Sound Traumas:
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Data, Disability, Detour, Détournement

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I NTEREST HAS BEEN PERCOLATING in the educational application of images to convey information in data visualizations, also known as infographics (Bertling et al. 2021; Kammer et al., 2021; Shreiner et al., 2021; Tønnessen, 2020). This may be partly a curricular manifestation of the positivist culture of data-driven education (Grodoski, 2018; Klein, 2014; Sweeny, 2017), in keeping with a long visual legacy of empirical research within education, dating back to the study of drawing among proponents of the Child Study movement at the turn of the 20th century (Efland, 1990; Korda, 2020; Levi & Tucker, 2020; Ryan, 2009). These recent efforts continue the legacy of STEAM projects that incorporate numeracy and systematic observation into creative work, but also reflect the past few decades of education policy and research more generally, during which quantified data have become the supreme criterion of legitimacy (Irby et al., 2018), echoing a tendency to value the supposed objective authenticity of the image over the more personal and subjective category of the oral and verbal. As an intrinsically multimodal and interdisciplinary field with vocational applications, there are many ways in which data science seems relevant to the study of curriculum.

However, art has long been considered a medium for learning and study within curriculum studies (Rolling, 2009; Springgay et al., 2005), while in recent art history there is a genealogy in which information developed into an autonomous medium in global postwar fine art that de-emphasized the authority of the image, replacing it with verbal speech and visual text (Alberro & Stimson, 1999; Camnitzer et al., 1999; Gilman, 2005; Lippard, 1973; Ramirez & Olea, 2004). In the Dada revival of the 1960s and 1970s, this impulse was expressed in poetic works by artists: text interacted with material space in visual works by Lawrence Weiner and Bruce Nauman, among others, and speech-based works were performed live and/or in recordings by John Cage and Steve Reich, among others. Sometimes, however, creative approaches to information merged the pedagogical epistemology of social science with the materials of archives and communications media and the content of anti-totalitarian politics. In looking at this artistic tradition, over a half-century old, there are many ways in which artists have used symbolic and analytic approaches to make artwork that defied and undermined institutions, rather than reflecting and reifying them, presaging an interest among arts education scholars and practitioners in emancipatory, sensory-based action research (Daza & Gershon, 2015; Gershon, 2020; Miraglia & Smilan, 2014).

Though the rosters skewed toward white male Americans, both Seth Siegelaub and John Wendler's (1968/2012) publication-based exhibition "Xeroxbook" and the show "Information" at the Museum of Modern Art (McShine, 1970/2017) catalogued strategies being invented at that time for depicting, informing, disseminating, and provoking through text, speech, and documentation. Feminist artists like Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Mary Kelly, Suzanne Lacy, and Andrea Fraser helped to clarify the political possibilities of this intellectual approach to artmaking (Shaked, 2017). Artists in other parts of the world, particularly in Latin America, employed a variety of tactics to introduce forms of public subterfuge in response to state repression (Bishop, 2012). Other than in the writing of Jorge Lucero (2006, 2013, 2014), who takes significant inspiration from the work of Uruguayan artist and theorist Luis Camnitzer (1980/2020), not much has been made of the language-based legacy of conceptual art and institutional critique within curriculum and pedagogy, despite the overtly didactic form and aims of much conceptualist art.[1]

Art education, for its part, has engaged for some time with the field of disability studies (Derby, 2012; Eisenhauer, 2007; Gross, 2021; Symeonidou, 2019). Significant contemporary manifestations of information-focused conceptualism can be found in work by disabled artists who are making use of assistive communication tools to poetically problematize language in new and specific ways that interfere with and mutate information, rather than faithfully representing it, using tools that mediate between text and speech. Captioning, screen readers, audio descriptions, and alt-text are harnessed by artists to generate evocative communicative conjunctures. While 20th-century conceptualists were widely known for dematerializing the art object (Lippard 1973), contemporary disabled artists are calling attention to an embodied history of technological development that has by turns engaged, exploited, and ignored the perceptual and expressive needs of disabled people (Clare, 2017; Dokumaci, 2023).

In much this same way, recognizing and reflecting back the ways in which nearly all schools project an ableist and positivist normative paradigm onto young people (Hunter-Doniger, 2017; Mayes, 2022; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007) can point to new possibilities for "data art" pedagogy. By adding a disability perspective to the avant-garde conceptualist legacy, teachers and young people can develop artistic research aimed not merely at visualizing personal habits through quantitative journaling (Lupi & Posavec, 2016), but at unsettling, criticizing, analyzing, mystifying, and publicizing a range of social dynamics, including schools and the systems of power they embody and enact, through communication tools that translate to and from the sphere of aurality, rather than visuality.

This paper explores the educational possibilities of engaging with conceptual art that focuses on information and communication not by asserting objectivity, but rather through directly engaging with specific politics related to particular bodyminds—an approach that seems to resonate with the intimately-construed modality of hearing, rather than the putatively universal faculty of vision. I begin with a discussion of artists whose works enact "sousveillance," the use of information as a politically engaged view from below rather than above. I then go in depth into forms of communication sabotage undertaken by disabled artists from the 1960s to today and close by proposing that all of these artists present not only meaningful experiments with ideas and technologies, but also educational models that can be adapted to a range of learning contexts.

