagogical movement represents the power of bearing witness and of bringing individual narratives together toward a communal end. The realpolitik of this power remains, in some ways, to be seen, though current analyses point to the possibility that it might be ultimately deceptive. From an educational standpoint, however, it is important to think about the conundrum of public pedagogy's relationship to truth exposed overall by this movement. If public pedagogy is definitionally something we cannot opt out of, then a public pedagogical movement about the pain, sorrow, and life-altering trauma that comes from experiences of not being able to opt out is inevitably problematic. As we bear witness, we are reminded of the problematics inherent to the requirement that we do so. This complexity is applicable to all pedagogical domains, carrying the humbling reminder that teaching, learning, and education can be violent, power-imbued endeavors, and that we constantly ask a lot—too much—of everyone who participates in these.

If #MeToo is a rally against the post-truth era, then, it is also and simultaneously a cautionary tale about truth. How can we ask for the truth if the truth is so painful? How can we ask for the truth when its very vicissitudes demand of us that we own up to our complicity in imposing our will upon others? Truth is transactional, complex, and easy to co-opt. Indeed, the post-truth era can only be resisted ambivalently, because truth is something humans have only ever had an ambivalent relationship to in the first place.

In a July 2018 editorial., Michelle Goldberg writes, "if Trump cared about the American people's consent, he'd resign" (n.p.). Goldberg, a feminist writer and activist, is decrying backlash complaints against #MeToo, offering myriad evidence that the movement has not, as some critics would have it, "gone too far." She shows how many politicians are continuing to rise to positions of power in spite or sometimes because of allegations of sexual violence against them, and she argues that the zeitgeist is primarily one of exhaustion. "At this point, who can get that worked up about each instance of White House sexism?" (Goldberg, 2018, n.p.). Goldberg (2018) describes how, just as the victims of sexual violence grow fatigued from fighting against their perpetrators, so too have Americans become too tired to become enraged each time a new scandal of sexual violence rises to the surface.

Whether or not her logic holds up completely, Goldberg (2018) raises crucial questions about what we do with truth. Our argument is that these questions are inherently educational in nature and that the only ethical response is to admit to the violence of each pedagogical encounter. In this paper, we have argued that #MeToo is fundamentally an educational movement, one that both highlights and exacerbates the complexities already associated with public pedagogy. Limitations of our argument include our choice to focus primarily on #MeToo within the United States and our conscious but inevitably problematic decision to keep our textual analysis narrow.

In spite of these limitations, we are able to conclude with the idea that #MeToo, specifically, and public pedagogy, more broadly, raise crucial questions about what it means to be an educator in the alleged "post-truth" era. #MeToo shows that valorization and degradation of truth are in fact both problematic and that to worry over the difficulties and ethical crises of "post-truth" is to inevitably disavow the often-traumatic nature of truth, which cannot be turned away from. Further, our examination of #MeToo and particularly the texts it aims at younger students raises necessary concerns about what it means to think about consent in the context of education. As an educational community, it becomes ever more important to take responsibility for the extent to which we work without our participants' consent. Acknowledgement of this paradox is the only moral way forward, especially in the midst of a public, pedagogical movement that lambasts nonconsensual acts of a person in relative power upon another.

Curriculum theorizing has always been a "complicated conversation" (Pinar, 2011), and contextualizing it in the Trump era is particularly knotty. Our work shows how necessary it is to see curriculum and pedagogy as ubiquitous in popular and political culture and to think seriously about the lesson plans all people are unwittingly imbibing. Future work might fruitfully analyze the power differentials, for instance around race, socioeconomics, ability, and age, within #MeToo, as well as considering the different emerging popular and educational programming around how to incorporate the lessons of #MeToo into sex education curricula.

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(Dis)orderly Potential
Ways Forward in "Post-truth" Social Studies

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I RECENTLY MET WITH a high school history teacher named Tim[1] to discuss the role of "post-truth" in his classroom. After settling on a working definition for our conversation ("an uncaring attitude towards facts…privileging emotion and opinion over facts"), I asked Tim if he saw "post-truth" pervading his classroom—"Do you see your students engaging in 'post-truth'?" Tim began his response by stating that he didn't think his students had changed in the past two years. His curriculum was pretty much the same as it had been for the past 15 years, and classroom engagement with current events (Tim teaches World history) was kept to an intentional minimum.

Then, an anecdote came to mind. The previous month, a senior male student had signed into an online classroom discussion forum as "Trump," a move that "instantly divided the classroom between the girls and a lot of the boys…it didn't last long, but tempers flared…with lots of laughing from the boys." I asked Tim how he responded to the student. He replied,

> I crossed it out and asked him to make one that wasn't political. In thinking back on all my years of teaching, starting with Bush and through Clinton and another Bush and then Obama—after the election you never heard their names come up while we're talking or doing activities, you didn't get the jingoism. And these are juniors and seniors! I've dealt with Trump's name being weaponized two or three times already.

Tim's conflation between "post-truth" and the President of the United States is interesting to note, and the weaponization of Trump's name is a phenomenon I have witnessed in classrooms of my own. But what resonates for me is Tim's frustration, a feeling that was palpable in our conversation—an understandable emotional response to the myriad anxieties, feelings, and opinions he feels tasked to police and regulate. This frustration cultivated a nostalgia for a past time he confidently locates, a lengthy period he remembers to be free of jingoism and triggering uses of the president's name, when unruly classroom disruptions were less frequent and order was more easily maintained.

I would wager that most social studies teachers can identify with Tim's story and his response—I know I can. The "post-truth" era has vitalized a host of anxieties attached to teaching and learning. The recognition of particular opinions instead of others is entwined with the

maintenance of order, and the ever-present possibility of Trumpian outbursts fore-fronting white supremacy or misogyny is a threat to that order. The arrival of "post-truth" symptoms in Tim's classroom, ones he synonymized with Trump and ensuing classroom discord, demonstrates a particular resistance to the opinions and emotions fueling such moments. Such a disavowal of student opinions and emotions imagines their impossible erasure, and while resistance to the opinions and emotions of students is not unique to the "post-truth" era, this messy entanglement between "post-truth," (dis)order, and the inconvenient but inevitable presence of opinions and emotions forms a fascinating dilemma for teachers.

On the one hand, Tim's response protected students from the harm of the President's name—it's implicit association with white supremacy, violent misogyny, and other painful realities. On the other hand, Tim's literal erasure of "Trump" works within a fantasy of removal and disavowal. The spontaneous conflict that erupted was deferred rather than addressed, and although the student who wrote "Trump" was publicly rebuked, something ineffable was brushed over to reestablish order. I am not suggesting that Tim's response was *wrong*; rather, I am interested in the impossibly tangled phenomenon that is "post-truth," the inner-lives of teachers and students, and the social studies classroom. What risky pedagogies might engage with the "post-truth" era in different, more life-giving ways?

This article presents a study I conducted with three teachers on "post-truth" in their social studies classrooms, and I argue that one such "risky" way forward might center an acknowledged engagement with the inner-lives of teachers and students, a focus that has been superseded by pedagogies of certainty, orderliness, fact-finding, and evidence-based argumentation. While I am not arguing against these aims, I am concerned by their cost—what is ignored, lost, or deferred in an exclusionary embrace of these products of modern social science? Because education is frustratingly interminable and inherently uncertain (Farley, 2009; Felman, 1982), this article argues that the "post-truth" era might be usefully disruptive of joyless, un-relational, and "certain" methods of teaching and learning.

The "Rise" of "Post-Truth"

The "post-truth" conversation seems to be everywhere. The Oxford Dictionary's new word of the year in 2016 describes circumstances in which "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (Midgley, 2016, n.p.). Crucially, the etymological development of "post-truth" was entangled with real-life politics. In 2016, an unprecedent amount of "fake news" and "alternative facts" saturated electronic media (Thurston, 2018). The Brexit vote on June 23 and the election of Trump on November 8 sealed a particular narrative, one that conflated both events as "manifestations of the same underlying trends; the promulgation of fanciful claims…at worst the peddling of lies, at best the assertion of emotional truth at the expense of expertise and knowledge and an outright contempt towards rationality and evidence" (Thurston, 2018, p. 153).

The work of Bruno Latour (2004b, 2007) and Karen Barad (2007) in science studies precedes the "rise" of "post-truth," but their demonstrations of the *discursivity* of facts are often cited as "post-truth" origin points (McIntyre, 2018). On the one hand, Latour and Barad have been blamed for the rise of "post-truth" because of their focus on the ways in which scientific facts are discursively-constructed products of an *entanglement* between the scientists, tools, elements, and a myriad of other actants (Barad, 2007; Latour, 2007) This does not mean that "facts" don't exist;

rather, noticing their constructed nature highlights the unavoidable costs attached to method, measurement, and claims of certainty.

On the other hand, Latour, Barad, and other science studies scholars might be characterized as postmodern salvage-artists—scientists conducting inquiry amidst always-partial truths and socially-constructed facts, pushing towards a refiguring of objectivity and the possibility of intervention in a real, material world. For Latour and Barad, the mythology of truth is old news—a given; the "post-truth" era has always been with us, a latent, uncomfortable instability lingering below artifices of fact and certainty. A more pressing question might be, what now? How do we navigate a clear-sighted, less-illusioned embrace of an inherently "post-truth" world?

I argue that a "post-truth" discourse that is critical of the mythology of truth and soberly aware of the limitations of facts and evidence might lead towards a reimagining of numerous practices of everyday life. One of these might be teaching; in the context of the social studies classroom, how might a pedagogy that stays with the many troubles of living in this world together revitalize classroom relationality and interiority?

Methodology

The study presented in this article centers on moments of "post-truth" in social studies classrooms, and my methodology operates from a foundational attention to the role of "truth" in social studies curriculum and the emotions and opinions of teachers and students.

(Un)certainty

One important component of my methodology is a critical focus on the relationship between certainty and moments of "post-truth" in social studies classrooms. The practice of teaching is a relationship imbued with ambiguity and uncertainty. Felman (1982) asserts that since Socrates there has been something about education that makes us nervous, a nervousness attached to the demarcation of learning as *started* and subsequently *finished*—these are uncertain, arbitrary lines. Contemporary demands for the quantification and evaluation of learning only exacerbate the nervous worries of teachers—they attach a currency of certainty to outcomes and answers that are inherently uncertain and ever-evolving (Garrett, 2017). This troubling juxtaposition between prevalent models of certainty-based schooling and theoretical arguments suggesting the impossibility of these aims constitutes one foundational tension fueling my methodology.

The poet John Keats (1817/2005) understood the ethical and pedagogical value in tolerating uncertainty, a learned skill he called "*Negative Capability*" (p. 43, emphasis in original). Similar to Haraway's (2016) notion of *staying with the trouble*—the ability to tolerate uncertainty, partiality, entanglement, and the inescapable germs of discursivity—negative capability is antithetical to many contemporary models of teaching and learning. Resolute certainty might prevent the reconsideration of ideas or defend against the unknown weight, responsibility, or personal implication that might accompany a painful encounter with new knowledge. I argue that these shifts are in line with a "post-truth" acknowledgement of the mythology of truth; an epistemologically-diverse classroom might be one disruptive way forward in the "post-truth" era—a pedagogy that is more concerned with the lived experiences of teachers and students than with the rote dissemination of facts and rigid maintenance of order.

Difficult Knowledge

If the "post-truth" era is, in fact, reconfigured as a confrontation with the mythology of truth, then subsequent interrogations of previously-certain facts or truth-claims are potentially painful. In this sense, "post-truth" becomes a form of difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998), and my methodology aims to examine the numerous implications and attachments surrounding its arrival in classrooms—confrontations with the mythology of truth, (un)certainty, and the inner-harm that occurs when one's constituting notions of truth, belief, and dependability are put into question.

On the one hand, my methodology grants that "post-truth" moments like climate change denial are a societal problem—it is imperative that teachers and students continue to discuss such important socio-political issues. On the other hand, I disagree that climate change denial demands a doubling-down on fact- and evidence-based social studies lessons. The phenomenon of climate change denial transcends an individual's acceptance or rejection of evidence; rather, I suggest that climate change denial and "post-truth" are two manifestations of difficult knowledge—they threaten the protected safety and stability of one's inner-life, our footing in this world. Particular pedagogical methods might, paradoxically, lead towards the ossification of an individual's opinion in the face of endless facts—might "post-truth" encourage a thoughtful, pedagogical consideration of the psychical and emotional pain attached to the difficult knowledge of irreversible climate change?

Intellectualization

In many ways, the affective and emotional capacity of the difficult knowledge of climate change is mediated away through graphs, charts, and facts. Britzman (2003) refers to this as intellectualization; difficult knowledge is often encapsulated within comfortable "units," kept at arms-length and mediated, mushed down into un-meaning through its instrumental use within a unit as an object of learning to encounter, master, and move on from. Facts are often seen as a rejoinder to "post-truth"—it is believed that off-base, emotional opinions are easily shot down by a fact-filled response. In turn, those emotional responses that might ignore facts and evidence are denigrated and silenced, yet they linger. My methodology is interested in this dynamic, in the cost of this silencing and the resistance to the threat of particular emotional responses, ones that reflect inner-pain and harm.

One provocation my methodology offers is the conviction that these forms of difficult knowledge should be embraced in social studies classrooms. Emotional responses to climate change are resisted in the interest of maintaining order and privileging particular narratives (those deemed *right*) over others (those deemed *wrong*). Staying with the trouble (Haraway, 2016) rejects the erection of illusory, comforting notions of truth and the disciplinary strategies meant to maintain an orderly status quo, however pragmatic. While the difficult knowledge of climate change and "post-truth" is existential and frightening, its disruptive capacity might be realized by imagining a social studies that acknowledges the limits of truth and facts and forges forward in listening more attentively to one another.

Listening

This facet of my methodology is concerned with listening—the ways in which subjective experiences, emotions, and opinions are resisted in "post-truth" classrooms. Building from Thurston (2018), my methodology attempts to consider the subjective experiences and opinions that have been relegated to the outside—experiences and opinions that have been silenced and aren't welcome in what Thurston (2018) calls a "post-truth/post-crash" world. Lyotard (1984) argues that postmodernism signaled the end of the metanarrative—hegemonic notions of Western progress were replaced by a variety of counternarratives, a multiplicity of voices. Thurston (2018) posits that a new metanarrative has risen to power, one that is sourced by the market-based solutions of globalized neoliberalism, a world-wide capitulation of the State to late-capitalism and the continued privatization of the commons. This metanarrative perpetuates particular opinions and renders others backwards, uninformed, and out of date. In Thurston's theorizing, "post-truth" is refigured and redeemed, not as *wrong*, but rather as those opinions and lived experiences rendered abject by the metanarrative of globalization, neoliberalism, and social science. His advice is to listen to opinions and experiences that have found themselves on the margins of a new metanarrative, one that seems to have succeeded in melding the palatable progressive politics of the center-left with the market-based solutions of neoliberalism and urban austerity.

Method

This project is based on a series of interviews and observations I conducted over a five-month period (early 2018-mid 2018) with three practicing high school social studies teachers—Lauren, Tim, and Brett. I met the teachers through email—each teacher responded to a general call I distributed stating that I (a doctoral student in a college of education) was recruiting participants for a study focused on teaching social studies in a context of heightened partisanship and "post-truth" confusion. In the end, Lauren, Tim, and Brett responded with an interest in participating; I chose to work with them based on the locations of their respective schools, the subjects they taught, and their schedule flexibility.

At the time of this project, all three participants were full-time, high school, social studies teachers. Lauren was the most experienced (21 years at the same school), and her teaching background was also the most varied (sociology, race & gender, World & U.S. history). Tim (20 years at the same school) and Brett (19 years at the same school) both teach various sections of U.S. and World history. All three teachers are white and taught in suburban high schools in the midwestern United States with similar student demographics. In Lauren's school, nearly 65% of the student body is white, while the remainder of the population is evenly split between black, Latino, and Asian students (the demographic signifiers utilized by the school). Brett's and Tim's schools are 68% and 70% white respectively with nearly the same ratio of other populations.

My work with each teacher was divided into two stages. First, I conducted an initial semi-structured interview with each teacher lasting between 70-90 minutes. During these interviews, I asked them several questions regarding moments of "post-truth" in their classrooms, as well as their own sense-making regarding "post-truth." After agreeing on a working definition of "post-truth," I asked, "Do you see 'post-truth' pervading your classroom? If so, how have you and your students responded? Finally, do you think 'post-truth' might possess a positive potential?" I realized that this question required me to provide an example, so I shared my own thoughts with

the teacher, usually thinking-aloud and wondering about the chance to move beyond disciplinary structures of truth and objectivity.

The second stage of this project was my observation of a lesson following our initial interview. During the observations, I wrote field notes and memos before conducting follow-up interviews with each teacher after their lesson was complete. I analyzed the data from the interviews and observations using a whole-parts-whole (Van Manen, 2014) cycle to work through particular sections of each interview and observation before returning to the entire transcript. I read each transcript closely, looking for similar themes within multiple discussions, and then re-read each transcript from a more holistic vantage point, attempting to decipher the larger stories present in the texts.

Findings

Beliefs, feelings, and subjective experiences are crucial components of the emotional dimensions of human life. In schools, these are too-broad signifiers for the complex and opaque inner-lives of teachers and students—the vast interiorities of the self and others. My findings will aim to demonstrate the ways in which the inner-lives of teachers and students became synonymized with "post-truth" confusion. In essence, the emotional opinions and beliefs of students were feared and resisted—a reliance on facts, evidence, routine, and order were the primary mechanisms teachers used to prevent the arrival of "post-truth" and emotional discord in their classrooms, and while this suppression is impossible, it proved to be comfortingly effective in particular moments (Tim's erasure of "Trump" above is one example of this expeditious response to potential disruption). In addition, all three teachers doubled-down on social scientific appeals to fact, objectivity, and certainty in their social studies curriculum. I argue this response to "post-truth" passes over its most constructive potential—"post-truth's" subtle, less recognized confrontation with the mythology of truth. I suggest that a critical *deconstruction* of the transcendent Truth so common in curriculum might provide new ways forward in the "post-truth" era, making space for epistemological pluralism and more equitable, attentive classrooms. While this pedagogical and curricular response from the teachers was not surprising—they are vigilantly defending against incursions of Trumpism and violent language in their classrooms—they also failed to provide a reasonable basis for this fear. I don't mean to suggest their protective instincts were wrong—far from it. Rather, I wonder if future work in this area of study might collaborate with teachers in devising ways to more thoughtfully, ethically, and creatively attend to the emotions of students and the destabilizing discursivity of truth.

Emotion(less)

All three teachers equated moments of "post-truth" with the "problem of emotion." Lauren described a divisive, post-election, Black Lives Matter rally that disintegrated into death threats on Snapchat—the "emotions and outrage were off the charts on both sides," and she spent the remainder of the semester barring discussion of the event in her Race & Gender classroom. Tim's story above led into another anecdote—he stopped teaching the 2016 election in early-September because discussions were inevitably interrupted by whispers and spontaneous shouts of "Trump!"—a volatile fuse that instantly ignited a flurry of emotional responses, raised voices, and

"even more division between the girls and boys, blacks and whites." Brett summed it up by saying that the key to avoiding "post-truth's bullshit is getting kids to think without emotion." Brett's voice rang with frustration as he discussed responding to a particular moment in his classroom. He continued—

> I have a student in my third hour that is very bright and very smart but completely immature. He just continues to get all emotional whenever a kid gives him a look or when someone doesn't agree with something he brings up. It's usually the whole, "The government's out to get you" conspiracy sort of stuff. He's obviously an outlier, but I do see more and more of it now.

I offer this as a "post-truth" moment because it is marked by a fascinating interplay between facts (hiding beneath the signifiers "bright" and "smart") and emotion. Brett's student is smart and bright but his "immaturity" and "emotional" behavior seems to counteract his intellect. While it is suggested that the student's immaturity is displayed through emotional responses to looks or disagreeable responses from other students, it is also implicitly and suggestively tied to the initial appearance of emotion in Brett's classroom. If Brett's goal is getting kids "to think without emotion," the uncomfortable appearance of emotional knowledge is bound to disrupt, and such appearances clarify both the rationality and futility of this goal in the first place.