Conceptualism as Sousveillance

In the 20th century, critical and popular impulses in art certainly often have worked together. Steve Mann et al. (2002) coined the neologism "sousveillance" to denote a view from below, rather than the view from above implied by the French term "surveillance." During the Cold War, artists throughout the world took up language and its transmission as sources of inspiration, and some of this work manifested radical aims in its form and/or content. These artists drew on the information-based models of systems theory and cybernetics, while the professionalized expertise of the modern security state was at the same time making information a key implement of control (Brodeur, 2010; Deleuze, 1992; Garland, 2001; Sommerer, 2022).

Guy Debord's (1967/1995) opening assertion in *The Society of the Spectacle* is that "all that once was directly lived has become mere representation" (p. 12). Growing out of the oral and textual language experiments of Lettrism, the artists of the Situationist International, aligned with the psychogeographic politics of Henri Lefebvre and distilled in Debord's utopian iconoclasm, played a major role in student organizing and resistance in the May 1968 uprisings in Paris. Also in 1968, the Argentine artist David Lamelas created an installation for the Venice Biennale, *Office of Information about the Vietnam War at Three Levels: The Visual Image, Text and Audio*, in which updates about the war came in and were printed, posted, and read aloud over electronic devices located behind a glass partition.

That same year, a group of Argentine artists risked their freedom and safety to create an ambitious didactic project entitled, *Tucumán Arde*, or *Tucumán is Burning*, which intended to inform viewers about the conditions imposed by the U.S.-backed military dictatorship on residents of the impoverished rural sugar-producing province of Tucumán. Interviews, photos, and economic research were all included in the exhibition, and the research materials were published as part of the international exhibition Documenta 12. Police pressure shut down the remote instantiation of the exhibition in the city of Rosario after two weeks, but the show in the capital of Buenos Aires was closed after two days. The crackdown on these artists had a chilling effect on Argentine art for years to come (Camnitzer 2007, p. 92). All of these artists offer models for how to share information publicly, without sacrificing complexity, in a way that is politically informed, and which teachers and students can emulate.

Figure 1
Photograph from *Tucumán Arde* installation at Rosario, 1968 (Wikimedia Commons)

In the English-speaking world, discussions of art and systems were strongly influenced by art critic and historian Jack Burnham, who in a 1969 lecture referred to art as a "mediocre teaching machine." In Burnham's (1969) prophetic vision, improvements in visual pedagogy would come about through interactive "computer-based, real time simulations" like those used in "the testing phases of the missile defense program and space program" (p. 27). However, the artist Hans Haacke, whom Burnham references in his lecture, became known for making didactic artwork that eschewed technocratic politics and technological visualization. A landmark of what would come to be known as institutional critique, Haacke's installation, *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, consists of text, photos, and images drawn from public records documenting the disreputable dealings of an exploitative New York landlord. Haacke's scheduled show of these works at the Guggenheim Museum was infamously canceled, and the curator responsible for the exhibition was fired.

Text and communication media have since become common in politically progressive art. For one example, feminist artists Margaret Harrison, Kay Hunt, and Mary Kelly spent two years recording the experiences of women working in a metal box factory in Bermondsey, in the U.K., and presented their findings as an informational exhibition: *Women and Work: A Document on the Division of Labor in Industry 1973-1975*. Other examples of reportage in conceptualist art, however, have expressed intentions beyond straightforward communication. For his 1980 *Studies in Happiness* project, Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar created a public survey and advertising campaign that asked the simple question, "Es usted feliz?" or, "Are you happy?" Since the country was under the control of brutal U.S.-backed dictator Augusto Pinochet, the expected and universally untrue answer was "yes." In 1991, American conceptualist Chris Burden created *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, a giant interactive book-like sculpture etched with three million Vietnamese names, randomly generated. Referencing artist Maya Lin's famous Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C., dedicated in 1982, Burden's piece symbolizes the loss of Vietnamese lives during the war. Studying these historical examples of censorship and official erasure can shed light on current efforts to control curriculum and can inspire group research on topics of community concern.

Similar efforts continued in the new millennium. Since 2000, the War on Terror, among other intrusions into everyday life, unleashed a deluge of artistic responses to electronic and digital surveillance, often highlighting official and corporate misuse and obscuring of information. Jenny Holzer, Steve McQueen, and Laura Poitras have made use of redacted declassified text in their work, as have Jill Magid, Jamal Cyrus, and Navine G. Khan-Dossos. Secret state operations have been a main subject of Trevor Paglen's often ambiguous images, as well as the work of Forensic Architecture, a legal advocacy organization comprised of activists with legal, technological, artistic, and design expertise. Electronic Disturbance Theater's 2007 app, *Transborder Immigrant Tool*, aimed to help migrants find water and safety in the Mojave Desert, and technology artists Ben Grosser, James Bridle, and Heather Dewey-Hagborg critique forms of electronic surveillance. Meanwhile, branching off in their own genealogy, disabled artists took the critique of information beyond content to the level of form, enacting the iterative, creative, and distorting translation of verbal and textual language.

Disability as Detour

While artists throughout history have been disabled, artists who make work consciously focused on experiences of disability have gained prominence in recent years. This correlates with the rise of critical disability studies as a robust area of research and scholarship, which in turn owes its emergence to the disability rights activism of the 1970s and 1980s, inspired by midcentury civil rights and feminist movements (Garland-Thomson, 2014). Disability activists coined "the social model" of disability, an explanation in which social conventions, institutions, and practices are taken to be primary causal factors producing the experience of disability, as opposed to individual diagnoses and personal incapacities (Shakespeare, 2006). While later activists and scholars have since added qualifications to this framework (Gabel & Peters, 2004; Puar, 2017), the social model of disability remains a vital reference point for politically conscious disabled activists. As a result, the presumption that scientific data represent neutral and incontrovertible evidence has become negatively associated with the "medical model" that the social model aimed to replace, as well as with traumatic experiences in the lives of disabled people. As in conceptualism, tools and theories of communication have thus become significant as both form and content in work by disabled artists. Unlike previous information art, however, many of these works either focus on text as a means of addressing D/deaf viewers,[2] or make use of speech as a means of addressing both visual and verbal disabilities.

The sound artist Alvin Lucier spoke with a profound and pronounced stutter. In his landmark 1970 audio performance and recording work, *I Am Sitting in a Room*, Lucier set up two tape recorders in a space and recorded a brief oral statement describing the intention of the performance, which is then played back into the space and repeatedly re-recorded until "any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed … as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have" (Lucier, 1969/n.d., para. 6). Whether despite or in keeping with his intentions, art scholar Christof Migone (2012) feels that Lucier's stutter remains the most enduring sonic element as the audio decays (p. 181). Discussing this piece, Heather Warren-Crow (2018) mulls over the degree to which Lucier's piece directly addresses disability, versus offering a more abstract and universal metaphor. But his intention to address his disability is explicit in another 1969 work, *The Only Talking Machine of its Kind in the World*, which Lucier dedicated to "any stutterer, stammerer, lisper, person with faulty or halting speech, regional dialect or foreign accent or any other anxious speaker who believes in the healing power of sound" (as quoted in Cox, 2018, p. 100). As many disabled artists have demonstrated, sound, both verbal and otherwise, offers an enormous range of ways to experimentally explore and comment on the politics of communication.

Media theorist Jonathan Sterne (2021) lost his full vocal function following surgery related to thyroid cancer. He describes impairment, which he discusses as an overlapping but non-identical category with disability, as a "detour" (p. 194), as opposed to a dead end. Hope is not lost when forced to take a detour, but ingenuity, cooperation, and the ability to improvise and develop unique skills are necessary to survive and get by in an ableist world. Sterne proposes an imaginary art exhibit themed around the voice, featuring several conceptual artworks that detour meaning through forms of translation. In Erin Gee's 2014 *Larynx Series*, the composer used an abstracted vector graphic of an endoscopic photo of a human larynx to create musical charts for a four-part vocal piece (Sterne, 2021, p. 98). For *Talking Popcorn* [2001, 2012], artist Nina Katchadourian created words by digitally translating the sounds of a popcorn popper into Morse code. When a popper caught fire and ceased to function, Katchadourian called on a range of human experts to

interpret the popper's "last words" (Sterne, 2021, p. 108). And musical expression is conveyed entirely through sign language and movement in Hodan Youssouf's 2018 silent music video *Masques*.

This kind of translation between modes and forms of communication has become a major feature of conceptual work by disabled (and d/Deaf)[3] artists, particularly in the use of adaptive communication tools, many of which are now accessible online and within schools. An early example is Lucier's 1968 composition, *Vespers*, which made use of echolocation devices designed to aid the blind (Cox, 2018, p. 95). More recently, in their 2018 piece *A Recipe for Disaster*, disabled Black artist Carolyn Lazard produced a creatively re-captioned version of one of the first television shows ever to feature closed captioning, Julia Child's classic cooking show *The French Chef*. Lazard also used their own voice to vocalize captions and add audio descriptions for blind and visually impaired people. Rather than commenting on the events on screen, Lazard's poetic text resembles a militant access manifesto, a trenchant critique of accepted ableist standards claiming and partitioning the sensorium, while also "wielding performance and aesthetic objects of dominant culture to raise skepticism about whiteness and white supremacy" (McClendon & Okello, 2021, p. 59).