I suggest that Brett's desire for the separation of emotion from thinking might be thought of as a "post-truth" symptom. In Brett's view of "post-truth," emotions distort facts and evidence—this vantage point necessitates the cultivation of an emotion-less classroom, however impossible this task might be. To bring psychoanalytic theory to bear on this example, it is a given that all of Brett's students carry emotionally-fueled personal beliefs into his classroom. These collections of knowledge are precious to them—they are constitutive—and in this sense, the process of learning new knowledge is painful—it necessitates breaking down and rebuilding old and new knowledge—this is a difficult process, one that is resisted. Moreover, these emotional outbursts often surface in conjunction with a *defense* of a particular type of knowledge, one that is not well-respected or considered to be valid. As Brett says, "It's usually the whole, 'The government's out to get you' conspiracy sort of stuff." This knowledge is based on conviction, intuition, and emotion—Brett's student knows, and clings to, countless stories, opinions, and beliefs. These stories, these subjective "facts," are precious to the student. They are life-giving, constituting, and inspiring in an unparalleled way.

Factually Disappeared

A second method of defense against "post-truth" moments is the disappearing of "post-truth's" disruptive potential through intellectualization (Britzman, 1998). The generative potential inherent to "post-truth's" troubling of the mythology of truth and attention to interiority is rarely realized in schooling because this new knowledge, that which might *deconstructively* provoke and re-shape one's closely-held knowledge, is kept at arm's length and mediated, mushed down into un-meaning through its intra-action within what I'll call the fact-evidence apparatus. This is a tool of modernity and social science—one way in which the social scientific values of validity, generalizability, and certainty have found their way into contemporary social studies curriculum. The various screws, swivels, clamps, and bars of this apparatus are reified in schools in diverse

forms: encapsulating "units," long-term plans, textbooks, the four steps of thinking like a historian, graphic organizers, dates, names, place, memorials, etc. While this apparatus is not working *against* the flourishing of a given student, it does manage to further mediate the distance between the "content" (also a flattening and mediating word) and the student. This snuffs out the potential for meaningful intra-actions within classroom phenomena—the student, "post-truth," the past, and difficult (new) knowledge—an intra-action that might be transformative.

As Tim said later in our conversation,

> So "post-truth" is this idea that facts aren't facts and facts are debatable…like I agree, there's plenty that's debatable, but to use it as a cat-call to just kind of undermine things in general, or present alternative facts that could be blatantly disproven, I find it to be totally absurd. Still though, it's a reality that people are responding to and they perceive that they have proof and they're acting in accordance. Because of this, I double-down on the burden we have to our students—we can't take a laissez-faire attitude for students providing evidence, doing research, and objectifying their evidence. I forefront the idea of evidence now. I push them—"How can you support this?" That type of thinking I may have taken for granted in the past before all this stuff with "post-truth."

Tim conveys a very nuanced and insightful understanding of the myriad dynamics of "post-truth" in this excerpt. He notices the ways in which facts might be "debated…to just kind of undermine things in general." This is interesting—despite his staunch positivism, Tim slips into an admission of the duplicitous nature of facts within the imaginary context of a debate—he seems to suggest, "Facts might appear to be on our side, but in the wrong hands? You never know." Tim hopes to preemptively counteract this undesirable outcome via the fact-evidence apparatus. He tells me that he has "doubled-down," refusing to take a "laissez-faire attitude" when it comes to asking his students to "provide evidence" and "objectify their evidence." He "forefronts the idea of evidence now"—he pushes them. This is intellectualization at its finest—students will likely learn something about the past (flattened content), but most importantly, they will be protected from falsities, fake news pretending to be factual, or emotional appeals that can't stand up to a rigorous, scientific examination.

Hidden in the middle of Tim's grappling with "post-truth" and the fact-evidence apparatus is an interesting admission—the "post-truth" he sees is "a reality that people are responding to, and they perceive that they have proof, and they're acting in accordance." Although he follows this with his commitment to "doubling-down" on making his students provide evidence, there is another direction his curriculum might wander in the "post-truth" era—an inclusive engagement with these lived realities and experiences in his social studies classroom. Might an attendance to these realities and experiences bring to bear alternative ontologies and epistemologies, ones that might challenge a new metanarrative of globalization and neoliberalism (Thurston, 2018)? Tim hardly alludes to this as a curricular possibility, but his simple act of giving voice to this noticing of his suggests a new way forward in "post-truth" social studies.

Tim's aim, and the purpose of the fact-evidence apparatus, is to make it impossible for an emotionally-charged "post-truth" kernel to squeeze through. And yet, doubt remains. After our interview, I watched Tim teach a lesson on the Armenian Genocide, a topic infested with "post-truth" rhetoric. Debates over the Armenian Genocide still rage today, infecting geopolitical and domestic relations. It is a topic imbued with emotion—each side possesses its own set of facts, dates, numbers, and convincing arguments. It was clear that Tim understood his lesson's unique

vulnerability to an unwelcome moment of "post-truth" during that period. As a response, he saturated his lesson with quantitative data. Dates, numbers of Armenians killed, the locations of those killings, more dates—it went on and on. Two photographs were shown, but they were blurry, and the students were kept busy working with their numbers, a corresponding graphic organizer, and inquiry prompts. There was no emotion in the room—only facts and the scratching of pencils on paper.

I am not aiming to question the reality of the Armenian Genocide; rather, I am hoping to highlight the all too common futility of exclusive and narrow appeals to *truth* and *facts* in matters of history and painful pasts. The "post-truth" insistence on the mythology of truth and an attendance to interiority in relation to traumatic histories might recalibrate the desired outcomes in teaching difficult knowledge. On the one hand, is it about getting the facts straight? If so, which facts? On the other hand, a "post-truth" focus might move beyond a dependence upon facts and evidence—it's privileging of interiority might cultivate a renewed acknowledgement of relationality and our inescapable vulnerability to one another in this world (Garrett, 2017). It is certain that a pedagogical shift of this type, one that is vulnerable to and welcoming of emotions and feelings, will be messy and initially scary. Still, I suggest that such an epistemological reorientation might be one more way forward for social studies curriculum in the "post-truth" era.

Constrained by Discourse

One promising way forward for social studies in the "post-truth" era is a confrontation with the mythology of truth—a clear-eyed look at truth's discursivity. Importantly, this focus requires caution and nuance—I am not suggesting that declaring, "Truth is a social construct!" will lead towards epistemological pluralism; rather, I am advocating for a rejection of the social scientific values that have been encroaching upon humanities curricula for decades (Heilbron, 2001). I suggest that the modernist, assembly-line, pedagogical values of validity, generalizability, and certainty have no place in a social studies classroom; rather, social studies curriculum in the "post-truth" era might center the lives of teachers and students—their lived experiences, their vast interiorities, and lessons that *listen* and *attend* to the ways in which we might live together in more fair and equitable ways.

The third method of defense against "post-truth" is paradoxical in its aims and results. I found that a troubling level of certainty is often attached to discussions of the discursive, as though discourses, the socially-constructed facets of culture, are simply another object of reductive study. In one example, Lauren began her lesson on the social construction of race by saying, "We all know race is a social construct, right? We're biologically the same…got it guys?" Her statement was met with weary nods and scattered murmurs of agreement. I wonder what it means to "know" that race is a social construct? What would this mean for one of Lauren's students—what can they do with this information? Does this realization implicate a white student in racial injustice and inequity? Is there political weight or capacity behind this realization? What ethical obligations might they uncover? Is Lauren's question grasping for anything more than either a mechanical head nod or an awkward acknowledgement of false consciousness? In short, Lauren's admirable appeal to discourse and the instability of social "truths" like race is taken too far; the uncertain and constructed becomes stable and ossified—the potential of "post-truth" as a disruptive force is mediated through a most ironic partner—discourse.

Lauren's predicament is relatable—I'm sure many social studies teachers have started lessons with similar statements (as have I). Unfortunately, appeals to discourse in the "post-truth" era put teachers in a double-bind. If there is no transcendent Truth (one tenet a disruptive embrace of "post-truth" might reinforce) and racial difference can't be located in the natural realm, then how might classroom conversations respond to the racist beliefs of teachers and students? Should they be silenced or ignored? In some cases, yes—I am not arguing for the airing of vulgar prejudice. Rather, I remain interested in the tactics we use, often unintentionally, to avoid the difficult knowledge that "post-truth" embodies—there is no easy answer, no easy truth. I am arguing that appeals to discourse and social constructivism *as certain* are two of those easier answers we might move beyond.

Returning to Latour (2007) and Barad (2007), a critique of social constructivism and its profound inability to respond to the painful materiality of racial violence doesn't mean race is *not* a social construct. Rather, I wonder what is ignored and brushed under the rug by simple appeals to social constructivism? How does the emotional core of "post-truth" figure into this? I would argue that social constructivist frameworks represent an outright denial of the embodied and materially-structured racial violence (e.g., de facto segregation) students notice. Race might be a construct, but what does that mean for how Lauren's largely-white students see racialized others? The very *real* optics of race might be theorized (Tuhkanen, 2009), as might the very *real* material embodiment of race (Fanon, 1952/2008). Moreover, these embrasures of materiality do not work from a deficit—like Latour (2007) and Barad (2007), these are products of salvaging the material body from the confines of language. Such moves towards materiality encourage critique themselves, as should any project worth its salt, but it is worth considering these particular limits of discourse before an appeal to the social-constructed nature of race becomes our only answer to police brutality and other racial violence.

To be clear, I am not arguing for a rejection of discourse and the foundational precepts of social constructivism. Racial categories are discursive—I am not disputing that. Rather, I am interested in generous critiques of poststructuralism and postmodernism, ones that are interested in both solidarity and a redemptive salvaging of the material body from totalizing conceptions of discourse (Bennett, 2010). Just as discourses might be essentializing, hegemonic, and overtly-transcendental, an attendance to *matter* provides new openings for critique. How might an ethics of materiality, one that seeks retribution for the real-world cuts, scars, and wounds inflicted on black and brown bodies through racism, be in a better position to adjudicate racist discourses? I suggest that these questions implicitly call for a more attentive epistemological framework, one that is more attuned to the experiences, emotions, and "truths" that have long been marginalized. Again, a disruptive embrace of "post-truth" proves useful here; epistemological pluralism and myriad truths have always been with us, but they are too often drowned out by the voices and opinions deemed *right* by a new metanarrative (Thurston, 2018)—"post-truth" provides an opportunity to finally *listen*.

After the bell rang, Lauren and I discussed her lesson—I asked her about her approach to teaching race and what pushback she might have received in the "post-truth" era. She responded by sharing a frustrating interaction with a student; she said—

> In this post-factual world, it's really hard to teach facts. I'm finding it very difficult to teach my race class because I will say things like, "Race is a social construct," and I'll have someone say, "No, the Bible says there are races," and I'm like, "Well, the Bible's not science, and we know this because of science and skin color has evolved," and I'll give

them a whole bunch of evidence about interaction with the environment and the sun, and they will say, "I don't believe in science." I don't even know how you deal with that. This is something new in teaching, and so I guess it's a challenge, but I don't know how to deal with that.

Many social studies teachers have been in Lauren's position. Clearly, the presence of religion in her classroom is troubling to her, and the affective intensity of this moment was palpable—I could sense the sharp pain inflicted on each side by both emotional responses. It is not just the student, but Lauren as well, who resorts to what was likely a painful attack on the student's faith and scripture. Likewise, Lauren experiences the pain that accompanies the rejection of knowledge in the teacher-student relationship. She is right to conclude that she doesn't know how to deal with this style of dialogue—I don't either, but shouldn't this be an ethical imperative? The inner-lives of our students will never evaporate, just like emotion(less) teaching and learning is a fantasy. Moreover, this harkens back to the paradoxes attached to discourse—Lauren's framing of social construction *as certain* is bound to fall short; her student's faith, along with their optical perception of racial difference, will not be stamped out; so then, what is to be done?

Perhaps another valuable outcome of a disruptive embrace of "post-truth" might be an acknowledgement and inclusion of the classroom's multiple truths. Lauren seems to allude to this when she says, "it's something new in teaching," and while it's not really new, she is correct to say that a cessation of continued resistance to the numerous emotions and opinions each student carries into class might be a radically new interpretation of "post-truth," one that gives up the project of disseminating the same old facts and mythology of truth and, instead, *listens* and pays attention to opinions like the one above. I am not suggesting this student's opinion is correct—again, a disruptive embrace of "post-truth" allows us to move away from the endless adjudication of right from wrong. Rather, it is the case that many teachers and students carry faith with them into the classroom. Braidotti (2008) is attuned to this dilemma, and, in turn, pushes us to think about religious difference positively—how might the emotional and opinionated differences of teachers and students, ones that are often disregarded as "post-truth," be included positively in a pluralistic classroom?

Discussion

It seems quite possible that "post-truth" will remain in bad company; all three teachers associated "post-truth" with the alt-right, "fake news," and "alternative facts," and none of them showed an interest in redemptive "post-truth" projects (Fuller, 2016; Horsthemke, 2017), ones that, similar to this project, argue that epistemological pluralization and disorderly confrontations with the mythology of truth might be useful, even radical, methods of disruption—tools of destabilization upon the ever-encroaching social scientific values of validity, generalizability, and certainty into the humanities.

Teachers are fearful of "post-truth" and the emotional opinions attached to classroom disruptions. It seems that futile attempts to eradicate emotions, beliefs, and opinions from social studies classrooms will lead towards the continuation of rote, skills-based lessons in joy-less classrooms, and the reluctance to engage with the inner-lives of students will foster further classroom division. Furthermore, the mythology of truth stands strong in social studies, serving to validate a singular, onto-epistemological framework (Thurston, 2018) at the cost of countless

others, an act of ignorance and chutzpah that has led us to, among other catastrophes, the brink of ecological collapse. While this article argues the "post-truth" era might be reconceived as a time of onto-epistemological renewal, it is unlikely that a sea change in listening and attendance to the inner-lives of our neighbors is on the horizon.

This vein of skepticism was prevalent in my conversation with Brett, especially in our discussion regarding communication and the possibility of civil debate in the "post-truth" era. He said, "You know, there are just so many instances of diminished communication…a student says something is true, the other person doesn't trust the source they're getting it from, whether it's FOX News or whatever, and the conversation just ends." Brett's short anecdote rings true—a rupturing of communication many of us have witnessed, whether at school, work, the family dinner table, or on social media. While this article has argued in favor of unbridled, communicative engagements with emotional opinions and feelings, the "post-truth" era has also highlighted the extent to which the beliefs and opinions we hold are emotionally-cemented and immovable. So what gives?

Perhaps Latour (2004a), Butler (2001), and Kirby (2011) provide one way out of this debacle of collapsed communication and vitriolic critique. They encourage an engagement with "others more generously through interconnection…to avoid the more murderous maneuvers of dialectical reasoning that negate another's position as wrong in order to affirm our own position as right—as *the* one (and only) position" (Kirby, 2011, p. 83). This ethos of engaged critique aims to build *from* and *with* instead of *against*. It is more open to listening and attending to previously-silenced voices and epistemologies, a stance I argue is attuned to the disruptive potentials of the "post-truth" era. In addition, this abandonment of adjudicating right from wrong displays a willingness to *stay with the trouble* (Haraway, 2016), an admirable desire to exist within a state of entangled uncertainty—a refusal to settle for the false stability provided by facts, certainty, and other products of the mythology of truth.

This article presents several implications for future scholarship, projects that might continue to grapple with the entanglements between social studies curriculum, "post-truth," and the interiorities of teachers and students. First, this article attends to teacher and student interiorities, a focus building from the work of Britzman (1998), Segall and Garrett (2013), and Garrett (2017). In addition, the potential for curricular engagement with student opinions builds from the work of Parker (2010) and Hess (2009). In this vein, future projects might consider social studies curriculum that is less interested in the dissemination of facts and "truths" about the past than it is with social studies' most important question: how might we better live in this world with one another? Garrett's (2017) work in this area is an important start; future projects might continue in imagining a more relational social studies pedagogy, one that is attuned to the vast inner-lives of students.

Second, future projects might utilize this article's reconfiguration of "post-truth" to further explore what I consider to be the double-sided crux of this article's argument—a false attachment and a phantasmatic sundering—the wayward emphasis on *certainty* in education and the bracketing of emotion from learning. While these points are crucial to my argument in this article, more work is needed in determining the entanglement between the mythology of truth, social studies, and the positivist values of the social sciences. What are teachers doing to combat an ever-increasing focus on skills-based social studies instruction?

In conclusion, this study has attempted to show that contemporary attempts to assign quantitative measures of certainty, learning results, and other data-driven methods of instruction have only contributed to a disavowal of classroom emotions and opinions. I argue that these

resistances have carved out an opening for a disruptive refiguring of "post-truth," a reconstruction that recognizes the mythology of truth and the vital importance of teacher and student emotions and opinions.

Conclusion

The "post-truth" phenomenon is far from new. It has always lingered beneath the modern artifices of social science—certainty, validity, generalizability, and other truth-making practices. This paper argues that moments of "post-truth" challenge these modern heralds of truth—their measurements refuse to align with the powerful reality of lived experiences. I suggest that these moments shine a light, however briefly, on the mythological nature of truth—the tools of modern social science are found lacking when applied to the vast, varied, and epistemologically-diverse realm we might call *a life*. Problematically, contemporary American schooling embodies these values of social science, operating under the guise of data-driven certainty and generalizable methods that will produce particular results—"post-truth" works against such aims, and I suggest that an open engagement with this tension might produce new openings in social studies education, ways forward that are more attuned to the inner-lives of teachers and students and less interested in doubling-down on modernist, assembly-line schooling that centers certainty and relegates emotion and opinion outside the classroom.

This article argues that "post-truth" itself is a symptom of the joyless, anti-aesthetic, and rote process we call learning. As I've repeated throughout this paper, the project of learning is far from a process that can be replicated on an assembly-line—we might be wise to consider which came first—"post-truth," the impossible-but-attempted extraction of emotion from schools, the intellectualization of difficult knowledge until there's nothing left but abstract information and numbers, or the reliance on unsophisticated structural explanations for violent societal problems of injustice? Lost in all of these is subjective experience—the inner-lives of teachers and students that don't have to continue down this punishing road. I suggest a serious and intentional re-inclusion of the emotional and affective components of the human in the interminable project of learning—a disruptive reconstruction of "post-truth" that rejects the mythology of truth and acknowledges the multiplicities of emotion and opinion in social studies classrooms. It is possible that an attending to the complex, conflicted, and vast inner-lives of teachers and students might rid us of some neurotic malaise.

Notes

1. All proper names are pseudonyms.

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Oh, How Quickly We Forget
Curriculum Theorizing in the "New" Post-truth Era

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THE CURRICULUM STUDIES FIELD is situated in a paradoxical time and place. Curriculum theorists currently work in a post-truth era wracked by resurgent authoritarianism throughout the world. Neoliberal globalization produces widening economic and political inequalities through accumulation by dispossession, starkly exemplified by Puerto Rico's fate in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. And, in an interesting twist on the gendered mind-body split, both intellect and empathy have been rendered superfluous. Institutional power cultivates an historical amnesia that dissolves the world's complexity "onto a flattened never-ending 'now'" (Pinar, 2012, p. 227). The outrage expressed about Russian meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, for example, elides discussion of the often violent subversion of other governments by the United States. The unwillingness to reflect on such a self-serving historical narrative suggests that we suffer a "psychosis of permanent war" in which we claim victimhood and disavow our complicity in creating "the very militancy we purport to fight" (Hedges, 2014, p. 48).

On the other hand, amid our current post-truth anti-politics, the discipline of curriculum studies generates provocative counter-narratives in an educational research field enthralled to improving learning outcomes through audit culture's "governmental demands for evidence-based practice" (Lather, 2007, p. 2). Curriculum theorizing in this post-truth era complicates the present, unearths subjugated histories and knowledges, and opens spaces where one can historically situate oneself in issues of critical importance to all humanity. Curriculum studies provides generative spaces in which a special kind of humanity can emerge in response to dark times (Arendt, 1968), embodied by those who speak and hear truth as an ethic of care for the self and the world.

This paper reflects my concerns about the current post-truth moment as a regime of veridiction (Foucault, 2008), which forms a system of governmentality that effects institutional power through bodies. I first situate my inquiry in Foucault's (2003, 2008) tactic of genealogy and theorization of biopolitics (Foucault, 2003, 2007) to trace the conditions of possibility that produced the present post-truth moment. Second, I grapple with my reconstruction of truth through two brief autobiographical reflections. Finally, I discuss *parrhēsia*, or "free-spokenness" (Foucault, 2011), as a technology of self-care and a politics of truth embodied through a hermeneutic process of subject formation and reformation. Importantly, one can speak freely and not embody *parrhēsia*. In a pejorative sense, *parrhēsia* includes speaking out of self-interest, to

manipulate others, or speech that cannot link discourse "to a principle of rationality and truth" (Foucault, 2011, p. 10). As the Greeks understood, *parrhēsia* embodied in the pejorative sense can endanger democracy, corrupt institutions, and produce demagogues. The resurgence of authoritarian populism throughout the world seems to illustrate a form of free speech that has produced a dangerous era of denuded truth.