Figure 2
A Recipe for Disaster, Carolyn Lazard, 2018, digital projection, 27 mins (looped)
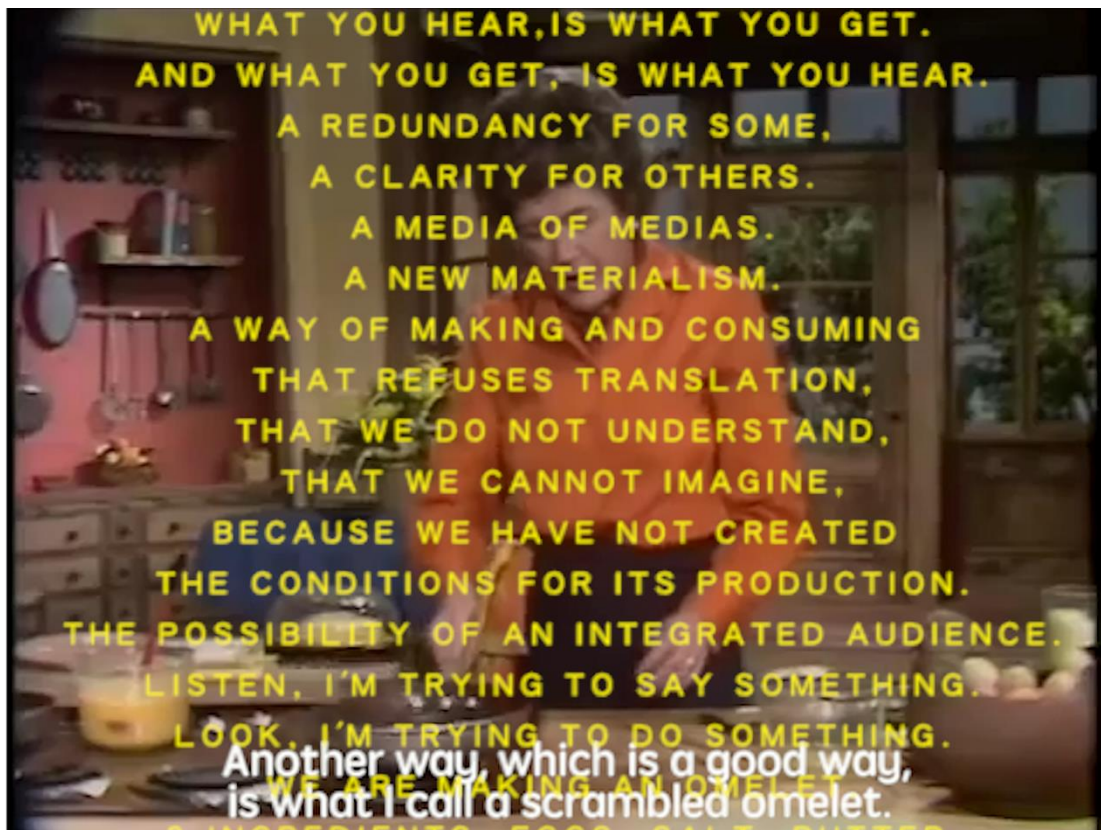
Deaf sound artist Christine Sun Kim's work offers several straightforward models for engaging socially with perception. Kim's art plays with the idiomatic features of sign language, video captioning, and musical notation. For her 2016 collaborations with Thomas Mader, *Tables and Windows* and *Classified Digits*, the two artists use sign language to talk about Deaf culture and communication through use of the "helping hands" improv game, in which one artist stands behind the other, with the partner in front providing facial expressions as the partner behind uses their arms and hands. In her 2020 video, *Closer Captions*, Kim signs about the shortcomings of video captioning and accompanies enigmatic cinematic visuals with poetic captions like "electricity attempting to find its outlet" and "words throwing punches," and in *CAPS SUBS* [2019], Kim wrote evocative captions at the top and bottom of translucent pages overlaying text and images in the art magazine *X-TRA*. For a major public art commission in Manchester, *Captioning the City*, Kim created huge all-caps sans-serif captions that were installed on building facades, such as "THE SOUND OF BUILDINGS COUNTING CARS" and "THE SOUND OF BLAMING THE MOON." In drawings on paper like *The Sound of Temperature Rising* [2016] and *The Sound of Obsessing* [2016], later developed as large-scale wall drawings, Kim makes use of musical notation to express experiences in time. And she uses other forms of visual communication, as with her drawings from 2019, *Shit Hearing People Say to Me* and *When I Play the Deaf Card*, which depict humorous pie chart infographics.

Other artists have also been working with technologies that translate between modes of verbal communication. Blind artist Bojana Coklyat and sighted disabled artist Finnegan Shannon created a project called *Alt Text as Poetry* in 2019 to encourage public engagement with the practice of adding textual descriptions to online images. "Alt text" refers to descriptions of images embedded in HTML that can be read out loud by a screen reader, but Shannon and Coklyat also include textual descriptions in other forms, including captions. The artists have presented the project many times as an in-person or remote workshop and created a website for the project, featuring a range of interfaces, which includes a clear and in-depth workbook on creating meaningful descriptions of visual information that are neither dry and perfunctory nor overly detailed.

Along similar lines, blind sound artist Andy Slater has made several works that incorporate extensive and imaginative written texts that do more than offer mundane descriptions. In the strange audioscapes of *Unseen Reheard* [2020], *Waiting Rooms* [2020], and *At Arm's Length* [2021], Slater composes with field recordings and low- and high-tech audio tools, often featuring the taps and scratches of his cane, as well as apocryphal fictional narratives. For his *Invisible Ink* series, he created blank images that only exist as alt-text descriptions. And in 2021, he collaborated with disabled composer Molly Joyce to create the video piece, *Side by Side*, in which Slater created poetic captions describing his experience of Joyce's music over footage of her composition being performed.

Figure 3
Liza Sylvestre, *Audio Description Project*, 2018. Copyright Liza Sylvestre.

Figure 4
Liza Sylvestre, *Audio Description Project*, 2018, Detail. Copyright Liza Sylvestre.

Liza Sylvestre, a deaf artist with a cochlear implant, creates works that depict many disabled detours in translating between audio and visual media. In her piece, *Audio Descriptions* [2018], Sylvestre presented audio descriptions of eight artworks from three museums, without any visual reference, and invited attendees to listen and imagine, while also displaying visual works she had engaged four artists to make in response to the audio descriptions. In her *Interference Drawings* series [2017], as well as in her video piece *__a_ i_ I _old you a __ory in a language I _an_ _ear?* [2014], Sylvestre obscures written or spoken text in a way that recreates her own experience of selective inability to perceive certain sounds. For her 2019 installation *The Conversation*, or *_ommuni_a_ion*, she showed a two-channel video projection with two images of herself speaking on facing walls with a visual blur filter aligned to different levels of audible discernibility. The exhibition also featured illustrations of fallacious sign language translations and a booth where visitors attempted to communicate with Sylvestre while wearing headphones that obstructed their perception. Her 2017 series, *Chart Drawings*, feature abstracted forms based on data visualizations, while for her series of *Captioned* videos, *Channel Surfing* [2017] and *Twentieth Century* [2018], as well as her two-channel video, *Third Space* [2019], Sylvestre adds her own captions to silenced TV and cinema footage.