Theory and Method

Genealogy: Erudite Knowledge and What People Know

Genealogy historically traces the production of regimes of truth and how they effect political power as specialized knowledges. Regimes of truth form totalizing narratives that support prevailing relations of institutional power. Genealogical analysis determines the regime of truth established at a given moment and uncovers local critiques of totalizing, elite discourses that dismiss certain histories, knowledge, and experience as unsophisticated or non-erudite.

> It is thanks to the reappearance of these knowledges: the knowledge of the psychiatrized, the patient, the nurse, the doctor, that is parallel to, marginal to, medical knowledge, the knowledge of the delinquent…it is the reappearance of what people know at a local level, of these disqualified knowledges, that made the critique possible. (Foucault, 2003, p. 7)

Genealogies, thus, form histories of present phenomena, in this case post-truth politics, to understand the points at which institutional discourses coalesce to exercise power over populations through specialized knowledges. I trace current post-truth politics to the development of sophisticated public relations and propaganda tactics during the early 20th century in the United States. Yet, genealogies also excavate subjugated knowledges and histories, which I demonstrate in my autobiographical reflections. Uncovering "the historical knowledge of struggles" against oppressive regimes of truth allows us to "make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics" (Foucault, 2003, pp. 8-9) and embody counter-conduct against unjust configurations of institutional power.

Biopolitics

Biopolitics reflects the concern of nation-states with security and governing by developing the state's human and economic resources. Biopolitical states exercise the power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death, which requires macro and micro-level seizures of bodies (Foucault, 1978/1990). First, anatomo-politics seeks to understand the physical functions and capabilities of bodies and how to harness and increase their capacities. Second, a macro-level biopolitics of the population conceptualizes the body as a defined species or nation. State-sponsored racism is essential to biopolitics to bond a national group together and fragment that group from others. Biopolitics, thus, reframes political struggles as internal or external biological threats to the population that must be eliminated to improve the species or race.

Biopolitics also expands the concept of racism. In addition to eliminating racialized others and sacrificing their own citizens to purify and strengthen the species or race, state-sponsored

racism also targets criminals, the mentally ill, and sexual "deviants" to rationalize their institutionalization and execution. The biopolitical "death function" purports that "the death of others makes one biologically stronger" insofar as one is a member of a "unitary living plurality" (Foucault, 2003, p. 258). Biopolitical death transcends physical killing to include political death such as mass incarceration, political and economic disenfranchisement, environmental racism, the isolation of Indigenous peoples on reservations, epistemic erasure, and the denial of the civil and political rights of LGBTQ people. Biopolitical mythologies, thus, delimit the norm from the abject, friend from foe, and the licit from the delinquent.

Synoptic Analysis and Autobiography

Synoptic analysis engages with texts in both documentary and worklike dimensions. The documentary situates a text "in terms of factual or literal dimensions" and conveys information about it (LaCapra, 1983, p. 30). The worklike dimension transforms a text by deconstructing and reconstructing it to create something that did not previously exist (LaCapra, 1983). The interplay between the documentary and the worklike reflects an intertextuality in the "relationship between text and context" (Jay, 1988, p. 53). I, thus, paraphrase seminal critical media studies texts to trace the development of public relations and propaganda techniques that have contributed significantly to the production of the current post-truth era.

I also use brief autobiographical reflections to demonstrate speaking truth as writing, a vital technology of the self (Foucault, 1988). Writing as self-enactment, an important part of my ontology of truth, is subjective in its self-focus and reflexivity and also a form of social expression that reaches out to engage the world (Pinar, 2011). I also borrow from *currere* the element of historicized distance, in which my lived experience becomes a data source for analysis and reimagination of the future (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman 1995). I, thus, seek distance from a collective identity to "write" myself outside of a "preapproved form" (Pinar, 2011, p. 102). The physical, temporal, affective, and intellectual places of which I write serve as spaces of defamiliarization from what I consider my home. That sense of estrangement, embraced lovingly, is where the possibility of an educative process lives (Wang, 2004).

A Brief Genealogy of Post-truth

Donald Trump's presidency is associated with a new post-truth era defined by the newspeak of "alternative facts" and "fake news." But the late American playwright Steve Tesich (1992), reflecting on the 1991 U.S. War against Iraq, expressed grave concern about post-truth in a *Nation* essay:

> All the dictators up to now have had to work hard at suppressing the truth. We, by our actions, are saying that this is no longer necessary, that we have acquired a spiritual mechanism that can denude truth of any significance. In a very fundamental way we, as a free people, have freely decided that we want to live in some post-truth world. (p. 13)

Tesich (1992) concluded that awaiting us on the other side of the mirage of the U.S. as a military superpower would be a "monster with a human face…to inform us with whom we have been

collaborating" (p. 14). Perhaps President Trump is the "monstrous" embodiment of the post-truth era, but I am concerned that an ahistoric presentism (Pinar, 2012) that interprets figures like Trump and phenomena like post-truth as new or an aberration will obfuscate the conditions of possibility of the present. Historicizing and locating oneself in the past and the present to reimagine the future, a core tenet of post-Reconceptualization curriculum theorizing, is essential to understand, counter, subvert, and perhaps transcend this post-truth era.

Shortly after the 2016 presidential election, I reread *It Can't Happen Here* by Sinclair Lewis (1935) and found his Depression-era novel about the fascistic rise of Berzelius "Buzz" Windrip timely. Lewis depicted an American public both incredulous and welcoming of a populist dictator, all in the name of national restoration and security. The "Fifteen Points of Victory for the Forgotten Men," Windrip's *Mein Kampf*-like blueprint to make America great again, *Zero Hour*, the subversion and cooptation of the press and courts, and Windrip's armed militia, the "Minute Men," resonated uncannily. Lewis (1935), through his fictional, devoted communist, Karl Pascal, incisively characterized Windrip as the inevitable product of a rotten system:

> Altogether too easy to explain everything just blaming it on Windrip…. Why, Windrip's just something nasty that's been vomited up. Plenty of others still left fermenting in the stomach—quack economists with every sort of economic ptomaine! No, Buzz isn't important—it's the sickness that made us throw him up that we've got to attend to. (p. 110)

Karl characterized the focus on Buzz Windrip as a distraction from a diseased system. It seems that Donald Trump is similarly distracting many Americans from a system in which, as Karl asserted, there are plenty of others still fermenting.

Reading *It Can't Happen Here* reminded me that, like today, the early twentieth century witnessed a struggle for truth that accompanied many social upheavals. Progressive journalists publicized predatory business practices and the plight of the working class and questioned commonsense assumptions about free enterprise capitalism. Progressive elites initially viewed the public as literate, engaged, and necessary to democratic life and thought publicizing corporate corruption, graft, inequality, and brutal working conditions might ignite a social reform movement (Ewen, 1996). But Progressive publicity quickly morphed into public relations and propaganda tactics to engineer consent (Bernays, 1947). The emergence of the social sciences convinced many Progressives that a benevolent elite could socially engineer an orderly, efficient society, and they regarded democracy as an inconvenience. Lippmann (1922/1997) foresaw the persuasive power of public relations techniques:

> Persuasion has become a self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government. None of us begins to understand the consequences, but it is no daring prophecy to say that the knowledge of how to create consent will alter every political calculation and modify every political premise. (p. 158)

Lippmann (1927/1993) also denigrated the public as "spectators of action" who should be put in their place "so that each of us may live free of the trampling and the roar of the bewildered herd" (p. 145).

Progressive intellectuals like Lippmann, thus, contributed to, as Lasch (1996) concludes, a revolt of the elites against the public:

> At best public debate was a disagreeable necessity not the very essence of democracy but its "primary defect"…. Lippmann had forgotten what he learned (or should have learned) from William James and John Dewey: that our search for reliable information is itself guided by the questions that arise during arguments about a given course of action. It is only by subjecting our preferences and projects to the test of debate that we come to understand what we know and what we still need to learn. (pp. 169-170)

Early Progressive intellectuals had illuminated threats to democracy like monopoly capitalism, political corruption and graft, and abysmal working conditions, which generated support for organized labor, women's suffrage, and political and economic reforms. But increased working and middle-class hostility toward industry threatened social disintegration in the increasingly conservative minds of Progressive elites (Ewen, 1996). As print media became profitable through advertising, corporate consolidation quickly ensued. The reconfiguration of Progressive media as sensationalist, tabloid journalism driven by advertising revenue set the stage for a media model that has remained remarkably stable as a propaganda platform. The "propaganda filters" identified by Herman and Chomsky (1988)—corporate consolidation, advertising, reliance on state officials and "experts" for information—remain evident today.

Progressive intellectuals, thus, pioneered public relations techniques to manufacture news and to create, study, and manipulate various publics. Advertising, for example, has built a consumer culture that fragments people along demographic lines, focuses consumers on personal gain, and diverts attention from challenging authority (Chomsky, 2016). Perhaps no better example of the effectiveness of public relations and propaganda exists than war. President Wilson, for example, recruited Progressive journalist George Creel to head the Committee on Public Information (CPI). The CPI, which Creel called the "House of Truth," was Wilson's propaganda bureau that successfully sold World War I to the public with marketing pitches like "Make the World Safe for Democracy," deployed local business and community leaders to speak in favor of the War, used academics to write pro-war pamphlets, published its own newspaper, and created a 24-hour news cycle. While the CPI marketed the War with ideals of freedom and democracy, the Espionage and Sedition Acts suppressed dissent against the War and even criminalized criticism of the Wilson Administration.

The CPI set a precedent that has informed every U.S. military escapade since World War I. Public relations and propaganda, often based on lies such as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident and weapons of mass destruction, have manipulated the public into supporting U.S. militarism. The U.S. "War on Terror," begun in 2001, has also facilitated a dangerous erosion of our civil and political liberties. On the eve of World War I, Wilson used the Espionage Act to imprison Eugene Debs for making an anti-war speech in Ohio. The Bush and Obama Administrations used that same Espionage Act to prosecute and imprison whistle blowers like Chelsea Manning, John Kiriakou, and Reality Winner. Edward Snowden, still in exile after he revealed National Security Agency bulk data collection operations, may never be able to return to the United States. Figures like Debs and Snowden demonstrate the danger of a political system that withholds so much information from the public. Such opacity introduces great difficulty in determining the veracity of the truth claims made by the state and obfuscates the biopolitical nature of the propaganda that impels us to support militarism. The "War on Terror," for example, has created the terrorist from an assemblage of biopolitical fears: a perversely raced, gendered, sexualized Other who threatens the survival of a carefully-defined social body that comprises the "homeland" (Puar, 2007).

Demographic technologies have subverted democracy by targeting specific groups with messages they want to hear to generate and amplify group hostilities (Ewen, 1996). Social rationalization-fragmentation is an effective biopolitical tactic, with perhaps no better current example than the use and abuse of Facebook, which markets itself as a worldwide social network that connects people. But the platform's real purpose is collecting and selling user data, and Facebook has been hijacked by myriad political entities to deliver specific content to well-defined demographic groups. In addition to the misinformation spread through Facebook during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Facebook has been implicated in the spread of propaganda during the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom and the rise of authoritarian governments in India, the Philippines, Kenya, Poland, Hungary, and Indonesia (Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

With more than two billion users globally, Facebook suffers three problems: the spread of information "pollution"; the amplification of content that registers strong emotional reactions; and the "filter bubble" created by an algorithmically-driven platform that rewards users with more of what they like and narrows their fields of vision (Vaidhyanathan, 2018). Facebook collects detailed user data with which to classify and manipulate users who receive affirmation based on their "likes" and "shares." Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and other technology elites embody a techno-fundamentalist ethos, and like past elites, their hubris regarding their expertise feeds a libertarian belief that they should be free to engage in for-profit social engineering without public scrutiny or political accountability. Techno-fundamentalism has infiltrated schools as well (Pinar & Grumet, 2015), which reduces education to technologically-mediated schooling. Technology also facilitates panoptic data collection, which constructs a "meticulous archive" (Foucault, 1977/1995, p. 189) that focuses a normalizing gaze on students and teachers alike. Often punitive technologies, such as high-stakes standardized assessments and fatally-flawed value-added measures (VAM) of teacher effectiveness (Berliner, 2014), actually depoliticize education issues and decision making processes by providing a veneer of scientific objectivity absent subjective context.

Science denial, notably about climate change, is certainly part of our post-truth dilemma. So, too, is the proliferation of scientific-sounding but empirically flawed reports produced by corporate-funded think tanks, which form the basis for much education legislation and policy. The suppression of scientific information by the tobacco, fossil fuel, and pharmaceutical industries about the known dangers of their products further exacerbates the contentiousness around the language of science and truth. The politics of truth have certainly assumed greater visibility in the Trump era. How might we contribute to new politics that reconstruct the spiritual mechanism that, as Tesich (1992) suggested, denudes truth of any significance?

A Personal Politics of Truth

Part of the spiritual mechanism necessary to seek truth lies in the capacity to reconstruct and share my understanding of myself and the world as an ethic of care. I, therefore, reflect on my struggle for truth through two brief autobiographical reflections. In the first, I return to Okinawa, where I was stationed while in the Marines. In the second, I reflect on a day spent at Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Both, as Wang (2004) notes, were places of estrangement from myself and from what I consider to be my country.

The Long Nightmare of Okinawa

As a young man of 18, I romanticized the military out of ignorance of its reality. My father, a Navy veteran, had lost his father and an uncle to World War II. After he left the Navy, my father worked for a defense contractor where exposure to asbestos eventually killed him as well. When I enlisted in the Marines, though, I felt invincible. The Reaganomic fairy tale that we could have guns and butter and that lower taxes on the rich would trickle down to everyone else became a regime of truth that still hypnotizes many. Reagan's agenda to rehabilitate the U.S. military's image after Vietnam also resonated with my naiveté about military culture.

The romance abruptly ended when I arrived in San Diego late one November night for basic training, replaced with dirt, sweat, sleep deprivation, physical abuse, and constant "mind games." The majority of my platoon were young men of color, mostly Latinos and African Americans from Southern California and the Southwestern United States. There were also a few older recruits who had joined the Marines because the military was the only company hiring during the recession early in Reagan's presidency. Over the years, I've realized that my partial truth about the military, and much else, starkly differed from theirs. As a white, middle-class boy, I chose to enlist, but many of my buddies enlisted with their backs to the wall. Slick military marketing appealed to their self-interest—a steady paycheck, medical care, travel, maybe some college—while it also demanded the perversely patriotic *quid pro quo* of self-sacrifice.

I spent most of my eight years in the Marines overseas, and like many, I served on Okinawa. Military indoctrination consisted of propaganda—"peace is our profession"—woven together by Kubrick-like caricatures to justify the long-term "benevolent" U.S. colonization of Okinawa. As elsewhere in its "potentially ruinous global empire of bases" (Johnson, 2010, p. 184), my country had transformed Okinawa into a place where everyone constantly encounters the United States. Jet and helicopter noise, the stench of turbine fuel, convoys, artillery fire, the sex "industry," an economy that catered to the colonizer, and agreements that established extraterritorial legal protections for U.S. troops made Okinawa an imperial plaything.

My encounters with Okinawan people helped me to see myself, my country, and the world differently. I learned that Okinawa had, like Hawai'i, once been an independent kingdom that had been overthrown and annexed. The Japanese government had sacrificed Okinawa during World War II to avoid a full-scale military invasion. After the war, Okinawa had again been sacrificed to minimize the number of American troops stationed on mainland Japan. The U.S. government declared Okinawans who resisted the occupation communists, deported them, and built bases on the stolen land.

I left the Marines at age 26 to study political science and Japanese history, language, and literature and meandered toward becoming a high school teacher and education professor. One of my political science professors introduced me to the work of Chalmers Johnson, a former Navy officer, CIA analyst, and Asia scholar. As I followed his scholarship critical of the post-9/11 U.S. Empire, Johnson's (2004) brief summary of U.S. conduct on Okinawa further contextualized and clarified my understanding of my role as a U.S. Marine on Okinawa:

> From 1945 to 1972, the United States held on to the island as a colony directly governed by the Pentagon. During this period, the 1.3 million Okinawans became stateless, unrecognized as citizens of either Japan or the United States, governed by an American lieutenant general. They could not travel to Japan or anywhere else without special documents issued by American military authorities. Okinawa was closed to the outside

world, a secret enclave of military airfields, submarine pens, intelligence facilities, and CIA safe houses. Some Okinawans who protested these conditions were declared probable Communists and hundreds of them were transported to Bolivia, where they were dumped in the remote countryside of the Amazon headwaters to fend for themselves. (Johnson, 2004, p. 199)

With years of distance, the edifice of the "truth" to which I had clung that my country is a force for freedom, democracy, or even security has disintegrated. Indeed, my subjective reconstruction is similar to that of Major General Smedley Butler, one of the heroes we Marines were taught to worship. Butler's role as a vocal anti-war activist and critic of capitalism when he left the Marines after 33 years, however, didn't fit the Marines' curricular regime of truth. Butler concluded in 1935:

I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I helped make Mexico…safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street…. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested. (p. 40)

Butler's (1935/2003) characterization of war as a "racket" sold to the public as "beautiful ideals" like "make the world safe for democracy" (p. 35) presaged Eisenhower's 1961 warning about the military-industrial complex. Today's post-truth war racket, similarly marketed with beautiful ideals, facilitates the bipartisan flow of money "into what is laughably called 'national security'" (Englehardt, 2018, p. 1). The failed "War on Terror" consumes enormous financial, human, and spiritual resources, and sophisticated regimes of truth with terrible histories—kill the Indian, save the man; American Exceptionalism; Manifest Destiny; make the world safe for democracy; the axis of evil—continue to fuel the U.S. militarism that may reduce the United States to an "empire of nothing at all" (Englehardt, 2018, p. 5). The "War on Terror" has also produced a nearly religious deference to the military that has circumvented critique and dissent. The U.S. National Football League starkly illustrates the dissonance between military-funded "patriotic" displays and the dissent of black players who kneel during the national anthem to protest police violence against people of color. Analyses of our violent history often elide the imbrication of white supremacy with militarism and capitalism. Working for four years in South Dakota confronted me with that aspect of the American Empire.

Wounded Knee

Education scholarship has often presented Native American communities through voyeuristic, damage-centered research (Tuck, 2009). Scholarship based on such logics of extraction forms a regime of truth that "privileges discrete, fully knowable entities that remain consistent across time and space, absent…material context" (Kuntz, 2015, p. 44). Indigenous scholars have, however, created counter-narratives of survivance that portray Indigenous "active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victimry" and create "an active presence, more than the instincts of survival, function, or subsistence" (Vizenor,

2008, p. 11). As with my experience on Okinawa, my encounters on Pine Ridge opened spaces in which I reconstructed many truths to which I had long been enthralled.

I had been to Pine Ridge, home of some of my students and colleagues, several times while working in South Dakota, but as I prepared to leave the State for a new job, I returned to Wounded Knee alone. As I drove West across South Dakota one Friday morning in December 2014, I noticed, more acutely this time, the signage along Interstate 90 that conveyed a regime of truth that Takaki (2008) called the "Master Narrative of American History."

> According to this powerful and popular but inaccurate story, our country was settled by European immigrants, and Americans are white…. Not to be "white" is to be designated as the "Other"—different, inferior, and unassimilable. (p. 4)

Interspersed with advertisements for car dealers and farm equipment were signs that professed the sanctity of life and the ruin of sin on land where white Christians nearly exterminated the buffalo, massacred the tribes, and stole land and resources long held in common through force and fraud. To complete the deculturalization (Spring, 2009) of the tribes, Indian boarding schools effected the family separation policy of that time and place. The Master Narrative is a myth of raw power: a white, straight, "exceptional" Christian nation bequeathed by a loving and vengeful God to hard-working pioneers who "civilized" the Indians, spread the false religion of rugged individualism and private property rights, and put the "idle" land to "productive" use. And, our "Manifest Destiny" fantasies, through the alchemy of neoliberal globalization and military Keynesianism, have only expanded as we have declared ourselves the world's lone superpower.

After about seven hours, I arrived on Pine Ridge. That early December afternoon was warm, sunny, and accompanied by the ubiquitous "breeze" that crosses the plains. The landscape east of the Missouri River, rationalized by agribusiness and colonized with genetically modified commodity crops, had given way to bluffs that reached skyward as living, historical texts. As I drove through the reservation, I stopped often to survey the terrain against the December sky.

There are nine reservations in South Dakota, and nearly 10 percent of the population is Native American. Pine Ridge, located in southwestern South Dakota, borders Nebraska to the south and is not far from the eastern border of Wyoming. Red Cloud, who led the Lakota people onto what became Pine Ridge after signing the Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868 and who lies buried on the Reservation, led a combined force of Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho in what the U.S. Army called Red Cloud's War between 1866 and 1868. In December 1866, Red Cloud's forces dealt the Army its worst defeat—until the massacre of Custer in 1876 at Little Big Horn—when they wiped-out Captain William Fetterman's entire detachment.

Juxtaposed with the memory of Red Cloud is Whiteclay, Nebraska. With a population of about 15, Whiteclay lies just across the southern border of Pine Ridge where the sale of alcohol is illegal. Whiteclay has long been infamous for an economy reliant solely on a couple of stores that sold about 13,500 individual cans of beer per day to Native Americans. In April 2017, after years of automatic renewals, Nebraska revoked the liquor licenses of Whiteclay's beer stores, which remain closed as of this writing (Hammel, 2018). Sadly, the state's decision to revoke those licenses reflects a concern with Whiteclay's reputation as it seeks economic redevelopment (Hammel, 2018). Befitting another component with the racialized and classist "personal responsibility" regime of truth, the responsibility for dealing with the Reservation's alcohol problem, created by whites who have profited handsomely from it, rests with the victims.

I didn't sleep well that night. Early Saturday morning, I left the Lakota Prairie Ranch and drove the 30 miles to Wounded Knee. As I emerged from my car in the monument's deserted parking lot, a leaden sky and biting wind had overtaken the previous day's sun and warmth. I stood alone before a sign in the parking lot inscribed on both sides with the story of the massacre. As I surveyed the killing field, I remembered a photograph of Chief Big Foot, whose Lakota name was Spotted Elk, lying frozen in the snow where he had been killed. He had been sick with pneumonia at the time of the massacre and had been leading the people to Pine Ridge where the U.S. Army intercepted them and where they surrendered and set-up camp. My gaze followed the wind toward the monument where a Christian church and cemetery also stand, and I recalled photos I had seen of the mass burial of the massacred Lakota people by a party of white civilians escorted by Army troops a few days after the massacre. To my right as I faced the monument, I saw a building with a sign that read: "Holocaust Museum at Wounded Knee." The signs I had passed on I-90 that professed the sanctity of life flashed to mind.

As the wind rustled the grass, I crossed the road and walked around the locked museum building. Grates covered the building's windows, and the roof, mostly plywood and some corrugated metal, was secured in a few spots with large rocks or chunks of cement. I climbed the small hill, stood at the memorial's entrance for several minutes, and wondered whether or not I should enter. I looked down onto the massacre site and visualized the Hotchkiss guns that had rained canister shot on defenseless Lakota men, women, and children, as well as some of the Army's own troops. The technologies of death ubiquitous in our history—from the Hotchkiss guns used at Wounded Knee to today's drones—have rendered others' lives cheap and killing easier and more anonymous. As I walked through the arch, topped by a Christian cross, toward the memorial to the massacred Lakota, I saw only paradox.

The weathered monument to the dead rose from the ground inside a chain-link fence. Although the fence had a gate, I remained outside and read through the list of names carved into the monument, which began with Chief Big Foot. I turned toward the entrance and saw that both pillars that supported the arch had been inscribed with an historical counter-narrative. The pillar to the left had been painted over in black. Undeterred, the anonymous historian re-inscribed their truth, their survivance narrative, on the right pillar in hues of blue, green, and black (See Figure 1 below).
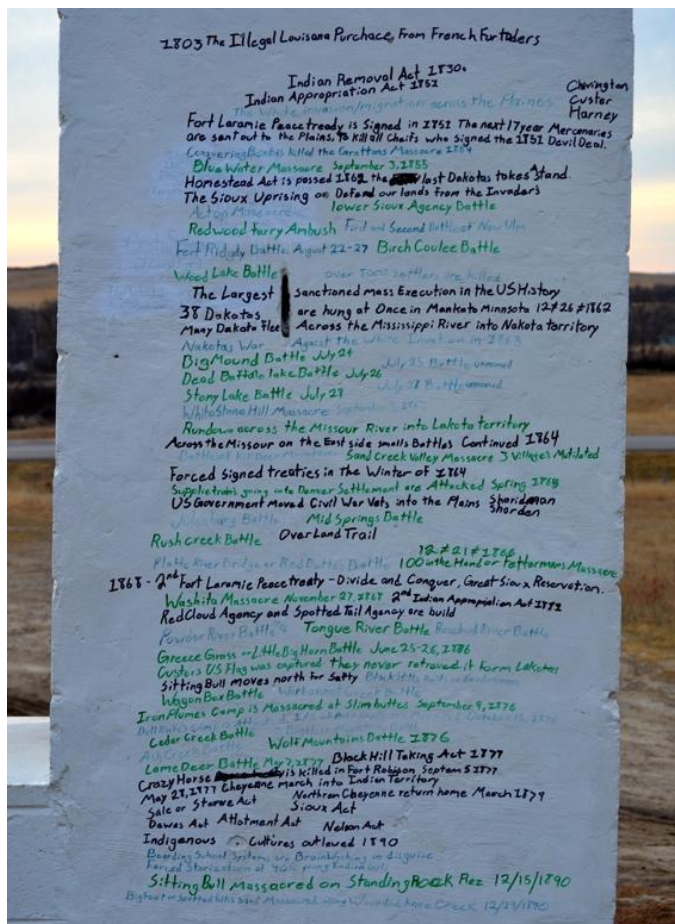
Figure 1. An anonymous historical counter-narrative at Wounded Knee

The timeline reminded me of the grievances enumerated by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence as justification for revolution against Britain. A critical history confronted me: Jefferson's illegal Louisiana Purchase; the Fort Laramie Treaties; the largest mass execution in U.S. history of 38 Dakota men on December 26, 1862, ordered by the "Great Emancipator" Abraham Lincoln; the murder of Sitting Bull at Standing Rock; the capture of Custer's flag; the Dawes Act; Sand Creek; Big Foot, Crazy Horse, and Chivington. The list seemed more compelling than Jefferson's and asserted the writer's existence and refusal to melt into the pot:

> I am visible—see this Indian face—yet I am invisible. I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot. But I exist, we exist. They'd like to think I have melted into the pot. But I haven't. We haven't. (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 86)

Wounded Knee simultaneously celebrates lives lived and commemorates the victims of unspeakable violence. It comprises Lakota traditions, Christianity, and Western modernity. Wounded Knee and Okinawa are two of the places where Baldwin's (1965/1998) reading of history whose force comes from "the fact that we carry it within us" and is "present in all that we do" (p. 723) became axiomatic. Seeing my country from a distance, both from Okinawa and Pine Ridge, and through others' eyes and histories has further exposed the value gap in which the lives and fortunes of white people are valued more than others (Glaude, 2016) and on which successive

regimes of truth, currently "Make America Great Again," have functioned. It has taken me years to begin to understand that.

Curriculum Theorizing as the Courage of Truth

In great pain and terror one begins to assess the history which has placed one where one is and formed one's point of view. In great pain and terror because, therefore, one enters into battle with that historical creation, Oneself, and attempts to recreate oneself according to a principle more humane and more liberating; one begins the attempt to achieve a level of personal maturity and freedom which robs history of its tyrannical power, and also changes history. (Baldwin, 1965/1998, p. 723)

Our post-truth era reflects a bundle of recurring historical motifs—anti-intellectualism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, rapacious capitalism, religious intolerance, nationalism, militarism, xenophobia, techno-fundamentalism, and the hubris of class elites. Curriculum theorizing in our post-truth times can open some of the complex dialogic spaces in which we as a nation and world might begin to speak and listen to each other and run the course toward finding truth together. Considering these dark times and looming existential crises associated with human impact on the biosphere, war, forced migration, and resource depletion, engaging in those complicated conversations will certainly be an act of courage. Perhaps the hope in this post-truth era lies in our recognition of the powerful, insidious propaganda technologies that manipulate and conceal truth, fragment us, and render us compliant to power.

In the United States, the Trump Presidency has made many historical paradoxes more visible. Curriculum theorizing in and against the post-truth era can contribute provocative counter-narratives through new genealogical histories of the present in which curriculum scholars illuminate the complex conditions of possibility of the current phenomena we experience. As I suggested above, a regime of truth comprised of a complex history of power relations and institutional public relations and propaganda technologies has helped produce our current post-truth anti-politics. Similarly, my autobiographical reflections illustrate the historicization of regimes of truth related to the biopolitics of U.S. militarism and my subjective reconstruction of those truths. Based on this inquiry into myself, it seems to me that most of the pressing social issues we face have emerged over long periods of time, and those issues, including post-truth, militarism, and the violence perpetrated against Native peoples, have not emerged through linear paths or in isolation. Importantly, dissent, resistance, and counter-conduct over time has been integral to those histories, which suggests, as Foucault (2007) asserted, that power relations are always in motion and contestable.

In these post-truth times, President Trump and his allies have spoken the language of racism, xenophobia, and white nationalism, but like Buzz Windrip, he has also deftly exploited the economic fears and distress of many who both major U.S. political parties have abandoned and promised security against nebulous biopolitical threats and to "make America great again." Troublingly, other national leaders, notably Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, have followed the same path, targeting LGBTQ people, Indigenous communities and their lands, and the poor while promising the restoration of a mythic, national greatness. None of these tactics are new. Trump's xenophobic, racist, neo-America-first rhetoric borrows from that pioneered in the 1930s by Nazi sympathizer

Charles Lindbergh, who in a 1939 article entitled *Aviation, Geography and Race*, urged the United States to rebuild its "White ramparts" to guard against "Mongol and Persian and Moor" (quoted in Stanley, 2018, p. xii).

Trump's rhetoric appeared in sharp contrast to globalist candidate Hillary Clinton. While Trump channeled his supporters' anger toward Muslim asylum seekers and immigrants, particularly from Mexico, Clinton, who helped reconfigure the Democratic Party as a center-right organization committed to neoliberalism, dismissed Trump's supporters as a "basket of deplorables." Hearkening back to Lippmann's characterization of the "bewildered herd," Clinton in one phrase denigrated and alienated large swathes of the public. And, in the context of the Progressive revolt of the elites, the Clinton campaign illustrated a system of governmentality that has come to define the moribund American left, in which allowable discourse must comply with elite, liberal-establishment orthodoxy.

Transcending the current post-truth era, thus, presents us with a significant challenge. Many throughout the world have lost confidence in the liberal democratic institutions that should mediate the social, political, and economic upheavals that have fueled resurgent authoritarian populist movements. Curriculum theorizing in the post-truth era might help create a new politics of truth through the enactment of a "pedagogical model of the public sphere" in which all interlocutors attempt to teach rather than impose their beliefs and explain their points of view "while working to understand others'" (Pinar, 2006, p. 8). I suggest that Pinar (2006) describes a *parrhēsiatic* space in which we embody the courage to speak truth through our work, particularly in historicizing and complicating issues crucial to all humanity.

The Courage of Truth

In his final series of lectures completed just a few months before his death, Foucault (2011) discussed *parrhēsia* as the embodiment of truth in how we live. Judith Butler (2005) characterizes *parrhēsia* as an act of publishing oneself in dialogic encounter with others, making oneself appear before others, and a public accounting of oneself as a form of action "that is already a moral practice and a way of life" (p. 126). Curriculum theorizing imbued with a *parrhēsiatic* ethic can create dialogic spaces in which we seek truth through our subjective reconstruction, to understand the conditions of possibility that form the problems of the present, and recover the complexity of subjugated knowledges, wisdom traditions, and histories. Foucault (2005, 2011) characterizes *parrhēsia*, or the *parrhēsiatic* game, as an aesthetic experience, an interlocutionary practice that requires the courage to both speak one's truth and listen to the truths of others, which carries the risk that one's truths and understanding of oneself, others, and the world are partial or erroneous. For me, *parrhēsia*, particularly as a technology of the self, privileges the importance of the Other, not as a foil by which to define myself, but as an interlocutor with whom I can dialogue to better understand myself, others, and my situation in the world. *Parrhēsia*, as an act of caring for the self, can help us situate ourselves in the world, connect us to the whole world, impel us to action, and set limits on the actions we take in the world (Foucault, 2005). Self-care impels us to act as subjects related to a human community that transcends the single plurality associated with biopolitics and encompasses humanity in its entirety.

Foucault (2011) discerned three features of *parrhēsia* that can inform our curriculum theorizing in an age of denuded truth. First, speak truth "without concealment, reserve, empty manner of speech, or rhetorical ornament which might encode or hide it" (Foucault, 2011, p. 10).

Second, speaking truth is a grave ethical act because we are bound to the consequences of our speech. Third, speaking truth involves risks, which include angering others and being confronted by others with the painful truth that our assumptions and beliefs are wrong. *Parrhēsia* is, thus, a "way of being which is akin to a virtue, a mode of action" (Foucault, 2011, p. 25) rather than rhetorical techniques that conceal meaning. In the current post-truth era, where free speech often resembles dogmatic battles of entitlement to opinions, flawed as they may be, a *parrhēsiatic* ethic of curriculum theorizing might resemble that described by Lasch (1996):

> It is the act of articulating and defending our views that lifts them out of the category of "opinions," gives them shape and definition, and makes it possible for others to recognize them as a description of their own experience as well. In short, we come to know our own minds only by explaining ourselves to others…. Argument is risky and unpredictable, therefore educational. Most of us tend to think of it (as Lippmann thought of it) as a clash of rival dogmas, a shouting match in which neither side gives any ground. But arguments are not won by shouting down opponents. They are won by changing opponents' minds— something that can happen only if we give opposing arguments a respectful hearing and still persuade their advocates that there is something wrong with those arguments. In the course of this activity we may well decide that there is something wrong with our own. (pp. 170-171)

Writing this paper, for example, has helped me, as Lasch (1996) notes, to give shape and definition to my experiences, better understand my own mind, reflect on the reconstruction of my previous misperceptions, and offer to others the possibility that they may recognize some aspects of my experience in their own lives. Curriculum scholarship in the post-truth era may also contribute to a politics of truth in which we narrate and embody truth through how we live and by listening to others' truths to understand, question, and subject our truths to ongoing self and social verification.

Ruminating on my past and the histories of the people and places I've encountered in the context of inquiry into the post-truth present has taught me that the search for and meaning of truth, long debated, is complex. As a curriculum scholar working to historicize the current post-truth phenomenon, I have begun to rethink my ontology of truth in terms of *parrhēsia* as a technology of the self, particularly through writing myself for others. I have also learned that truth can be manipulated through both the language of science and technologies of propaganda that create, filter, and restrict public discourse. The discourse of science has also been used to justify frightening biopolitical agendas, including eugenics and "race science," that were broadly accepted by political and academic elites. Likewise, fascistic emotional appeals like those currently seen in the United States and Brazil have historically proven just as dangerous. The search for truth requires both intellectual engagement and, as Wang (2004) suggests, the empathy to lovingly embrace the estrangement and alterity through which to engage with the educative processes of truth seeking. In the spirit of that ethic of care, curriculum theorizing in the post-truth era may help us to reconstruct ourselves and our world "according to a principle more humane and more liberating" (Baldwin, 1965/1998, p. 723).

What might curriculum theorizing in the post-truth present look like? One possibility, particularly relevant to address existential threats such as climate change, includes engagement with the epistemologies of the Global South. Reconstructing my lived experiences on Okinawa and at Wounded Knee exposed some of the partial and erroneous assumptions embedded in the social theories of the Global North and revealed connections inherent in common struggles of

seemingly disparate communities throughout the world, particularly in terms of environmental protection and peace. In post-truth institutions enthralled to the logics of neoliberal globalization, genealogical study of settler-colonialism, capitalism and military Keynesianism, forced human and animal migration, climate breakdown and environmental sustainability, and the persistent effects of coloniality and slavery could generate a more complex understanding of the conditions of possibility of the intersected global problems that demand our attention.

Another important aspect of the intellectual and emotional labor of curriculum theorizing in a post-truth age lies in remaining mindful of the possibility of creating our own systems of governmentality that could, inadvertently or not, descend into disciplinary policing of the difficult, long-overdue dialogues in which we must engage. We should remember the trap into which liberal intellectuals of the past such as Lippmann, Creel, and Bernays fell where they claimed the authorial voice of the expert social engineer and rendered the public superfluous to the demos.

Finally, one of the lessons I've learned from my experiences on Okinawa and Wounded Knee is that we in the Global North have become enthralled to violence as spectacle—events and actions that are "immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space" and erupt "into instant sensational visibility" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). But beneath the viral videos, consumerist distractions, and "alternative facts" that emanate from the U.S. White House lies a history of "incremental and accretive" slow violence, the "calamitous repercussions" of which play out "across a range of temporal scales" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). It has taken years for me to realize that I witnessed the results of slow violence on Okinawa and Pine Ridge. More importantly, I also learned of the histories of resistance against that violence. The intergenerational effects of climate change, environmental toxicity caused by industry and war, impoverishment, and the traumas of slavery and settler-colonialism continue to afflict people, the earth, and all its species. Yet, what Nixon (2011) calls the "environmentalism of the poor" (p. 4)—the environmental actions of those disproportionately affected by slow violence—also has a long history and is accelerating in response. From Standing Rock to Okinawa, from Flint to Puerto Rico, from the South American rainforests to the farmers of South Asia, the impoverished, colonized, and dispossessed have long embodied the courage of truth against a morbid capitalist-militarist regime of truth, the sand on which the American empire of nothing at all is built and into which it will inevitably sink. Considering the numerous existential crises we all face in the post-truth era, the role of curriculum theorizing has arguably never been more important.

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Shady Figures and Shifting Grounds for Re/Truthing
Channeling McLuhan's Posthuman

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Medium

ATUMULTUOUS RELATIONSHIP is taking place between the American presidency and its nation's media and is on display in front of the entire world no less. Its technologically mediated discourse is demonstrably rancorous, making for fraught terrain that antagonizes divisions exacerbated by frequent allegations of lying and misrepresentation lobbed between the establishment media and President Trump and his administration.

Donald Trump has proven to be a ubiquitous force in "technospace" owing to an unprecedented approach to his professional role as U.S. president that has been amplified by his particular brand of relationship with the American media. Experiencing a strong sense of his *mediated social presence*, these conditions indicate acclimatization to a rapidly changing environment during which humans have been slow to recognize the extent to which they coexist with nonhuman machines. Meanwhile, Trump and his administration hold a particular affinity for Twitter, presumably attracted to the tweet's brief, impactful nature and the immediate conveyance of its messaging directly from @realDonaldTrump to Americans and world citizens alike. These are among visible effects of the electric age permitting an instantaneity of information's release (McLuhan, 1964).

In conditions such as these, Twitter's global reach and sense of immediacy create a space of consequence rivaling network news' coverage of American presidential communications, while displacing traditional power relations. During technologically mediated coverage of roiling debates and divisive policies, American media are oft times preoccupied with reporting Trump's lack of presidential etiquette and various faux pas, among other manufactured dramas and exaggerated upheavals that distract our attention and fail to safeguard us from attending to far more consequential concerns. Political events of global import—among them America's withdrawal from various treaties and accords, thus, reneging on obligations to address climate change and

nuclear arms proliferation—call for multiple rationales: not only epistemological, but ontological, philosophical, and pedagogical.

Our interest in the educational implications of these circumstances has us delving into approaches conditioned by the posthuman, during which relationships between human and nonhuman actants are being more fully imagined. Herein, we do so by consulting a rare document co-written by Marshall McLuhan, a work that propels a consideration on media, technology, and education in the present day as riff. *City as Classroom: Understanding Language and Media* is a 40 year old high school media curriculum that McLuhan (McLuhan, Hutchon, and McLuhan, 1977a, 1977b) co-developed to sharpen the perceptions of Canadian teenagers when engaging their surroundings. McLuhan (1964) early recognized the effects of media and technologies when he posited that "all technologies are extensions of our physical and nervous systems," thereby challenging a basic humanist premise (still largely assumed today) that humans exist independently of their "tools" (p. 137).

We are intrigued by the profundity of McLuhan's often pithy pronouncements, his highly original approach to information, and his curricular strategies. In this present "Post-Truth Era," we suggest that failing to scrutinize media's effects leaves us vulnerable to imbibing polarizing binaries and being constantly distracted by frivolous narratives instead of grasping larger, far more consequential threats: a situation amounting to us leaning in closely to read mediated messages that are actually, in the words of McLuhan, "the stenciling on the casing of an atomic bomb" (McLuhan, 1969/1995, p. 238).