Works such as these take up visual text and verbal speech as forms of expression germane to both conceptual art and social functionality, dealing with information as sensory experience rather than abstract content, available for interpretation by the audience as well as the artist. These artists play with language and communication in the manner of Dada and neo-Dada conceptualist artists but in a context grounded in the embodied experience of non-access to able-bodied media, an alienation that offers a form of aesthetic distance. The translation these artists orchestrate between modes of perception and idioms of communication enacts new forms of ekphrasis, the poetic tradition of describing images in words, famously exemplified in John Keats' (1819/n.d.) poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn." As different minds, media, and machines translate information through successive ekphrases, meanings stretch and change, and the limits of communication are foregrounded.

These ekphrastic repetitions are not only semantic but also somatic, as well as historic. In his 2012 book on the history of the MP3 audio file format, written before the surgery that made him disabled, Jonathan Sterne recounts the history of telephonic engineering, one of many technologies that were developed to aid disabled people, with the aid of disabled people. Along with voice recognition and speech-to-text tools, and other obvious items like curb cuts and fidget spinners, there is also the typewriter, with its ubiquitous alphanumeric keyboard. In his treatise on the mechanization of thought via modern communication, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, media theorist Friedrich Kittler (1986/1999) contends: "Blindness and deafness, precisely when they affect speech or writing, yield what would precisely be beyond each: information on the human information machine. Whereupon its replacement by mechanics can begin" (p. 189).

Kittler does not imply that sensorially impaired people are incomplete or insufficient, thus avoiding the eugenics of Alexander Graham Bell (Greenwald, 2006). Rather, Kittler, who highlights early typewriters created by blind inventors Foucauld and Pierre, opposes the ableist ideal of an integrated Vitruvian body with a model of the mind or self reducible to the functionality of multiple organs and systems, including but not limited to the brain, the ears, and the voice. What Cristoph Cox (2018) ascribes to vocalization, in analyzing works by Alvin Lucier, could be extended to all human communication, including communication within and about education: "the product of a machine subject to failures of all sorts" (p. 102).

Resisting Rationalization

Minoritized subversion of official representations is not restricted to disabled artists, and particularly not white disabled artists. Kittler's insights could extend to the algorithmic grid drawings produced by the Black conceptualist Charles Gaines, a quasi-digital depersonalizing rasterization of organic images that Kris Cohen (2022) presents as a formal tactic for diffusing the aura of integrated ocular individualism implicit in white cultural supremacy. These drawings could be compared in turn to the ingenious sociological infographics created by W. E. B. DuBois for the 1900 Paris Exposition, which Lynda Olman (2022) talks about as an expression of resistance in content against the racist social Darwinism of contemporary social theory, while also an expression of resistance in form to a "panopticism" implicit in mapping practices undertaken to enact, extend, and reinforce centralized control. And these visual works could be seen as precedents for the performances of stuttering Black sound artist and musician JJJJJerome Ellis, who brings his experience of spoken language into music, performance, and video works that represent the traumatic and creative disruptions that help to define Black history, spirituality, and culture (McClendon & Okello, 2021).

Artworks that recontextualize communication offer a meaningful contrast with traditional conceptions of art and information. These works by DuBois, Gaines, and Ellis can be seen as drawing on a Black oral tradition of questioning and reinterpreting history and language through story and song—as with the King James Bible in the case of enslaved Africans or, in the case of these more recent figures, the transparency presumed in infographics and other standardized forms of visual and vocal representation. Disruption is a unique and essential element of diasporic Black aesthetics and is also a key aspect of ways in which artists of all backgrounds push against ideals of integrity and perfection, a tendency that Tobin Siebers (2010) described as "disability aesthetics."

Speaking of the celebration of accidental cracks in the 1915-1923 piece, *The Large Glass (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even)*, by its creator (and challenger of retinal art) Marcel Duchamp, Deaf theorist Michael Davidson (2022) states, "The incorporation of error into the work acknowledges the fragile nature of aesthetic value and complicates any presumption of a gap between art and life" (p. 2). Davidson (2022) goes on to elaborate how and why the bodies of disabled artists are often inseparable from the ideas in their artwork, as expressed through subjective and imperfect ekphrastic translations in captioned video works by Lazard, Kim, Sylvestre, and others (pp. 157–182). This intimate link between information and material existence has important implications for education as well as for art, particularly as regards the way in which disability conceptualism, through sound and text, reveals distortions and refractions inherent to language and present in all communication and, thus, in curriculum.

The detouring and *détournement* schemes of conceptual art, particularly as pursued by disabled artists, offer tools that are critical—meaning necessary—resistant, and precise, in understanding the uses and abuses of data in contemporary schooling and in the wider media landscape. Numeracy can be promoted through art lessons that deal with data, research, information, and communication, but the use of quantified measures in evaluating educational aptitude and achievement, many of which have explicitly eugenic origins (Au, 2009; Hunter-Doniger, 2017; Stoskopf, 2002; Watkins, 2001, Winfield, 2007), can be historicized and critiqued. The creative aspects of using facts and measurements to tell stories can be explored in ways that question the algorithms that govern everything from school funding to online advertising (Daza & Gershon, 2015; Gershon, 2020; James, 2019).