AI

Interactions with networked technologies and public platforms like Twitter, keep bumping up against Trump, who troubles widely held conceptions of what a world leader looks, sounds, and acts like. Holding a presumption regarding what an American president says or does, we compare Trump to this image of thought and the chaos and disorientation with which he is associated, particularly in regard to media. For example, he frequently alleges that the American media trades in "fake news." Is he merely identifying reportage that is "yellow journalism"? Or is he correctly identifying a territorialization of news corporations by "liberals" and corporate interests? Conjecturing posthuman veins, are relationships between humans and machines sufficiently developed to a degree permitting networked technologies to independently generate news items *outside* of human authorship? We are suggesting a world of the machines that is, to humans, still enigmatic.

Figure

A dramatic shift in *ground* across the American political and social landscape is taking place, the kind that happens when a *figure* such as Trump conducts himself in the media, including through Twitter. In describing approaches to navigating a changing world through media, McLuhan employed the concept of figure/ground to evaluate media and their effects: a pursuit in sharpening perceptions. When an object of interest becomes figure (the content), the ground is often overlooked. We have ourselves employed figure/ground analysis to better recognize that a traditionally accepted humanist lens as figure has largely precluded recognition of a posthuman

grounding that increasingly structures the conditions of the developed world's existence (Sharon, 2014). Western society may be presently disrupted by political events internationally; however, holding one's attention on both the figure *and* its (back)ground helps to better understand both the relationships between, and the properties of, mediated situations and meanings conveyed. A "Post-Truth Era" warrants educators' recognition that the ground, as "underlying structure," supplies the "conditions for experiencing any part that presents itself as figure" (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 14). When compelling figures "advance into the foreground," it is important to recognize their effect on perception and to balance relationships between the figure and their ground (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 9).

While figure and ground are constantly reconfigured amongst consumers of media preoccupied by their immediate environments, rapid developments such as technological change, the looming threat of environmental disaster, and militarization remind us that we are arguably on the brink. While Trump's political priorities are largely shared by supporters, even some of his opponents may hold quiet sympathy for particular issues: including protectionist and isolationist stances. The situation is further complicated by an accelerated concentration of American media ownership since telecommunications' deregulation in 1996, the corporate nature of which bears global importance. Alongside advertising, mainstream media's approaches are still often determined by the demographics of a generally aging television audience, homogenizing content to accommodate the news coverage preferences of its viewership, including talking points and panel discussions. There has been much upheaval throughout broadcasting as "alternative" news sources stream video content on platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, each requiring independent channels to enter contractual agreement and remunerative relationship before being reminded that, despite their "independence," they must uphold the corporation's terms of agreement lest they risk being disciplined for disrupting their platform hosts' advertising revenue streams.

McLuhan

McLuhan's work established humanist theories in a radically new way by "explor[ing] the contours of our own extended beings in our technologies," while creating space for understanding more and differently (McLuhan, 1964, p.7). Although situated in a humanist tradition of the mid-20th century and having never witnessed either the personal computer or the Internet, McLuhan's prescience ensures that posthumanists recognize him as having cleared space for academia to theorize technologies. Malabou (2017) suggests that, by corresponding technological development with an "extension of the nervous system to the very limits of the world" (p. 48), McLuhan (1964) recognized the Anthropocene when he wrote:

> After three thousand years of explosion, by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the Western world is imploding. During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned. (p. 5)

McLuhan held serious concerns about "the disaster civilization faced if mankind could not learn to use new media wisely" (Gordon, 2010, p. 102). We can only guess the nature of his sense

of foreboding; however, what most troubles us now are the ecological ill effects wrought by rampant capitalism, material consumption, and technological conditions that permit facilitation of our exacting, destructive whims. Haraway (2016) asserts that, as proposed geological epoch, the Anthropocene too anthropocentrically bespeaks an innate speciesism of "human exceptionalism," disproportionately focusing on threats posed to humans and particularly the human concerns of those inhabiting developed regions and monetarily wealth**y** classes (p. 49). In addition to the Anthropocene, Haraway (2016) introduces her conceptualization of additional "timescapes." The Capitalocene is a timescape during which capital is recognized as the force driving relentless resourcing of the earth by means of *exterminationist extraction* (Haraway in O'Neill-Butler, 2016), like the Anthropocene, a boundary event, for its projected short duration. The Chthulucene is conceptualized as a timescape—past, present, future—comprising mutually reciprocal relationships as entwined, *tentacular* existences of all species in a reconfigured world (Haraway, 2016).

City as Classroom

In the mid 1970s, McLuhan co-wrote a media textbook for Canadian high school students: *City as Classroom: Understanding Media and Language* (McLuhan et al., 1977a). Recognizing that, in a technologically mediated society, knowledge increasingly resides outside the schools that had once been physical hubs of information, McLuhan et al. (1977a) sought to pose questions within school walls that then could be explored outside them. Committed to honing media informed perceptions about the city as a "changing environment," McLuhan et al. operationalised the early twentieth-century psychological work on figure/ground analysis by Edgar Rubin as a study in structural relations.[1] The authors contended that balancing relationships between figures and their ground will expand understandings of the situations with which one is confronted (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 9). Let us demonstrate figure/ground using a familiar urban scene: that of congested traffic in which vehicles will idle, crawl, briefly accelerate, frequently brake. The motor car, a quintessential symbol of modernity and human ingenuity, typically dominates one's attention and, therefore, acts as *figure*. Backdrop to the motorized vehicle, however, are the countless entities that support the automobile's existence and function: gas stations, highways, traffic lights, parking lots, toll booths, and signage, etc. (Marchand, 1989). Moreover, the automobile's *ground* includes the extent to which modern society is arranged and habituated around its use, including motorists' acceptance that to travel by the motorcar is to be subjected to traffic jams. Figures are altered by their ground, which is never static.

We suggest that the *ground* of the United States' once familiar domains is experiencing seismic shifts, a situation exacerbated by mercurial relationships between the Trump administration and the nation's establishment media, locked in disputation about what is purported to be "truth" and "fake." McLuhan, Hutchon, and McLuhan (1977b) asserted that by "concentrat[ing] on the structure of a situation, we can assess problems more realistically and change the situation or our response to it" (p. 10), surely an advisable course of action in seemingly chaotic times.

Twitter

How far are post-truth narratives being advanced through a U.S. president's Twitter activity, his repeated allegations of "fake news," and the scrutiny these accusations bring upon the journalistic practices of American establishment media? In Trump's tweets, how might he be interchangeably positioned as figure, ground, or medium? These questions reflect features of a new era in media, its reporting, and milieu, all demonstrating the observation by McLuhan that "the clearest way to see through a culture is to attend to its tools for conversation" (Postman, 1985/2006, p. 8).

Tweeting, retweeting, and hashtagging engage Twitter users in co-authorship that reconfigures traditionally regarded roles of writer, audience, content, subject, and object. Readers are themselves co-opted into writing Trump's messaging as Twitter mines information about who views each tweet, where the cursor is placed and clicked, for what duration it rests, to whose account it is retweeted, which hashtags are added, what commentary is made, etc.

The use of analogies between information networks and vehicular traffic seems apt. Automobility, so intimately tied to a North American sense of freedom, is situated on networks of roads and freeways that, when gridlocked, may cause a level of human frustration, even rage, that is demonstrated in the kind of violent scenes at times reported in the media.

When Trump tweets late at night, he is riffing with technology, with available information, with his Twitter followers, with his thinking, *and* with the Twitter publishing mechanism itself. His declarative statements are setting conditions that are in turn riffed in media reports and retweets, online discussions, news programming, late night television monologues, and comedy skits. Some of his tweets, which presumably (although not necessarily) feature his own, uncensored words, bear the immediacy and environmental impact of some kind of detonation within and well beyond Twittersphere. Any resulting consternation, excitement, upheaval, and validation experienced by members of the U.S. electorate, even global citizens, fully demonstrates the prescience of McLuhan's iconic phrase, coined over a half century ago: "the medium is the message."

Trump's early penchant for retweeting the opinions of others, including nefarious individuals and groups such as David Duke and *Britain First*, provides the President opportunity to present (even seemingly endorse) controversial positions without personally stating them—acts of collaborative activity, engaged however briefly. The "ground" (be it human personalities, corporations, demographics, or algorithms) constantly shifts beneath "shifty" figures (*again* human personalities, corporations, demographics, and algorithms) constantly altered by their conditions. *Hidden ground* exists as the entire political, economic, and AI apparatus that is required to establish conditions on which Twitter activity is conducted, becoming so familiar that it tends to be overlooked—users having "stopped paying it any conscious attention" (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 19).

Algorithms

On city streets, a triangulation of cell phone data, Wi-Fi signals, and GPS provides a great deal of information to data providers, while Google and Apple services have been able to harness this data to determine traffic speed, areas of congestion, and make recommendations about how to navigate adverse conditions. Vehicles now routinely have sensors to automatically parallel park,

move the car out of harm's way, protect pedestrians, avoid lane drift, etc. Roadways increasingly have sensors that monitor traffic flow and adjust the regulation of stoplights and automated sensors regulating variable speed zones according to weather conditions. Some emerging networked technologies use Bluetooth/Wi-Fi and microwave technologies to aggregate more specific information about who is travelling where, while collecting information from roadside and overhead monitors that feed back into big data systems. The smooth flow of traffic is figure, while the backdrop is a massive collection of data that is being catalogued for all types of current and future purposes, many of which were unthinkable a relatively short time ago.

Transportation related technologies possess features that are shared with Trump's use of social media. Trump's tweets aren't simply unidirectional communications injected hypodermically into the veins of Twitter, paralleling the communications of broadcast television. Like the conceptualization of *automobility* as the AI guided aggregate of car-driver-road, here we think of Delanda's (2010) man-horse-bow assemblage. Trump's Twitter compositions end up being an amalgam of tweeter-Twitter-tweet, increasingly entwined in such a way that the boundaries of each role are no longer easily identifiable. Once Trump's tweets become further encoded with tracking data, visual framing, and comments by other users, the texts (in the broadest sense) accumulate and morph machine data in previously unimaginable ways.

Upon tweeting, Trump and his team have immediate access to reports indicating where the tweets were posted, retweeted, and what feelings readers attached to these messages. This contrasts earlier forms of opinion polling whereby reactions to a U.S. president's controversial platforms were collected after their unveiling. The results took days, even weeks, to assemble. There is now immediate access to sentiment data provoked by any message, including the broad demographics of gender and location. Trump and his administration can easily renege, shift, or pursue positions within a few hours of posting any given message on Twitter, in effect employing a "try before you buy" method of laying out policy shifts and initiatives. Creating a continuous cycle of text, this feedback informs how the tweet is further circulated in other media such as Facebook. The process continually adds or subtracts data from the transmission, the reader, the writer and the medium, all contributing to the way that Twitter exists in an almost virtually real world.

In the Twittersphere, we participate in what is an often chaotic social media version of an "information superhighway": tweets blast like car horns on digital roads, political pundits erratically careen and glance off one another, and bottlenecks form in areas of high traffic circulation that are also frequented by passersby slowing to rubberneck at any spectacle.

Surround

Reliance on humanistic, binary claims of "truth" and "fake," or "lies" and "false," restrict perceptions by being "either/or" propositions that keep us bound within the present. Figure and ground can also amount to binary positions, so we expand our purview beyond the largely anthropocentric concerns of McLuhan's use of both by proposing a further layer of consideration for analysis, one we term *surround*. This additional perspective is conceived to recognize the parts of the situation displaced or destroyed in order to accommodate emerging properties such as technofossils and anthroturbation—countless traces of human activity now abundantly populating earth. Surround acknowledges environmental impact on the earth caused by human activity. Revisiting our example of the automobile, a configuration of figure/ground/surround helps us to recognize not only a car as figure and the roadway beneath it as ground (in two senses), but also a

surround comprising the swathes of land, plant life, and rich soil that have been excavated, paved over, tunneled under, and, thus, "lost" to roadways, back alleys, driveways, and car lots.

Surround's inclusion alongside the figure/ground paradigm permits us to better recognize the extent of ecological destruction caused by urban development—loss and ruin compounded by automobility that permits travel over further and further distances. Arable land is similarly lost to petroleum wells, oil sands, and tail ponds (not to mention the copious amounts of freshwater consumed in fracking for natural gas). The decentering of the human becomes imperative to both recognizing and mitigating the extent of humans' environmental impact while, in educational contexts, heightening students' awareness beyond immediate observations, familiar constructs, and epistemological debates. The Anthropocene continues to manifest distress, marked by a sense of growing anxiety, that Morton (2015) claims is:

> precisely the feeling of the loss of the world—the end of the world, but not as we thought, a great bang or a void, but a prolongation of things in synchrony with the disappearance of meaningful backdrop—and thus the disappearance of the foreground as such. (p. 185)

Rideshare

The tools we use and the modes of transportation on which we anthropocentrically rely are expiring. Human work forces are becoming just another data set, increasingly consigned to fulfilling tasks informing machinic learning. Here, we look to a widely heralded player in the "sharing economy," Uber. In congested traffic, some cars are being engaged for the purposes of *ridesharing*, an arrangement secured by both patron and driver through the Uber app. An Uber hired car assumes a figure in traffic quite unique among the cars, apps, drivers, and occupants in its midst. What is the ground of the Uber car operated by the Uber driver? It is likely significantly different from the cars around it, for the Uber platform is using onboard smart technologies in its development of nonhuman automobility. Once ridesharing vehicles' activities are mapped by Uber, the humans presently conveying its technology (on company issued cell phones) are likely to be made redundant in their employ as driver. Human activity is in the midst of a tremendous existential shift; in the near future, the human will no longer drive vehicles carrying people and transporting freight. Meanwhile, *online* shopping continues to seriously disrupt human employment in retail work.

While we hold an image of thought that humans program the computer technologies that run automated devices, increasingly, it is machine learning technologies that collect information from humans and *any* other data source. Hierarchically, humans' position in matters is changing, and humans are being irreversibly delegated to machines' use. More specifically, humans aren't teaching self-driving cars their expanded role, as they are increasingly introduced to city streets, but are most likely sitting as passengers while being machine chauffeured—humans effectively riding "shotgun" from the driver's seat.

Philosophy of technology academic Tamar Sharon (2012, 2014) articulates a "cartography of the posthuman" as a typology of biotechnologies during the posthuman that careens between reactions to technological and human interactions: alternately dystopic, liberal, methodological, and radical. Identification of these types prompts similar questions about how technologies spring from human creativity yet reciprocally shape our human experience. Methodological shifts toward philosophical frameworks, such as those of Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 1994), and radical

posthumanism recognize the "political potential inherent in technologies to overcome some of the most detrimental effects of modernity" (Sharon, 2014, p. 8).

Riff

What might educational learning during the posthuman look like and how might it be pursued? We identify our rhizomatic tendencies towards unfettered discovery (primarily, but not exclusively, by technological means) as a compulsion to riff (Stevens & Wainwright, 2016; Wainwright & Stevens, 2017). Our learning is potentiated by thought: ideally open ended and without hierarchical structure. An assemblage of figure/ground/surround is conceptualized as a tool of analysis to develop simultaneity of perception, taking into account the entire "visual" field. High school students of media were encouraged by McLuhan et al. (1977a) to summon powers of observation to assess what might be these settings during the electric age: "You are always the *figure,* as long as you are conscious, the ground is always the setting in which you exist and act" (p. 10). These considerations invite approaches developing awareness, particularly when any given ground is better understood as composing any other entity's figure (human, nonhuman, technological). "The interplay between you and this changing ground changes you" (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 10). We are interested in posthumanizing these important curriculum initiatives created by the authors of *City as Classroom*. McLuhan's career-long study of media was self admittedly always of its effects rather than of its content, which is what still distinguishes it as unique in its field.

Such analysis encourages observation and curiosity, a breadth of perception permitting one to "experienc[e] the sense of configuration; this is the sense that an artist brings to bear on painting, a satirist on situations" (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 10). Our personal sense as pedagogues is to "plug in and play"—to riff—and we have been developing an *[onto]Riffology*, which is rooted in our tendency to tap philosophy, cultural theory, and critical approaches in technology to infuse posthuman education with creativity (Stevens & Wainwright, 2016; Wainwright & Stevens, 2017).

Riff pursues freeform inquiry that has never been about "bring[ing] together a structuralist account of knowledge, nor to formulate a truth in any unifying theory, [but rather] we sample theory, seek affect in discovery, imbibe concept's rationale and engage play beyond discourse" (Stevens & Wainwright, 2016, p. 169). In research and classroom contexts, riff effectuates a posthuman leveling of hierarchical relationships between teacher and student. In our development of [onto]Riffology, we draw on the theoretical work of various educational theorists exploring Deleuzoguattarian approaches during which the human is decentered, representation is avoided, and understandings of "what it means to be human" are interrogated. In conceptualizing riff, we are inspired by Wallin's (2011, 2015) mobilization of philosophy for thinking pedagogical difference, jagodzinski and Wallin's (2013) machinic arts, Roy's (2003) case study on nomadic spaces, and St. Pierre's (2017; St. Pierre, Jackson, & Mazzei, 2016) elaboration on post-inquiry.

We take notice of the extent of technological interactions and that humans are deeply enmeshed with the machinic. This is hidden ground that we explore by way of riff. Riff is information sharing between humans and nonhumans in relationships of (re)combinatoriality—one action bootstrapping another's function in machinic assemblage. Humans riff off the nonhuman, machines riff off machines, machines riff off humans, and humans riff off humans. Expanding our lens past the human to grasp the nature of these relationships has been akin to lifting a veil or developing an additional sense; we are continually upending figure/ground/surround,

while engaging multiple, intersecting lines of reasoning that tenderize otherwise binary debates about whether, for example, Russian interference significantly impacted the 2016 American election. Socially mediated contexts indicating hostility result in disagreements held on epistemological terms that stymie what is better achievable by way of ontological strategies of becoming.

Riff seeks to emulate methods of experimental inquiry; the research that is termed "post qualitative" or "post-inquiry" by proponents who likewise relinquish dualisms of organization and belief such as "same/Other, human/nonhuman, mind/matter, culture/nature" (St. Pierre et al., 2016, p. 99). Much as it is near impossible to unsee nonhuman and technological paradigms once they have been recognized as fully existing alongside the human, it is a difficult prospect to unlearn post qualitative research approaches once introduced to them. Post-inquiry disrupts the relationships between the traditionally privileged fields of knowledge (empiricisms) and those of being and becoming (ontology); methodological frameworks just no longer suit (St. Pierre, 2017).

Mr. President

When a car works as expected, we don't notice the necessary tools and labour that keep it in running condition. In the case of Trump's presidency, we enter a state of "breakdown." When Trump refuses to "act presidential" in the function of his job, great discomfort results. It is like a gestalt that switches figure and ground (what Trump says and what the medium does), optical illusions holding us transfixed. As long as the American governmental machine performs to our expectations, we rarely reflect on the nature of the tools, their workings, and their operations. Trump's approach to the presidency draws attention not only to Trump, but to the entire Trump/tweet/Twitter/reader assemblage in general—and the nature of the presidential role in particular. To riff on this tension is not so much to critique Trump's singular performance as president, but the presidential role over centuries. It's not that the King is without clothing; it's that the monarchy's textiles are made using exploited labour, and the kingdom's cotton is being picked in the Plantationocene (Haraway, 2016). Citizens of other countries, likewise monitoring Twitter and the media, join in a collective state of dissonance at the unfolding of internationally mediated events. Trump's disinclination to act "presidential" makes us all intimately aware of this fact.

This becomes the terrain of double figure/ground, the creation of which is "the most potent tool for creating insight and facilitating analysis" (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 49). In mediated circumstances, this technique alters figures and grounds to *both* form ground by their stark incongruence—bringing divergent audiences "into sudden collision" (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 49). It all plays with perceptions in the ways that one may expect when a gameshow host, property developer, and political neophyte unexpectedly becomes president of the United States (not entirely an unexpected phenomenon in the country given the political careers of Ronald Reagan, Clint Eastwood, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Jesse Ventura, and Al Franken). The situation of Trump's ascendancy creates an interesting figure and ground scenario of compelling dynamics all on its own; however, a *double* figure/ground comes into play when a media celebrity of this self-styling becomes a world leader yet declines to perform presidentially. What is created by these juxtapositions becomes "the basic structure of much satire and most metaphor" (McLuhan et al., 1977a, p. 49), deeply jarring but exceedingly compelling. Such assertions raise important questions

when the spectre of post-truth is fully cast. Is it the handiwork of intentional obfuscation or merely the nature of (even, unintentional) satiric work?

Probes

Deleuze's philosophical propensity for experimentality in thought inspires our mobilization of his concepts to explore and understand news events (published, streamed, or broadcast) and what to make of alleged "fake news" (as *lies* with an *intent* to misinform its audiences). In Deleuzian thought, events are conceptualized as stemming from processes of two intertwining flows: both the real as actual and the real as virtual.

Deleuze (1993) considers the actual event not as a state of affairs but as "*actualized* in a state of affairs" (p. 152, emphasis added), while the virtual comprises "incorporeal events" (Boundas, 2010, p. 197): "'Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'; and symbolic without being fictional" (Proust as quoted in Deleuze, 1994, p. 208). In navigating distinctions between the actual and virtual, "elements and relations" forming structure must not be overstated in the former circumstance, nor understated in the latter (Deleuze, 1994, p. 208). Moment by moment, as countless virtual events become actualized, exponentially more don't. While always real, actualized events in due course return to virtuality—events endlessly flow from states of virtuality to a moment of actualization and then return to the virtual. Massumi (1995) describes the virtual as:

> a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt—albeit reduced and contained. For out of the pressing crowd an individual action or expression *will* emerge and be registered consciously. One 'wills' it to emerge, to be qualified, to take on sociolinguistic meaning, to enter linear action-reaction circuits, to become a content of one's life—by dint of inhibition. (pp. 30-31)

This interplay between actual and the virtual fuels riff by pushing towards mobilization of theory, pressing concepts into active tenses. What is this world of our creation, and by what impulses and constraints is it alternatively propelled and structured? "Predatory capitalism," "proto-fascism," "democracy," "consumerism," we can't necessarily slow global systems and curb its preoccupations, but we may engage *thought* to not act complicitly. Identification of "fake news" is a provocation to discovery and engagement. Where does it exist, and what does it do? Riff is a tool kit of borrowed concepts, particularly those pursued as learning trajectories as *becoming*, infused with a sense of discovery and naïveté challenging us to think our way out of this mess. Humanity's ultimate destination may not be averted by such intellectual diversions, but the ride might be more interesting. Understanding figure, ground, and surround, we read the inscription *and* see the atomic bomb on which it is stenciled. We also see the material waste and poisoned water left in its construction's wake, as well as the dead beings and land that will feel its touch, if launched.

Zombies

We recognize that what we may well be witnessing is the culmination of the Anthropocene, a scenario about which Wallin (2015) evokes chaos, eco-catastrophe, and zombies—a scenario in which humanist educational ambitions to lift humanity out of a morass of its own creation are entirely for naught. Analogies of the post-apocalyptic and zombies (equatable to Sharon's [2012, 2014] description of the posthuman as dystopic) bring a certain cult movie sensibility—something like a breath of pollution choked air—to mises-en-scène that counter all the sentiments of hope that humanist pedagogical aspiration attempts to muster, then inspire. We're dying here, alongside all life forms. There is no real escape, and we rush headlong to our own demise, hastened by our unbridled anthropocentrism, that "key assumption of modern Western rationality" (Shaviro, 2014, p. 1). Wallin (2015) invokes zombies in breaking "the humanist conceit of progress and perfection by actualizing the occulted unconscious background of horror and decay with which human life is imbricated" (p. 140). Like this apocalyptical rendering of the Anthropocene, the Chthulucene tells its own tales, of an "order [that] is reknitted: human beings are with and of the earth, and the biotic and abiotic powers of this earth are the main story" (Haraway, 2016, p. 55).

Having suggested that, in a Deleuzian sense, reality inhabits the potentialities of the virtual and the actual, we now work within its ontology to consider McLuhan's confidence in figure/ground analysis as an "approach to problems as interrelated aspects of culture…stress[ing] the fact of continuity in a world of seeming change" (McLuhan et al., 1977b, p. 1). Our motivations in resurrecting a four decade old curriculum—albeit one co-developed by a foremost public intellectual, astonishingly prescient in his anticipation of the impacts of technology on civilization and learning—include unsettling our thinking and paradigms to embrace further implications of the posthuman conditions into which we have been thrust. We explore the nature of interchangeable subjectivity between online author, reader, and text, whereby, through responses, retweets, hashtags, and algorithms, Internet content is co-written—further disrupting traditional notions of news and its production.

In *City as Classroom,* McLuhan et al. (1977a) refer to "problems" inherent to a changing environment, betraying a decidedly dystopic approach to networked technologies and their effects on society. Both the textbook and its accompanying teacher's guide instruct students to be vigilant while identifying figure and ground when navigating "two major concerns…[both] to discover the new problems this environment poses, and to develop ways of coping with these problems" (McLuhan et al., 1977b, p. 1).

Shifting understandings of interdependence between animal, vegetable, and mineral, the metropolis becomes something like a petri dish of relationships *culturing* human and nonhuman matter. Over four decades after McLuhan et al. (1977a) introduced figure/ground analysis to Canadian youth to broaden their gaze on topics of media studies, speculative realist ontologies—such as object oriented ontology (OOO) theorized by Graham Harman (2002, 2010), Ian Bogost (2012), and Levi Bryant (2011)—further move notions of subjectivity in multiple directions. Any traditionally understood exceptionalism of human inhabitants over their nonhuman counterparts is being completely reimagined, particularly a hitherto acceptable hierarchy in which human life is considered more worthy of subjectivity than is matter.

Ontologies

The self-driving car becomes "figure" on the city's streets, an editorial plotline and a point of both interest and consternation in the ever changing world. The autonomous vehicle, engineered to carry freight and passengers, will one day end any reliance on human drivers, and this eventuality will create massive (human) job redundancy. As we recognize the many ways that Twitter induces human users to collaborate in garnering its data, we can anticipate how much of self driving cars' learning will take place on city streets. In its experimental phase, the autonomous vehicle has already caused human fatalities when systems have failed to anticipate all situations and eventualities. Without human pilots, the cars will be in transit night and day, car ownership will be reimagined, and the considerable space presently dedicated to parked vehicles and roadways may be repurposed. Figure becomes ground becomes surround, elements of ground become figure, and human perceptions are accordingly honed as foci shift.

Proponents of autonomous vehicles note that collision avoidance features will be based on detailed vehicle placement technologies that will virtually eliminate traffic accidents. For the first time, vehicles will be able to simultaneously focus attention in all directions. No longer will vehicles' navigation be compromised by human pilots' periodic gazing into the rear view mirror to assess their ability to safely proceed.

In an era of human-built machines, the automobile ("self *movable*") has shaped modern existence while being human navigated. The car's future incarnation as autonomous will necessitate new tools and concepts that require radical transformation of existing thought images based on perishing technologies of car/driver binaries.

Fake, truth, false claims, and lies are not just about trying to figure out what is fake and what is true, but concern striving towards a new conceptualization of the possible, of a new becoming. This doesn't happen by trying to continuously decipher the meanings in any particular statement or reporting; it comes instead by shifting figure, shifting ground, enlivening new folds, and by avoiding distractions caused by epistemological debates being sponsored by corporate interests, their bought politicians, and the mainstream news agencies.

Ontologizing our surroundings and engagements better navigates our passage than constant epistemological ruminations. Ontological considerations reimagine relationships in the many ways necessary to stem the ruin we have wrought. This will take more than a shift of content or even medium. It requires an entirely new way of creating and conceptualizing what's real. McLuhan (1967) wrote that "when faced with a totally new situation, we tend always to attach ourselves to the objects, to the flavor of the most recent past. We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future" (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967, pp. 74-75). But we march, regardless. We riff to decenter the human, avoid representation, and to engage ontologies to question war economies, rampant material consumption, cult of celebrity, political malfeasance, and environmental destruction—the makings of a posthuman critical pedagogy.

[onto]Riffology is an attempt to posthumanize education and ontologize learning that is optimized by machines and networked technologies, inklings more than knowledge, discovery more than dogma. Humanist renderings of the figure, ground, and surround are perhaps analogous to the bomb, its stenciling, and catastrophic detonation. Does a posthuman version of figure, ground, and surround approximate a combination of the boundary events and timescapes, Anthropocene, Chthulucene, and Capitalocene? What do these next years look like?

Trump and the lies spun from the presidential office seem to demand action of some sort. The entire American broadcast news media arguably inspires less confidence than ever. We are,

however, attempting to shift our attention from this figure and that ground to instead scrutinize the significance found in posthuman events.

Notes

1. Examples of "figure" and "ground" may be found here: https://goo.gl/tgcGGX

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Confronting the Assessment Industrial Complex
A Call for a Shift from Testing Rhetoric

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Assessment Industrial Complex (AIC)

PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAN LEAD to big profits for corporate entities and a variety of businesses. Test manufacturers, charter school management companies, education consulting companies, and other private organizations associated with the education market can all financially benefit from public school dollars. However, one major contributor to corporations' profits is the implementation of standardized assessments across the nations' public schools. According to one study conducted by the Council of the Great City Schools, "In the 2014-15 school year, 401 unique tests were administered across subjects in the 66 Great City School systems" (Hart et al., 2015, p. 9). Within these 66 school districts, on average, students will be required to take eight standardized assessments per year. These are only some of the types of tests students will take. This number does not account for other forms of assessments teachers, administrators, and states impose upon students (e.g., quizzes, formative assessments, teacher-constructed assessments, etc.).

The evidence of profitability and endless assessment is also readily apparent. For example, Taubman (2009) points out that, as early as 1999, writers were documenting that the education market was worth hundreds of billions of dollars and was steadily increasing. Strauss (2013) confirms this increase noting rising global market shares in the education industry from $2.5 trillion in 2005 to $4.4 trillion by 2013. Within the larger education industry, standardized assessments account for hundreds of billions of dollars annually (Picciano & Spring, 2013). For example, Pearson, the largest education company in the world, commented that they, "delivered more than 37 million tests, and during our peak testing period we successfully delivered tests to 5.8 million learners in a single week" (Pearson, 2018, para. 1). The large volume of tests helped Pearson to hold the top spot for profitability in the U.S. for student assessment, which accounted for 35% of the $1.2 billion market share (Pearson, 2018). Other education companies, including

Harcourt Educational Measurement, CTB McGraw-Hill, ETS, and Riverside Publishing, also seek to capitalize on mandated testing.

While these companies do more than make tests and their profitability does not alone warrant our critique, their influence on public education is worthy of our attention. Studies show that standardized testing, high stakes testing specifically, negatively impacts a disproportionate number of poor students and students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lomax, West, Harmon, Viator, & Madaus, 1995; Madaus & Clarke, 2001). High-stakes testing is part of the neoliberal agenda that disregards basic facts about the implications of the testing regime. Neoliberalism ideologically assumes that the free market can and should solve social problems, and in the context of education, it legitimizes corporately produced high-stakes testing as a viable option for improving educational circumstances.

According to Saltman (2018), neoliberalism is

> an economic doctrine that calls for privatizing public goods and services, deregulating government controls over capital, and encouraging trade deregulation…. Neoliberals tend to see the role of the state as furthering the interests of businesses and owners, maintaining the repressive institutions of the society, and destroying the caregiving institutions of the society. (p. 109)

Thus, one relevant point of inquiry focuses on corporations' desire to manufacture profits via these assessments while ignoring the truth about the impacts that these assessments have on students' educational outcomes, including the many who are our most vulnerable and are most severely impacted by their profiteering. In the context of education, Au (2016) states,

> Within the framing of neoliberal multiculturalism, the empirical question becomes whether or not high-stakes, standardized testing, as the fulcrum on which free-market education policy mechanisms pivot, ameliorates educational inequality experienced by children of color in the United States, or exacerbates racialized inequalities. (p. 42)

Hence, high-stakes testing, in a post-truth society is one of the key mechanisms for the corporatization and commodification of education and, thus, the basis of the Assessment Industrial Complex (AIC). The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate how the rhetoric of high-stakes testing via the AIC, despite its lack of veracity, impacts education and, thus, society, and to develop a counter-narrative that may offer an alternative discourse that empowers the public and reframes the current narrative.

What Is the Assessment Industrial Complex Exactly?

The AIC is an amalgam of corporate interests and neoliberal and neoconservative education reformers (herein referred to as Edreformers). This concept is reflective of Picciano and Spring's (2013) notion of the "educational industrial complex" (p. 2), which they describe as an array of corporate and political conflicts of interest influencing public school. Desai (2015) also used the term "educational industrial complex" to describe, albeit in fewer words, the interconnected relationship of corporations, philanthropies, government agencies, and

organizations that promote privatization and high-stakes testing. Saltman (2018) concurs and argues,

> Schools and districts have come to be increasingly modeled on corporate culture...teachers need to deliver numerically measurable results...curriculum and pedagogy are increasingly standardized, and schools must "compete" against each other for test scores to secure federal funding while parents are described as "consumers." (p. xiv)

While Saltman, Desai, Picciano and Spring, and other scholars have documented the ever-increasing growth and influence of corporations on public education from control of the curriculum to teacher preparation and beyond, we turn our attention specifically to the assessment aspect of the larger complex. We coined the phrase "Assessment Industrial Complex" to underscore the vast array of stakeholders involved who ultimately profit from this system of assessment and accountability. By focusing on the AIC, this paper exposes rhetorical fallacies that limit discourse about the purpose of education and exploit the public's desire to improve educational circumstances for their own profits.

Similar to the military industrial complex (Eisenhower, 1961/2011), the AIC amalgamates corporate and political interests. Education corporations lobby for profitable educational policy, and in turn, policy makers rely on standardized assessments to validate their policies (Au, 2016; Journey for Justice Alliance, 2014; Saltman, 2016). This relationship ensures successful outcomes for both the politicians and corporations (among other entities) who fund their campaigns. While on the surface there appears to be heavy investments in public education, those resources are directed to the assessment industry, and despite the rhetoric to the contrary, they even undermine the public schools they promise to help in the process by simply lying to the American public. Most relevant, through critical analysis of this complex, we argue that the AIC undermines participatory dialogue and reinforces historical hierarchies of control.

It is the nature of language to influence and shape thoughts and outcomes (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; Chomsky, 1972; Fairclough, 2001), and the rhetoric of the AIC shapes the public's understanding of testing and its relationship to education. More specifically, under the AIC rhetoric, knowledge is purchased, not made, and becomes anti-dialogical and reduced to the convergence of political and corporate values. Edreformers then create a false narrative around the test scores to persuade the public that standardized testing policies are achieving their intended outcomes (e.g., creating equal opportunities for individuals to achieve their goals and aspirations; Hursh, 2015). In reality, the AIC perpetuates an inequitable, racialized system of oppression that further marginalizes low-income students and those of color. In conjunction with various racialized institutions, the AIC limits students' capacity to function and engage in the world in democratic ways.

AIC Rhetoric in the Post-Truth Era

In this post-truth era in the U.S., standards-based, high-stakes testing has become the "fulcrum" on which standards-based education rests (Au, 2016, p. 42). The language of reform, with its emphasis on testing, codifies the standards-based education reform movement. The rhetoric maintains the illusion that, if we offer rigorous standards, hold students, teachers, and administrators accountable via testing and evaluation, and severely penalize those who fail to meet

the testing benchmarks (which continuously seem to change—see Strauss, 2014), we will inevitably reach the utopian notion that *all* students will succeed (Apple, 2006; Au, 2012; Jackson, 2004; Vinson & Ross, 2003). The rhetoric of standards and accountability (e.g., mastery, criterion-based assessment, etc.) also assumes that everyone desires the same outcomes throughout the process of education, devaluing, ignoring, or even condemning differing cultural values and diversity (Weiner, 2014). As stated on the website of the Common Core Standards for College and Career Readiness, "The standards define the knowledge and skills students *should* gain throughout their K-12 education in order to graduate high school prepared to succeed in entry-level careers, introductory academic college courses, and workforce training programs" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2019, para. 5, emphasis added). The rhetoric of standards, with its focus on criterion-based assessments, limits the discourse and controls the narrative about what the aims and goals of education can be and, in an Orwellian fashion, reduces linguistic forms and, thus, people's capacity to envision other purposes of education. The term "career" implies that education is about becoming a worker, not necessarily a learner or a citizen in a democratic society. However, as Jackson (2004) argues, this neoliberal discourse takes place within a larger, though misleading, language of education "purported to serve citizens in enhancing their individual development and individual interests as if they were autonomous and disconnected from the national agenda" (p. 223). Neoliberalism uses misleading language to undermine trust in public institutions, and this compromises evident truths. Recent developments in political populism have provoked Peters (2018), Suiter (2016), and others to use the term "post-truth" to describe how the alt-right and social media outlets use language to disrupt reality. Former Congressmen John Dingle (2018) observed, "The playbook is simple: Lie. Repeat the lie. Then attack the journalists who expose those lies as being liars themselves—or, in modern parlance, 'promoters of fake news'" (para, 18). These developments in deceptive discourse further undermine public institutions, while discrediting scholars who warn about neoliberalism in schools and criticize the AIC.

Discursive Deceptions

An astute example of this discursive deception is seen by an organization called Edbuild. Edbuild was founded in 2014 by Rebecca Sibilia, the former Vice President for Fiscal Strategy at StudentFirst [an organization founded by Michelle Rhee, the former, and dethroned, Chancellor of Washington DC schools]. Edbuild's mission is to "analyze per-pupil funding levels and state funding mechanisms that ensure 'equity' and 'adequacy' considerations" (EdBuild, 2019b). Like Rhee, Sibilia is part of the Edreform machine and a proponent of school choice, vouchers, charters, and testing. In fact, Schneider (2015b) posted on her blog a post whose title established Sibilia and her company as a "Charter's Little Helper," pointing out that, on her Linkedin bio page, Sibilia describes Edbuild as a "'venture capital project to utilize charter school facility funding and practices to renovate District of Columbia Public Schools buildings" (Schneider, 2015b, para. 4). On the surface, the discourse of Edbuild is compelling, including statements such as, "EdBuild works to raise national awareness related to the current problems with the way states fund public schools. Our data visualizations and policy reports demonstrate the illogical, outdated, and segregating nature of our state funding systems" (EdBuild, 2019a).

There certainly is merit in the argument that school funding is both inequitable and unfair (Baker, Farrie, & Sciarra, 2018); however, Edbuild's approach to both the analyses of the data and their choice of solutions are anything but progressive or in support of promoting public schooling.

Edbuild's coopting of progressive language while undermining public schooling is clearly seen on its website:

> EdBuild is a catalyst organization, working to fundamentally disrupt the status quo of illogical & inequitable school funding…national voice work will build a public narrative around the illogical and detrimental construct of local school funding policies that create the incentive and ability to segregate along socioeconomic lines. With supporting data, this work will be entrusted to a social justice organization to pursue greater systemic equity in the system via the judicial branch. (EdBuild, 2019a, para 1-3)

Though the language is anything but subtle, it is effective and powerful. The argument relies on several key rhetorical strategies: create an argument that is conceivable and uses your opponents' language, base that argument on data few people can distrust or argue against, and then repeat, repeat, repeat. Edbuild's use of key progressive terms like "social justice" and "equity" can be misleading given that their funders support a neoliberal agenda for public schools. Their funders include the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Gates Foundation), the Walton Family, and the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation to name a few. The blatant contradictions of this organization are almost too fatuous to address; yet, Edbuild is disrupting traditional, public school funding. By their own grandiose admission, they have had three state engagements "helping to overhaul current school finance systems; 113 features or mentions in the national media; 82 write-ups, citations, or features in local press." (EdBuild, 2019a, n.p.). So, while the website professes that "EdBuild works to raise national awareness related to the current problems with the way states fund public schools" (EdBuild, 2019a, para. 2), this is code for their real mission, which is to direct public funding to charters and private schools.

In fact, by her own admission, Sibilia considers the failure of public schools an opportunity for change. In 2015, in New Orleans, Edreformers gathered to attend a policy summit sponsored by the American Federation for Children [this organization was founded and funded by Betsy Devos]. During the meeting, Sibilia argued that school districts going bankrupt is a "huge opportunity" for them (Persson, 2015, para. 8), and that "if we can eliminate that in an entire urban system…[then we can] redistribute everything with all new models. And so, you've heard it first: bankruptcy might be, like, the thing that leads to the next education revolution" (Persson, 2015, para. 8). The potential for this blatant and "naked power grab" (Persson, 2015, para. 9) described in Sibilia's comment speaks to the unabashed and shameless efforts of Edreformers and their determination to dismantle public education. When Sibilia states that bankruptcy can lead to "the next education revolution," it can lead stakeholders to think that this is a positive outcome for these failing school systems, when in fact, they could be a prescription for corporate takeovers of public schools (Hursh, 2015; Ravitch, 2015b; Schneider, 2015a).