Emulating a project like *Tucumán Arde* can involve using collective action research as a jumping-off point for making collaborative immersive artworks on any matter of public concern, relating to events and conditions within the school, or histories that haven't received adequate attention. However, teachers in some American school districts now face a degree of scrutiny comparable to that faced by Argentine artists during the years of police-state repression during the Cold War. For that reason, following the example of Alfredo Jaar, provocative questions can be used to tell a story without a fixed outcome, in which the reader, listener, or viewer can reach their own conclusions. Toward this end, as the examples I've mentioned demonstrate, the productive distortions and critical fabulations of disabled conceptualist artists are highly worth taking up in classrooms.

The discipline imposed on disabled students by the eugenic history of standardized testing is softened but sometimes also deepened in the quantified techniques of special education (Baglieri et al., 2010; Connor, 2019; Gabel, 2005; Mayes, 2022; McCloskey, 2018; Reid & Knight, 2006; Wexler, 2016), and forms of group inquiry focused on disability can be one way to push against the individuating and normalizing pressure that all schooling imposes on students (Erwin et al., 2021). The sonic and textual embodied ekphrases practiced by disabled conceptual artists like Lucier, Lazard, Kim, Ellis, Slater, and Sylvestre make possible a collaborative conversation in which students can poetically narrate their experience—educational, cultural, and/or personal—and then open it up to creative interpretation and recontextualization by other students, as well as by non-human media. Adding subversive captions or audio descriptions to narratives of educational failure may be a first step into a wider field of critical tactics in opposition to a visual and epistemological regime of measurable assessment. In keeping with principles of critical pedagogy and art-based research, sound and text art can be explored as a productive distortion of official visualizations, rather than a passive reflection that adheres to institutional parameters for validating competence.

Notes

1. Perhaps the most noteworthy overlap of recent visual culture with the visual idioms of conceptualist art, albeit entirely coincidental, is in memes, which have gotten some attention in art education literature (Jones, 2015; Sederholm et al., 2022; Smith, 2020).
2. Over the last few decades, many people who live with hearing loss have become thoroughly integrated into communities formed around hearing loss, such that they identify themselves with the capitalized term Deaf, used to indicate a cultural as opposed to a merely sensory identification with small-d deafness.
3. Historically, many members of the culturally Deaf community have rejected the label of disability. They may also reject technologies designed to enhance hearing and strongly insist on communication through signing rather than verbal language. For this paper, I am including Deaf artists like Kim under the general heading of disabled artists, with whom she is commonly associated. Some chronically ill people have also resisted adopting the disabled identity.

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Sonic Dread
Classroom Encounters with the Sounds of Gun Violence through Film

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D URING THE SPRING OF 2021—my last as a full-time secondary social studies teacher—I walked with purpose down a hallway at school, off to complete one urgent task or another. I remember moving quickly through the space, head down, mind occupied by one of many swirling thoughts: planning my next lesson, a parent's urgent email, the pile of papers waiting for grades sitting atop my desk. That is until a sound slowed, then stopped, both my footsteps and my whirling mind.

Cracking out from a classroom down the hall was a jarring *pop pop*, the noise seeming to ricochet off the colorful bulletin boards and club posters decorating the walls, incongruous and strange. The discordant sound of gunshots in a school is the waking nightmare of so many teachers today. I felt the wrongness of it in my body—my heart rate increased, my breath quickened, the effects of adrenaline coursing through my limbs. I realized almost immediately that the noise I heard was not that of a real gun firing, but I was shaken, nonetheless. My feet began to move again as I approached the classroom and peered in through the opened door. The lights in the room were dimmed, the teacher seated at his desk, the students' rapt attention focused on a screen at the front of the room. A movie was playing.

Informed by research on teaching difficult knowledge and histories (Britzman, 1998, 2000; Epstein & Peck, 2018; Garrett, 2017; Miles, 2019; Sheppard, 2010; Zembylas, 2014) and sonic studies in education (Dernikos, 2020, 2021; Gershon, 2011, 2013, 2017, Wargo, 2018), this paper critically examines the affective implications of a common pedagogical strategy used to teach difficult knowledge: film.

To conceptualize sound and affect, I take up Dernikos et al.'s (2020) notion of "affective scratchings," which can be understood as moving beyond a consideration of what affect *is* and into theorizing what affect mobilizes or activates in a complex assemblage. Sonic affective scratchings, when "sounds extend into bodies ↔ bodies extend into sound" (p. 3), vibrate through space and into human, non-human, and more-than-human bodies. The bodily sensations provoked by contact with the sensorium (Massumi, 2002b)—in which sounds are constantly vibrating (Gershon, 2013) and circulating—settle or route (Garrett, 2017) into feelings and emotions (Ahmed, 2015).

Affective scratchings produced by this exchange are "sonorous flickers, gut punches, or complex mobilities [that] reveal crevices and fissures that launch new worlds and open us to multiple possibilities" (Dernikos et al., 2020, p. 3). In a classroom assemblage, the sound of a gunshot might cut through complex entanglements in ways that produce powerful affective scratchings.

Analysis of a film that features the sounds of gunshots is central to this article. Scholarship on the use of film to teach social studies tends to prioritize analysis that examines how students encounter difficult knowledge ocularly through a focus on what students *see* on screen. However, there appears to be little research regarding the ways in which teachers and learners process the sounds of trauma in film—specifically the sound of a gunshot. In a moment when a shooting at school is (tragically) not beyond the realm of possibility, educators must recognize that their eyes are not the only part of our bodies that experience the residue of violent events, that seeing is not the only sense that absorbs the always flowing and constantly circulating forces in the spaces we inhabit. Considering this context, I argue that teachers who choose to use film as a tool to teach difficult knowledge and history should be attentive to both what students see *and* what they hear.