Edbuild is a clear example of the danger of Edreform rhetoric. Because the language of education reform, with its focus on testing data, is clear, concise, and (seemingly) effective, it allows people to "buy into" this vision of a greater, more equitable and just America. Proponents of standards-based education and accountability claim that all will have success if only we, America, have high standards and testing for all students. And if test scores highlight failing schools and mediocre or underperforming teachers, schools, and students, then all the better for having as many tests as possible. Taubman (2009) contends that the incessant repetition of the same dire prediction about the state of education by various sources (e.g., policy statements, publications, statistics, research, etc.) eventually creates a "reality of its own" (p. 74). He states,

Striking is that those statistics about dropout rates, student preparedness, college success, our students' academic performance...the correlation between test results and later academic or job success, and the low caliber of teachers, schools, and students are taken as truth, when in fact there is enormous disagreement about them. (p. 74)

As Taubman (2009) points out, the public goes "numb," which leads to the "eventual attitude of 'going along to get along,'" rather than challenging the status quo (p. 75). The beguiling nature of this rhetoric supersedes the reality of its true effects. There is immense danger when "fake news" becomes the standard bearer of truth. In fact, the narrative of pervasive failure is "immune to facts" (Gottlieb, 2015, p. xv); no fact can disprove it. Thus, testing "data" has provided the means to solidify the overwhelming failure of our public education system (Au, 2016; Au & Gourd, 2013).

Equity and Equality for All: Not Really

Another rhetorical claim that Edreformers repeatedly proffer is that testing and accountability will lead to equality and equity for all students (Massell, Kirst, & Hoppe, 1997; Mathis, 2010; Rhee, 2012). These are doubtful assertions at best. For example, Madaus and Clarke (2001), through a meta-analysis of 100 years' worth of standardized testing data, concluded that standardized assessments have an adverse effect on racial minorities. Knoester and Au (2017) argue that not only does high-stakes testing fail to decrease the achievement gap, but it has led to the re-segregation of schools by race throughout the nation,

the use of powerful managerial tools such as standardized tests tied to high-stakes decisions…serve to racially code schools and to place enormous pressure on schools with low test scores (generally those with large numbers of children of color and living in poverty) to teach to the test. (pp. 3-4)

Additionally, Au (2016) advances this argument stating, "any and all claims to the use of high-stakes, standardized testing to promote racial equity and justice are ideologically driven and demonstrably false in the face of the materially racist effects of testing on children of color" (p. 54). As the literature clearly indicates, the testing industry's attempt to generate equity clearly fails to achieve its claims, but in a post-truth society, facts no longer matter. One is also left to ponder precisely how ignoring the differences between cultures, individual experiences and knowledge, and local context will lead to equity and equality in education.

Buzzwords, Reductive Language, Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

The rhetoric of standards and testing, though often wrapped in phrases of social justice, reinforces hegemonic conditions. While a discussion of the relationship between language and thought is beyond the scope of the paper, language influences people's thought processes (Gleitman & Papafragou, 2013). Overarchingly, Edreformers' discourse emphasizes rigorous standards to ensure opportunity and global competitiveness. Educational buzzwords such as "Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)" or "college and career ready" are

reductive intentionally. This rhetoric limits the general public's capacity to engage in complex dialogue, since who can argue that we should not be globally competitive in the 21st century? For example, Edreformers argue that by increasing STEM courses in K-12 (and higher education) or increasing the number of assessments students must take or by adopting common standards across all states (Mathis, 2010), we will increase our competitive advantage. These and many other claims abound when Edreformers discuss public education. Proponents of school choice, standards, high-stakes testing, and other neoliberal, neoconservative values find endless opportunity to reiterate these notions in reductive ways to persuade the public that these ideals are what will save America and lead us back to our prior "greatness." As Taubman (2009) asserts, if you repeat a refrain enough times, the message will become reality for some if not many, particularly when those in power reiterate that message to further advance their own agenda.

Another issue is the impact this rhetoric has on how we perceive ourselves as a nation in a globalized economy and world. What messages do Americans receive that shape their understanding of curriculum, testing, and accountability? How does the rhetoric of standards-based education and testing frame our understanding of the role and purpose of education? How does the rhetoric of school choice shape the public's understanding of the role it potentially plays to ameliorate our educational "ills?" If Americans buy into the rhetoric that we as a nation lag behind other nations, as the manipulation of international test scores purport (Berliner & Glass, 2014), then we suddenly find ourselves feeling threatened and succumb to those who hold decision making power (Apple, 2006). Consequently, it becomes critical to shift Edreformers' rhetoric of standards-based education, with its focus on testing and accountability, to form a new discourse that focuses on diversity, inclusion, social justice, and humanity.

[Neoliberal] Rhetoric and Action Shapes Policy

Similar to the "Military Industrial Complex" (Eisenhower, 1961/2011), the AIC relies on think tanks and other organizations to shape policy and sway public opinion. For example, Schneider (2015a) details how the Gates Foundation imposed the Common Core Standards (CCS) on public education. While on the surface this may look like acts of philanthropy from the Gates Foundation to promote the common good, the Gates Foundation usurped the democratic process through what Saltman (2016) and others describe as venture philanthropy, where a false generosity actually functions as an investment toward bigger profits and/or influence for the investor. The National Governors Association, Student Achievement Partners, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and Achieve all helped craft CCS; collectively, these organizations accepted $147.9 million from the Gates Foundation. Additionally, the Gates Foundation paid think tanks like American Agora Foundation ($100,000), American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research ($1,068, 788), and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute to promote CCS. Even teacher unions, like the American Federation of Teachers ($5,400,000) and National Education Association ($3,982,597), and professional organizations, such as Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ($3,269,428) and National Association of State Boards of Education ($2,328,625), accepted Gates Foundation dollars to support CCS (Schneider, 2015a). Ravitch (2013) notes what was happening:

> Instead of developing a democratic process in which teachers, teacher educators, scholars, specialists in the education of children with disabilities, specialists in the education of

English learners, and specialists in early childhood education were consulted at every step in the process, instead of trying out the standards to see how they work in real classrooms with real children, the Gates Foundation and the Department of Education took a shortcut. (para. 12)

The Gates Foundation invested $400 million in the CCS, and these investments influenced $4 trillion worth of policy in taxpayer dollars at local, state, and federal levels (Pullmann, 2017).

Giroux and Giroux (2006), Newfield (2002), and others explain that neoliberal ideology has dominated American policy dating back to the 1970s. Under a shared belief that the free-market can self-regulate and government regulations thwart prosperity, neoliberalism casts a wide political tent where both the Republican and Democratic Parties find common ground. Both parties' ameliorative rhetoric and political promises depend on free market solutions to solve society's woes, which consequently provide ongoing opportunities for corporate interests to capitalize from public spheres and the commons (Hursh, 2008; Watkins, 2012). Even as some hoped the presidential election of Barack Obama would revitalize constitutional democracy and a pivot away from the neoliberal period of American history (Mahao, 2009), President Obama continued, reinforced, and even extended several neoliberal traditions (Carr & Porfilio, 2011). Obama's first education initiative, *Race to the Top*, compelled states to embrace market principles of competition and efficiency, offering $4.35 billion in public funds that would eventually reinforce corporate reform of public schools (Hursh, 2015: Gottlieb, 2015).

Despite political bipartisan support, neoliberalism has its share of critics. According to Giroux and Giroux (2006), neoliberalism reduces societal relationships to economic ones:

Neoliberal pervasiveness is evident not only by its unparalleled influence on the global economy but also in its power to redefine the very nature of politics and sociality. Free market fundamentalism rather than democratic idealism is now the driving force of economics and politics in most of the world. (p. 22)

As the economic trumps the societal, political relationships based on democratic ideals are usurped and even replaced with free market principles where progress is measured through profits. However, because there is no explicit statement that profits drive the Neoliberal agenda, as Means (2013) argues, austerity provides opportunity for those with a steady cash flow to intervene on behalf of those "in need" to then offer market solutions to social problems. The key tactic is to then eschew the truth and simply state lies: Schools are failing, but businesses and philanthropists can save us.

A strong example of this, as already demonstrated by the Gates Foundation, is the influence of specific philanthropic organizations that purport to reform education for the benefit of society, in particular students in poor, urban communities (Hursh, 2008, 2015; Kozol, 2012; Watkins, 2012). Again, the Gates Foundation is one such organization that has devoted extensive resources and capital to public school education reforms. Recently, in fact, it has committed to investing 1.7 billion dollars over the next five years to "philanthropic organizations" devoted to building school networks (Camera, 2017). Despite their own admission of "mea culpa" (Camera, 2017, para. 12) for previously failed initiatives, like the CCS, the Gates Foundation is still committed to using private dollars to heavily influence the outcomes of public education.

The AIC: A Form of Symbolic Violence

After decades of the AIC's influence on public education, another consequence we find is what Bourdieu (as cited in Saltman, 2018) calls "symbolic violence" (p. 7). According to Saltman (2018), symbolic violence is "the devaluation of one's culture, knowledge, language tastes, and disposition" (p. 113). Standardized testing imposes symbolic violence by establishing what counts and what does not count as knowing to the benefit of dominant cultural oppression. But more alarming is what Saltman points out:

> The student is thus made complicit in her own cultural oppression. This is a cultural oppression that has material effects: the sorting and sifting techniques of the school such as testing are used to position students to do different work and to have different things. (p. 7)

To extend Saltman's point, the AIC does violence to the possibility of dialogue itself, by declaring the aims and methods of education final, scientific, and not up for debate. The positivist theoretical framework behind standards and standardized assessment, thus, undermines the imagination, reinforcing hegemonic conditions of consumption and control (Weiner, 2014). One should not wonder why then young people feel cynical about the world in which they exist (Giroux, 2001). Rather than close the achievement gap, the AIC has effectively made it worse (Au, Brown, & Calderon, 2016; Means, 2013; Weiner, 2014). Moreover, as Childers (2017) describes, the AIC robs students of the right to define success in their own terms. Means (2013) provides detailed examples of how democracy erodes through the AIC for students of color in inner-city schools. Students lack curricular input and are relegated to learning an often-meaningless curriculum (Au, 2016). Under the AIC, schools have increasingly controlled students, particularly students of color, by determining what they can learn and when and how they can learn it. Much of the limited resources allocated to schools serving mostly students of color, especially, go to seemingly endless test preparation (Kozol, 2012; Means, 2013). As a consequence of the AIC, communities of color have lost a say in what their children learn and how they get to learn it. Certainly, the AIC does not deserve all the blame for the destruction of public schools and the oppressive nature of curriculum, but it has contributed to eroding democratic liberties from the very students it promises to protect.

What Happened to a Being a Participant in a Democracy?

For a democracy to function properly, the interests of all its members need to be represented, and the voices of all its people need to be heard and acknowledged (Chomsky, 2003, Freirie, 1970; Janoski, 1998). Under the AIC, our democracy is threatened. Those in power, Edreformers, want to generate as much profit as possible for themselves and their shareholders while maintaining control of knowledge and power. Testing is one of the major control mechanisms that allows them to do this. One may challenge this argument by stating that we still live in a democratic republic in the United States. We still have the agency to vote and use that vote to change who represents us. However, this is an oversimplification of our current predicament. Those who represent us, quite often, do so under a falsehood: whom they truly represent are their donors and funders (Ravitch, 2015a; Saltman, 2016; Schneider, 2015a). As

mentioned earlier, we have seen billions of dollars flow into education by would be "philanthropists" who then determine how students are taught, what knowledge is of most worth (i.e., the Common Core Standards), how much they are tested, etc. However, one need only examine the data to see the impact of testing and accountability on education, specifically on students and the teachers responsible for educating them (Au, 2007, 2016; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Madaus & Clarke, 2001).

As this essay demonstrates, the Assessment Industrial Complex is vast and powerful. In this neoliberal, post-truth period of America, it is difficult to remain hopeful and avoid feelings of despair and anxiety. However, there are reasons to stay optimistic. Advocacy and grassroots organizations are developing a counter-narrative to the discourse of the AIC and the Edreformers that comprise it. Organizations like the Network for Public Education, the Progressive Education Network, the Social Justice Education Network, and others inspire new possibilities of change. Currently, progressive candidates are winning elections in districts throughout the country in which they once would not even have bothered to run. While there has been bipartisan support for the AIC, we see discontent among both parties' perspectives on testing, even in a red state like Texas. For example, the education commissioner of Texas, Robert Scott (R) referred to high-stakes testing as a "'perversion' of what education should be" and went on to refer to "'the assessment and accountability regime' not only [as] a 'cottage industry but a military-industrial complex'" (Strauss, 2012, para. 2-3). Furthermore, regarding the impact of high-stakes testing, Scott also observed: "What we've done in the past decade, is we've doubled down on the test every couple of years, and used it for more and more things, to make it the end-all, be-all" (Strauss, 2012, para. 4). As these Republican responses manifest, we argue that it is an appropriate time to have meaningful public dialogue and debate about the AIC.

This essay proffers a definition of the AIC as well as a brief description of how it operates. Going forward, we contend that we have an intellectual responsibility, particularly in the era of post-truth, to confront the rhetoric and outcomes of the AIC. Future research should focus on a more thorough understanding of the AIC and alternative forms of discourse. Rather than talk about our children and students through the labels of test scores and reading levels, we propose, instead, that we contextualize what it means to learn and articulate ways to support democratic values within the curriculum. In confronting the AIC, we strengthen our democracy.

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"La lucha todavía no ha terminado"/The struggle has not yet ended
Teaching Immigration Through *Testimonio* and Difficult Funds of Knowledge

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POLITICAL SCIENTISTS HAVE DESCRIBED the eruption of recent political tensions as a post-WWII divide between Americans feeling a loss of economic security that requires more authoritarian responses and Americans who continue to prioritize equality, freedom, and democratic participation (Inglehart, 2018). The consequence of this fissure is augmented through recent alt-right marches on college campuses and in cities, enraged and misleading posting on social media, and hostile political elections. Emboldened by political discourses that are "openly racist, sexist, authoritarian and xenophobic" (Inglehart, 2018, p. 25), Orwellian tools of misinformation have emerged that serve to disrupt the civil and trustworthy deliberations inherent to liberal democracies. For social studies educators, the current "post-truth" era that encompasses hatred towards Black, Latinx, queer, Muslim, Jewish, and immigrant communities should prompt decisive action. Unfortunately, in many elementary classrooms, the topic of immigration is rarely addressed beyond Ellis Island, and that curriculum typically avoids conversations about exclusionary, xenophobic, and racist laws that barred and severely restricted the entry of multiple ethnic and racial groups for over a century and continue into the present (Graff, 2010; Rodríguez, 2015).

As contemporary immigration receives minimal attention in classroom settings, the number of immigrant children in U.S. public schools is at a near historic level (López & Bialik, 2017). While scholars have long called for increased attention to the needs of immigrant children (Goodwin, 2002; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009), scant progress has occurred in teacher education settings that often address diversity generally without attending to the experiences of immigrant families in schools and the issues they face (Goodwin, 2016; Subedi, 2019). Such inattention demonstrates a willful ignorance toward the fears faced by marginalized communities before and during the Trump presidency. For example, in the midst of the 2016 U.S. Presidential

election, over 2,000 K-12 educators participated in a survey in which over two-thirds of teachers described that students (immigrants, children of immigrants, and Muslims in particular) were afraid of what might happen to them and their families after the election (Costello, 2016). Although adults often dismiss political discourse as beyond the comprehension of young children, the survey revealed that children make sense of what they observe in meaningful ways.

This study examines how a group of bilingual elementary preservice teachers in the Southwestern United States drew from the increasingly hostile national conversation around immigration in the spring of 2017 to create spaces for *testimonio* with their young students and designed social studies lessons that directly connected with their students' difficult funds of knowledge. The preservice teachers' engagement with *testimonio* as a means to reveal difficult funds of knowledge resulted in their development of critical pedagogical practices in the teaching of immigration, illuminating how intimate understandings of biculturalism, bilingualism, and Latinx immigration can provide powerful instructional opportunities. We contend that *testimonio* serves as more than a sharing of experiences, but as the creation of a counter-narrative deserving of legitimate status in official school curriculum. Given the scarce attention paid to immigration broadly, and to immigration-related current events in particular, the preservice teachers' work illustrates the importance of *testimonio* and difficult funds of knowledge as counter-narratives that center the lived experiences of marginalized students in elementary social studies curriculum. Learning from such *testimonios* is especially important for the white, native-born, monolingual preservice teachers who comprise the majority of enrollment in traditional teacher preparation programs (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2013).

Difficult Funds of Knowledge

This paper examines the use of "difficult" funds of knowledge in the teaching of immigration, weaving together scholarship on funds of knowledge (González et al., 1995), dark funds of knowledge (Zipin, 2009), and difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998). González et al. (1995) first presented the term "funds of knowledge" to describe "those historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household's functioning and well-being" (pp. 446-447). Funds of knowledge were a means to re-evaluate how educators might identify and validate the social and cultural capital held by historically marginalized students and their families. González and Moll (2002) assert that, when students share their funds of knowledge, they become producers of knowledge rather than just consumers of knowledge, an approach that fosters community and family involvement.

Zipin (2009) argued that, in practice, the funds of knowledge most often sought out by teachers were limited to positive, or "light," knowledge. However, students may also be familiar with what he termed "dark" topics, such as violence, abuse, and mental health problems, which should also be viewed as learning assets. As terms like "dark" have historically alluded, both implicitly and explicitly, to anti-Blackness and/or Communities of Color, to avoid perpetuating the negative and pathologizing educational and political discourse around Black and Brown students and their bodies (Dumas, 2016)[1], we draw from Britzman's (1998) definition of difficult knowledge. Britzman (1998) described difficult knowledge as the study of "experiences and the traumatic residuals of genocide, ethnic hatred, aggression, and forms of state-sanctioned—and hence legal—social violence" (p. 117). In Britzman's (1998) view, such pedagogical approaches necessitate a confrontation of "difficulties of learning from another's painful encounter with

victimization, aggression, and the desire to live on one's own terms" and risk "approaching the internal conflicts which the learner brings to the learning" (p. 117). Therefore, we draw from Zipin's (2009) focus on traumatic and violent funds of knowledge while reframing his term through the work of Britzman. In this study, elementary students' difficult funds of knowledge included personal experiences with deportation and the fear and separation that surround it, as both a lived reality and an impending possibility. *Testimonio,* explained in the section that follows, was the means through which difficult funds of knowledge were made accessible, as students were provided with opportunities to speak their traumatic truths related to immigration.

Testimonio as Theory and Method

Critical research recognizes the conflict and oppression inherent in society and seeks change rather than accepting the *status quo*, focusing on power dynamics in the hope of bringing about a more just society. In the 1970s and 1980s, legal scholars including Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Kimberlé Crenshaw felt limited by the separation of critical theory from discussions about race and racism, as they understood racism to be a normal, not aberrant, part of U.S. society (Delgado, 2013). These and other critical race scholars were particularly interested in the legal manifestations of white supremacy and the subordination of People of Color (Wing, 2003). Although critical race theory (CRT) began with the embeddedness of racism in the law, it recognizes that racial inequality permeates every aspect of social life, including schools.

CRT expanded to address distinctive community needs, complex histories, and multiple contexts (Yosso & Solórzano, 2001). Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) is a CRT outgrowth that recognizes the roles that immigration status, ethnicity, language, and access to citizenship play alongside race in the Latinx experience (Haney López, 1997). In this study, the LatCrit practice of *testimonio,* or personal narrative, centers alternative sites of knowledge, which may expose brutality while transcending silence and building solidarity (Anzaldúa, 1990; Latina Feminist Group, 2001). In education, *testimonio* is increasingly used as a pedagogical and methodological approach (El Ashmawi, Sanchez, & Carmona, 2018; Huber, 2009; Pour-Khorshid, 2016; Vasquez, 2018) that transgresses traditional academic paradigms, challenging objectivity "by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance" (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Carmona, 2012, p. 363). As *testimonio* compels the *testimonialista* (the participant who shares stories and engages in *testimonio*) as well as the reader/listener to action, voices that are generally oppressed demand to be heard in an act of political resistance (Anzaldúa, 1990; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Prieto & Villenas, 2012).