Sonic studies that enrich our understanding of both the epistemological and ontological affects of hearing underpin the conceptual framework of this article. For instance, Evens (2002) explores the affective intensities that occur when particular sounds and noises are processed through epistemologies of hearing, arguing that sounds have a kind of persistence that "hangs in the air, in the room, in bodies," vibrations lingering and recirculating, causing our bodies to "hum along with the noise of the universe" (p. 177).

Goodman's (2012) work delves into ontologies of hearing, examining how vibrational forces are registered and felt prior to being epistemologically assigned. Arguing that sounds have reservoirs of potential that produce affective "vibes" in and across bodies, Goodman describes a condition "in which hearing overrides the other senses, displacing the reign of vision in the hierarchy, producing a flatter, more equal sensory ration" (p. 27). These are moments that can transform "bad vibes" into a "sonic ecology of dread: fear activated deliberately" (p. 29). Sounds, like images, are attached to histories and settle into subjectivities that can satisfy, initiate frisson, or provoke what Massumi and Manning (in Weig, 2019) describe as a "schiz in the soma" (n.p.). Similar to seeing trauma, hearing it can be intensely destabilizing.

Goodman (2012) advances a notion of the sonic anticipation of threat, arguing that sounds are charged with futurity, "the *activity of the future in the present,* and therefore a portal into the operative logic of fear within the emergent paradigm of preemptive power" (p. xviii). The sound of gunshots is pregnant with potential dread, located on a grisly map in our minds, a cartography informed by the pervasive and ever-present climate of gun violence in the United States. This is not to say that teachers should avoid constructing encounters that generate discomfort, but rather that educators should think carefully about sight *and* sound when considering pedagogical and instructional approaches and sources.

This article explores how the sound of gunshots in films shown to students in a classroom, understood in the context of the always present threat of school shootings, have the possibility of producing affective responses that move from *bad vibes* to an *ecology of dread* through an activation of anticipatory threat (Goodman, 2012, p. xviii). In the pages that follow, I begin by introducing a theoretical framework that guides my analysis. Using this framework, I explore curricular materials for a film frequently used to teach difficult knowledge. Prior to choosing a film, I considered selection criteria that would help me to illuminate the implications of sonic dread in a classroom space. I wanted to find a film that is widely used by social studies teachers in the United States to guide students in learning about a topic considered difficult history. As well as

being widely used, I sought to locate a film that includes at least one scene that featured the sounds of gunshots. In addition, the film had to have several examples of easily accessible curriculum that would ground my analysis in possible teacher practice. *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, 1994) best fits these criteria. Though my findings were null, I used my own encounter with the sonic intensities of *Schindler's List* as a way to contemplate the affective potential and implications of inviting the sounds of gunshots into the classroom. The final section of this paper will provide analysis of this process and considerations for pedagogical and curricular shifts that might attend to vibrations that might provoke sonic dread.

Theoretical Framework

Teaching difficult knowledge in social studies is an endeavor layered with enormous pedagogical and curricular complexity for both teachers and students. Encountering the pain and trauma that others have experienced, that has been enacted on humans by other humans while being supported and perpetuated by systems that, in many cases, still exist, is profoundly unsettling. Bearing witness to past suffering simultaneously implicates witnesses while compelling new negotiations with once familiar understandings. Teaching difficult knowledge is—and should be—disruptive. It also plays an important role in guiding students to be able to engage with the social world as ethical citizens (Garrett, 2017). However, challenges to teaching and learning difficult knowledge are compounded by legislative efforts to scrub social studies formal curricula of issues that might provoke discomfort in students (Crenshaw, 2023; Marrun et al., 2023; Singer, 2023).

In order to broadly explore what it means to teach and learn difficult knowledge and histories in social studies, I first briefly trace the epistemological lineage of difficult knowledge and its relationship with emotion and affect in the classroom. I rely on the works of a number of social studies researchers who have produced important scholarship in this field of inquiry, including Epstein and Peck (2018), Garrett (2017), Miles (2019), Sheppard (2010), and Zembylas (2014). Drawing upon research grounded in the psychoanalytic turn to affect, these scholars explore how students and teachers "make sense of the complex intersection of difficult histories, emotions, and affects" (Miles, 2019, p. 478) in social studies classrooms.

Second, I turn to a common pedagogical strategy used to teach difficult knowledge in social studies: film. In particular, I seek to explore the ways in which learners and educators encounter difficult knowledge through sounds heard when watching a movie—specifically the sound of a gunshot. When viewing a film, the audience can choose to shut eyes or turn away from the screen. However, they cannot shut their ears—we lack an earlid (Kim-Cohen, 2009/2021).

Underpinning this analysis is a rich body of research on the role of sound in cinematic experiences, including work by Altman (1992, 1999, 2012), Beck and Grajeda (2008), Chion (2009, 1994/2019), and Holman (2010). In bringing these two strands of inquiry together—difficult knowledge in social studies and sound studies in film—I build upon research on sonic trauma, including important work by Gershon (2018), Goodman (2012), Dernikos (2020/2021), and Daughtry (2015), to explore the implications of hearing the sound of gunshots while teaching difficult histories and knowledge. Given the grim reality of gun violence in the United States, I argue that educators must be attentive to the various ways that learners encounter and process the complex modalities through which difficult knowledge presents—both ocularly, through our eyes, and sonically through our ears.