LatCrit and *testimonio* frame this study in several ways. First, LatCrit centers the experiences of the preservice teachers, all bilingual women of Color, who participated in this study. In teacher education, the overwhelming presence of Whiteness persists in the curriculum, student body, and professoriate as the number of non-white students in public schools grows (NCES, 2013, 2015a, 2015b; Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2001). However, the preservice teachers of Color in this study were enrolled in a bilingual elementary teacher preparation program focused on Spanish/English bilingualism and biculturalism with an emphasis on the Mexican American educational experience. Prior to the social studies methods course in which this study took place, the preservice teachers had read Anzaldúa (1990), learned about legislation for and against bilingual education, and comfortably used terms such as funds of knowledge. Many knew the immigration system firsthand, with no need to translate or explain terms like *la migra* (immigration

enforcement officers) or *coyote* (individuals paid to help immigrants cross the Mexican border into the U.S.), creating a distinctly Latinx-centered teacher-preparation context for the course. *Testimonio* as an epistemological site has been increasingly used in contexts similar to this teacher preparation program (El Ashmawi et al., 2018; Sosa-Provencio, Sheahan, Fuentes, Muñiz, & Vivas, 2017) and by teacher educators (Prieto & Villenas, 2012; Vasquez, 2018) and educators of Color (Pour-Khorshid, 2016).

Second, the study took place in a Southwestern state along the U.S./Mexico border during the first five months of Trump's presidency. On January 25, before the second session of class, President Trump signed two executive orders related to immigration. The first, "Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States" (Exec. Order No. 13768, 82 C.F.R. 8799), stripped federal monies from so-called sanctuary cities (including the city in which our university is located) and emphasized the supposed criminal threat posed by undocumented immigrants[2] by promoting the illegal detention and apprehension of these individuals. The second executive order (Exec. Order No. 13767, 82 C.F.R. 8793), "Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements," directed federal funding to the building of a wall on the U.S./Mexico border, an increase in Border Patrol agents, expedited deportations, and more detention facilities for undocumented immigrants. As future bilingual educators, immigrants, children of immigrants, and individuals living in a sanctuary city and state with a shared history and border with Mexico, these executive orders demanded the preservice teachers' attention. LatCrit forefronts the complex history of immigration as well as the precariousness of citizenship and belonging faced by Latinx communities in the past and present (Tirado, 2019).

Third, LatCrit draws from histories of racist nativism to explain "racialized constructions of non-nativeness in the U.S." (Huber, 2016, p. 220), no matter the actual origin of People of Color. Racist nativism results in Latinx and other groups falsely perceived as situated outside of the realm of who is/can be American and citizen, identities historically tied to Whiteness (Haney López, 1996). While anti-immigrant, and specifically anti-Latinx immigrant, rhetoric has long been wielded for political purposes, the racist nativism of the current political moment also has discursive functions that shape the educational trajectories of Latinx students (Huber, 2016). As this paper will demonstrate, Trump's xenophobic executive orders in the initial weeks of his presidency struck fear in the hearts of even the youngest members of immigrant communities.

Study Context & Participants

This instrumental, qualitative case study took place in the American Southwest during the spring of 2017. Stake (1995) defines a case as a specific, unique, bounded system, which can be a person, people, or a program. Instrumental case studies can provide insight into an issue (Stake, 2005). In this study, the case consisted of six undergraduate students enrolled in a bilingual elementary social studies methods course. This required course was part of a bilingual teacher preparation program that placed preservice teachers in Spanish/English dual language elementary field placements. The six preservice teachers selected for this study shared a common focus on immigration and President Donald Trump in two major projects they completed for the course. This study asks how *testimonio* and difficult funds of knowledge serve as critical, pedagogical practices that may provide insight into the instructional opportunities provided through personal understandings of biculturalism, bilingualism, and Latinx immigration. Additionally, this study examines how *testimonio* functions as an epistemological lens that centers counter-narratives that

alter the majoritarian tales common to the teaching of immigration (Salinas, Naseem Rodríguez, & Ayala Lewis, 2015).

Study Participants

The six students in this study represented an array of bilingual and bicultural identities. Four students, Larissa, Sofia, Luisa, and Isela, identified as Mexican or Mexican American, Celeste was Afro-Latina (Cuban), and Ruth was biracial (Black/white). Sofia and Larissa spoke Spanish as their first language, while Luisa was a heritage speaker who grew up with Spanish-speaking parents but was not fluent in Spanish until she attended college. Several students grew up along the U.S./Mexico border and learned Spanish in their K-12 schooling, demonstrating varying levels of Spanish fluency by the time they arrived in the social studies methods course their junior year. Only Sofia identified as an immigrant, with the remaining students born in the Southwestern U.S. state where they attended university.

Researcher Positionality

Noreen is Asian American, was the instructor of the social studies methods course described in this study, and is a former bilingual elementary educator. Cinthia is a Chicana teacher educator who designed and supervised the bilingual social studies methods course. They were both born and raised bi-/multilingually in the state where the study took place and worked with Latinx immigrant students throughout their K-12 teaching careers.

Data Sources

Data sources from the six students focused on two related course projects, *What are They Thinking* (WATT) and a lesson plan, and included transcriptions of WATT podcasts, integrated lesson plans, lesson plan reflections, and post-class reflections. WATT asked preservice teachers to investigate students' views on a topic related to social studies (see Swalwell, 2015) in a recorded interview and to present their findings in a podcast. WATT asked preservice teachers to listen carefully to their students' responses, to avoid making assumptions about what students do or do not know, and served as a starting point for preservice teachers to develop curriculum that expands on students' actual (not assumed) (mis)understandings (Swalwell, 2015). The students who participated in WATT interviews were in second, third, and fourth grades and were enrolled in Spanish/English dual language classrooms following the Gomez and Gomez model (Gomez, Freeman, & Freeman, 2005) in predominantly Latinx, Title I campuses within the same large, urban school district. Two campuses were located in neighborhoods targeted by ICE in February 2017. WATT interviews were conducted and recorded in January and February 2017; the preservice teachers' WATT podcasts included student audio from the interview as well as their own recorded reflections. Due to Institutional Review Board constraints, child recordings were excluded; therefore, elementary students' words are not directly cited, but the authors consider the podcast recordings to be an initial set of *testimonios* that guided the preservice teachers' respective *testimonios* that followed, which are analyzed here.

The lesson plan was based on students' WATT interviews. The lesson was approved by the classroom teacher who supervised the preservice teacher and by the instructor and then was taught either to a small group or the whole class. After teaching their lessons, the pre-service teachers completed a reflection that examined their teaching, students' learning, and the lesson's social studies content. Due to the bilingual nature of the teacher education program, preservice teachers completed their work in English, Spanish, or a combination of the two; their Spanish reflects a range of linguistic repertoires (Hornberger, 2003), from academic Spanish language to colloquial and translanguaging approaches (García, 2009) typical of bi-/multilinguals. Honoring the role of voice in *testimonio*, quotes are presented in the original language in which they were uttered/written; translations into English were done by Noreen and are in brackets. Data sources were analyzed through descriptive and axial coding (Saldaña, 2009) to arrive at emergent patterns and themes.

Findings

The analysis of preservice teacher social studies methods coursework revealed three themes. First, the preservice teachers recognized the topic of immigration in general, and President Trump's negative attitude toward Mexican immigrants in particular, as subjects very familiar to their students and about which students possessed substantial knowledge. Second, in contrast to mainstream pre- and in-service educators, the bilingual preservice teachers recognized that their students did not consider immigration to be a controversial topic worthy of fear and/or discomfort, but a simple fact of their lived experience. Third, the teachers emphasized historical connections to provide context to the current immigration events mentioned in WATT.

Immigration as Familiar Subject

Although researchers in social studies education have argued for more inclusive, student-centered approaches that connect social studies content to students' lives and experiences (Choi, 2013; Dong, 2017), the marginalized nature of elementary social studies provides few opportunities for this to actually occur (Heafner & Fitchett, 2012). During conversations in their respective elementary field placements, all six preservice teachers recognized young students' familiarity with the topic of immigration as they articulated understandings of family migration and reasons for leaving one country for another. Moreover, the difficulties of the immigrant experience were also part of their funds of knowledge.

In her WATT podcast, Sofia reflected, *"Estos niños están expuestos al maltrato de inmigrantes y viven en temor que sus familias sean separadas y nunca jamás vuelvan a ver. Esto es algo deshumanizante y realmente triste"* [These students are exposed to the mistreatment of immigrants and live in fear that their families will be separated and will never see (each other) again. This is something dehumanizing and truly sad.]. One child detailed the fear felt by her family after ICE raided her neighborhood, recounting to Sofia how she tried to soothe her younger sister. The father of this child in Sofia's field placement had already been deported, and his loss was deeply felt by the family; the younger sister was terrified that other family members would be forced to leave as well. Sofia contemplated her role as a teacher in the face of such adversity: *"Estos niños como mi estudiante tienen preocupaciones más grandes. Al ver la cara de temor de*

mi estudiante me ayuda a ver la diferencia que podemos tener en nuestros estudiantes" [These children, like my student, have bigger problems (than other kids). Upon seeing my student's frightened face, it helps me see the difference we can make in our students.]. Sofia understood that some children experience excruciating amounts of stress in their daily lives and may spend school hours preoccupied with the safety of family members rather than the lesson at hand. As a teacher, she wanted her students to *"resaltar...y tener éxito"* [overcome...and be successful] and viewed funds of knowledge as a vital access point for lesson design.

One of the students Larissa interviewed also expressed fears of a family member being deported. She summarized their conversation as follows:

> *(La estudiante) mencionó que no quiere que se lleven a su mamá. Y creo que eso fue algo que me impactó mucho y quería hacer una lección basada en las injusticias y que es lo que puede hacer, entonces empecé de pensar en que puedo hacer para sentirse un poquito mejor, aunque sea un poco, de lo que está sucediendo* [(The student) mentioned that she didn't want them to take her mother. And I think that is something that really had a big impact on me, and I wanted to make a lesson based on injustices and what she can do. So I started to think about what could I do to make her feel a little better, even if it's just a little, about what is happening.].

Like Sofia, Larissa considered the experiences shared by her students to be a starting point for her lesson. Moreover, she wanted to provide her students with agency and voice. She decided to focus her lesson on the story of Emma Tenayuca, a young Latina activist who fought to improve labor conditions in the early 1900s, through the picture book *That's Not Fair!/¡No es justo!* (Tafolla, 2008). In her post-lesson reflection, Larissa wrote, "We talked about the things we can do during hardships and unfair situations. I think they see issues like that every day, and now they can respond in ways that might help change the situation." While addressing required state standards in language arts, Larissa used her lesson to highlight a Mexican American activist and to discuss ways to initiate change in one's community. This emphasis on agency reflects the potential of *testimonio* to explore students' own lived experiences and ultimately foster solidarity in the struggle for social justice (Anzaldúa, 1990; El Ashmawi et al., 2018).

Ruth also used a picture book to explore undocumented immigration. The student conversations during her read-aloud of *Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote* (Tonatiuh, 2013) led to a realization that her students, although familiar with immigration issues, understood it only within the context of Mexico to the U.S. *"Me di cuenta que (el estudiante) sólo pensó de la inmigración de México... ellos sólo tienen un poco más entendimiento de la inmigración de una perspectiva"* [I realized that (the student) only thought of Mexican immigration...they only have a little more understanding of immigration from one perspective.]. Ruth felt it was clear that the lesson *"fue relacionada a muchas vidas de mis estudiantes"* [was related to many of my students' lives] and understood that exploring immigrant experiences beyond those with which her students were already familiar would be a natural instructional progression. While her students' *testimonios* revealed their rich knowledge of immigration from Mexico to the United States, Ruth recognized the need to include the *testimonios* of other immigrants to nurture and introduce a more nuanced understanding of similarities and differences in the immigrant experience.

Immigration as Not Controversial

In spite of supposed programmatic shifts toward culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum, teacher education researchers have paid scant attention to immigrant students (Goodwin, 2016), suggesting an ongoing lack of focus on immigration in teacher preparation. Moreover, many educators view immigration not as an essential part of the American fabric but as a controversial issue to be avoided (Graff, 2010). Luisa and Isela both admitted to feeling nervous prior to teaching their lessons, which included discussions about Donald Trump followed by students writing him persuasive letters. Luisa explained, *"Todas las respuestas que me ofrecieron fueron increíbles y respetuosos. Aunque sentí un poco nerviosa para preguntarles cerca del Presidente, sus respuestas no fueron lo que esperé. No eran positivas, pero no eran groseros o inapropiados"* [All the responses they offered were incredible and respectful. Although I felt a little nervous about asking questions about the president, their answers were not what I expected. They were not positive, but they were not rude or inappropriate.]. Additionally, Luisa described being impressed by her students' enthusiasm and participation.

Isela was also surprised that the discussion during her lesson was much more respectful than what she recorded during the WATT interview, when several students called Trump a racist. *"No tenía algún incidencia [sic] con mis estudiantes particularmente porque eran muy respetuosos del tema... Les dije que tenemos que mantener respeto para nuestro presidente incluso si no le gustamos"* [I didn't have any incidents with my students particularly because they were very respectful of the topic.... I told them that we have to maintain respect for our president even if he doesn't like us.]. Notably, Isela included herself, alongside her students, as part of the community targeted by the president's hostile, xenophobic rhetoric. However, rather than disparage the president on a personal level, Isela's students composed letters to President Trump about how he could improve the country, with statements like *"los inmigrantes hacen este país mejor"* [immigrants make this country better]. Despite her initial hesitation to teach this topic, Isela realized, *"Esto es algo que es muy relevante en sus vidas. No es algo controversial para ellos"* [This is something very relevant in their lives. It is not something controversial for them.]. The quotidian nature of immigration *and* discrimination was a part of her students' world, regardless of the preservice teachers' own levels of (dis)comfort with these issues.

In their post-lesson reflections, both Luisa and Isela described a contrast between their personal fears and anxieties in discussing the president—which initially struck them as a controversial issue—and the pride of discovering their students' comfort, openness, and respect in the same lessons. The pre-service teachers attributed their students' interest and engagement in the lessons to the deep relevance of immigration to the children's lives and realized that something so personal to their students was not controversial, but rather a fact of their daily lives. In direct response to the difficult funds of knowledge revealed in students' WATT *testimonios*, the preservice teachers' lessons recognized students as producers of knowledge and centered agency through the act of writing letters to President Trump, drawing from students' lived experiences as immigrants and children of immigrants who felt threatened by the new president.

Immigration in the Past and Present

The Southwestern state where this study was conducted was part of Mexico before it was ceded to the United States as part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The last two decades have

witnessed a shift from mostly Mexican immigration, now on the decline, to more Central American immigration (Goodwin, 2016); nonetheless, in a state with a longstanding Mexican American political and social history, a broader understanding of its immigrant history is indispensable but largely absent in school curriculum. As the preservice teachers used their WATT interviews to inform the creation of their integrated lesson plans, several of them decided to juxtapose their students' contemporary preoccupations with immigration issues with historical examples.

Before WATT, Celeste taught a traditional lesson on the civil rights movement. For her WATT follow-up lesson, she decided to "*utilizar el conocimiento previo del movimiento para los derechos civiles de los afroamericanos para que mis estudiantes hagan conexiones con ese movimiento y los esfuerzos de los mexicano americanos para los mismos derechos*" [use the prior knowledge of the African American civil rights movement so that my students make connections to that movement and the efforts of Mexican Americans for the same rights]. However, her students struggled to understand how different groups experienced segregation and discrimination. *"Los niños leyeron informes acerca de la huelga nacional en febrero, 'Un día sin inmigrantes.' Mis estudiantes son muy conscientes de ese momento, pero nunca lo habían conectado con el movimiento"* [The children read news articles about the 'A Day without Immigrants' national strike in February. My students are very conscious of that moment, but they had never connected it with the (civil rights) movement.]. Celeste attributed this disconnect to the fact that curriculum tends to treat the civil rights movement as something resolved in the 1970s, but she was determined to push students to look more deeply at the ongoing struggle: *"Sin embargo, esto niega a todas las injusticias que han sufrido los mexicano americanos después de eso. La lucha todavía no ha terminado, y quería que mis estudiantes fueran más pensativos en eso [sic]"* [However, this negates all the injustices that Mexican Americans have suffered after that. The struggle has not yet ended, and I wanted my students to be more thoughtful about that.]. Celeste recognized the limitations of social studies curriculum and sought to expose her students to modern-day racism and discrimination across ethnoracial groups; in particular, her pedagogical shift from the Black/white binary to contemporary struggles for immigrant rights signaled her efforts to teach multiple oppressions across different groups and over time to build solidarity.

Historians (Lomawaima, 2013; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998), activists (Espinoza, Cotera, & Blackwell, 2018), and social studies scholars (Halagao, 2004; Rodríguez, 2015, 2018; Salinas, Fránquiz, & Naseem Rodríguez, 2016) have also troubled the binary by stressing the importance of broader inclusion of racial and immigrant histories. Ultimately, a more inclusive narrative is more complex, robust, and conscious of the exclusionary nature of traditional K-12 social studies curriculum. By connecting contemporary xenophobia to past civil rights struggles, the preservice teachers attempted to illustrate what Hall (2005) calls "the long civil rights movement." Such an approach disrupts the neatly resolved narrative of the fight for civil rights as contained in the 1950s and 1960s by Black actors who overcame injustice and expands the struggle to include the Chicano Movement, longstanding Mexican American activism, and ongoing societal inequities across racial and other identity groups. A longer view of immigration-related struggles can support learners in understanding that all newcomers to the United States must negotiate, to varying degrees, some level of discrimination, hardship, and/or acculturation.

Conclusion

The preservice teachers in this study used the difficult funds of knowledge revealed in the *testimonios* of their bilingual students as both witness and curriculum (Bryson, 2017) to inspire

lessons about immigration and the Trump presidency grounded in their students' identities, histories, and resilience. Their work illustrates how, with support, preservice teachers of Color can acquire critically humanizing pedagogies for their future classrooms (Brown, 2014; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2017), as demonstrated by their inclusion of Latinx and immigrant activists (e.g., Emma Tenayuca; A Day Without Immigrants strike) and centering of undocumented immigrants in the classroom (*Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote*). Importantly, the teachers drew from students' WATT *testimonios* to engage in transformative pedagogies that welcomed students' experiences and supported student agency, utilizing *testimonio* as both method and pedagogy.

Efforts to increase inclusion and embrace cultural and linguistic diversity in teacher education often rely on superficial approaches to multiculturalism that appease the white majority and continue to alienate preservice teachers of Color. Immigration is a topic essential to the United States' past and present, yet many teachers consider it too controversial to teach beyond traditional master narratives of the Pilgrims, Ellis Island, and idyllic stories of people seeking opportunity (Vasquez, 2018). This study demonstrates how bilingual preservice teachers of Color used course assignments to explore young students' existing understandings of immigration and applied those insights to lesson design and implementation. Students' *testimonios* exposed difficult funds of knowledge that included intimacies with deportation and the attendant fear of such traumatic events happening in their families, generating new starting points for the preservice teachers who recognized the depth of their existing knowledge.

Since Trump's election and the xenophobic and Islamophobic executive orders that followed his inauguration, teachers must consider how immigrant and other marginalized students' difficult funds of knowledge impact their ability to learn and thrive. The preservice teachers' use of *testimonio* demonstrates how students' lived experiences are informative and vital to improving the teacher-student relationship and overall learning environment. When teachers solicit students' *testimonios* about complex, deeply personal topics such as immigration, they validate alternative epistemologies rarely addressed in the curriculum. Undoubtedly, teachers must create safe spaces for students to share *testimonios*, since such revelations may include traumatic and violent details and can potentially endanger families if privacy is violated. Additionally, offering opportunities for students to express themselves in languages other than English and through illustration or movement make *testimonio* accessible to our youngest learners, emergent bilinguals, and children who communicate best through multiple modalities.

We assert that the mandated school curriculum offers historical narratives that situate students of Color as outsiders; students of Color often know these narratives but don't believe them. Concurrently, through the (hi)stories shared by their Communities of Color, they may believe in counter-narratives but may not fully know those narratives as they are omitted in schools (Wertsch, 2000). *Testimonios* draw from the deep histories and funds of knowledge of marginalized communities and can create noteworthy epistemological shifts and counter-narratives that disrupt exclusionary mainstream narratives. Informed and student-centered pedagogical approaches, such as those described above, are essential to recognizing the multiple truths of students' lived experiences and to fostering solidarity with marginalized communities in the Trump era. Given recent calls for teacher education to more deliberately create equitable classrooms for the growing population of Latinx youth (Bondy & Braunstein, 2017), *testimonio* and difficult funds of knowledge offer important pedagogical possibilities worthy of further exploration and classroom implementation in the ongoing struggle toward justice for all.

Notes

1. Thank you to the faculty fellows and editorial board of the 2018 *Curriculum Inquiry* Writers Workshop for their critique of dark funds of knowledge.
2. In spite of allegations by Trump and others regarding the criminal nature of undocumented immigrants (Mexicans in particular) to the U.S., data overwhelmingly repudiates these claims (Dixon & Williams, 2015).

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