Difficult Knowledge in Social Studies

Literature on teaching difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998) and history in social studies underscores the complexities inherent in navigating sensitive and challenging topics in the classroom, such as war, genocide, and structural racism. Research on teaching difficult history (Epstein & Peck, 2018; Garrett, 2017; Miles, 2019; Sheppard & Levy, 2019; Stoddard, 2022) frequently draws upon the work of Deborah Britzman (1998), whose psychoanalytical approach to learning difficult knowledge focuses on how such encounters affect learners in two simultaneous and related contexts: "the inside or the psychic, and the outside or the social" (p. 2). Considering the implications of Britzman's theorization on social studies education, Miles (2019) makes clear that there are important distinctions between difficult knowledge and difficult histories, though the interrelated nature of these two concepts compel social studies researchers who seek to understand the effects of difficult histories to frequently return to Britzman's findings.

However, before exploring the complexities and implications of these concepts, both taken together and apart, it is necessary to define these distinctions. According to Britzman (2000), where difficult *knowledge* is concerned more broadly with how people attach to the knowledge of the other's suffering, difficult *history* more specifically refers to "periods that reverberate in the present and surface fundamental disagreements over who we are and what values we hold" (Gross & Terra, 2018, p. 52). As social studies is not limited to history education but instead encompasses a vast array of fields interested in deepening our understanding of the social world (e.g., economics, psychology, anthropology, geography, and civics), both difficult knowledge and difficult history are relevant to this discussion

A central objective of teaching social studies is to help students become "ethical subjects in relation to other ethical subjects" (Britzman, 2000, p. 37), an understanding Garrett (2017) links to engaging in democratic practices. Proponents of confronting difficult knowledge in social studies argue that teachers must help students to encounter the full spectrum of human behavior and potential. Only through such encounters can students truly and deeply appreciate the historical context that underlies their relationships with others.

Nevertheless, this approach to social studies is by no means universally embraced, as evidenced by the recent spate of anti-memory and anti-history legislation that seeks to surveille and regulate how the past is encountered in the classroom (Gross, 2022; Pollock et al., 2022). Where proponents of teaching difficult knowledge do so in order to render each other ethical subjects and maintain that doing so obligates the learner to "that which was destroyed but has not gone away" (Britzman, 2000, p. 39), opponents propose an education stripped of "pain and remorse." Instead, opponents favor featuring "only stories of war heroism, emplotment, and redemption" that does not "reenact the past in a way that could give insight into the present" but rather proposes a "congratulatory insistence that the present is better because the past made it so" (p. 39). Among the many reasons an anti-difficult truths/pro antiseptic approach is problematic, Britzman argues that it leaves learners with "nothing to do, nothing to think" (p. 39).

Perhaps, then, what is needed is a less "safe" (Dumont, 2012) and more thought-full and risky (Gershon, 2012) pedagogy. Teaching social studies *through* difficult knowledge by embracing the powerful affects and emotions produced in such encounters offers educators the potential to take students beyond disassociation and present "opportunities for actions of affective solidarity" (Zembylas, 2014, p. 404). In other words, such an approach has the possibility of helping students to feel agentive rather than helpless in the face of past, present, and future trauma.

However, introducing difficult knowledge also invites conditions that may provoke precarity, insecurity, and discomfort for students and teachers alike.

Recent research around the affective turn in education (see Dernikos et al. 2020; Snaza et al., 2016) investigates how affective encounters produce different and often unpredictable responses in students. Snaza (2020) argues:

> Students' affective attunement to the space, to the other human bodies, and to the histories that materialize in the classroom shapes what they *feel* in ways that determine how they can listen, how they can respond, and how they can engage … . Bodies in the room vibrate differently, feel differently, and attune differently. And these differences have everything to do with the ways those bodies moved through other spaces (institutional, intellectual, geographic, and psychic) before they walked in or were brought in. (p. 116)

As Snaza (2020) notes, students entering a classroom space compose a unique assemblage informed by countless entangled subjectivities. Teachers who do not heed these complexities while also recognizing the unique cultural moment that students exist within may not succeed when introducing difficult knowledge as a way to create more agentive, empathetic, and ethical students.

Wozolek (2020) powerfully reminds us that

> schools do not exist in a vacuum, and the violence that is learned in schools recurs in and through communities and, in turn, impacts schools. Schooling is therefore central to the resonances and reverberations (Gershon, 2017) found in the echo chamber of aggressions within an assemblage. (p. 111)

Likewise, curriculum does not exist in a vacuum. Teachers are curators of knowledge, making pedagogical decisions and content choices that map onto the classroom assemblage in complex ways.

Given this reality, teachers must attend to how difficult knowledge has the potential to create classroom environments that feel simultaneously precarious and fragile (McCall, 2022; Wozolek, 2023). In this case, fragility does not necessarily suggest a thing that is easily broken. Rather, the precarity of a fragile classroom system—one that challenges the lovely and comfortable knowledge baked into the linear, progress-oriented master narratives that often define social studies classrooms—offers untold potential. Once broken, the shattered pieces can be reattached in surprising and previously unforeseeable ways. Fragility contains potent possibilities, systems that are constantly in-the-making because they can be easily broken and rearranged countless times and ways.

In the passage above, Snaza (2020) describes a fragile and precarious classroom space that both individuates and collectivizes bodies. The *collective difference* of individual affects creates a harmony unique to that particular assemblage. It is no mistake that Snaza articulates this phenomenon using sonic terms—attunements and vibrations can be both felt and heard. These affective scratchings can create intense reverberations that have the potential to rupture a student's way of being-knowing-feeling.

Sound and Film

The intersections between sound and film studies situate my inquiry on the affective implications of introducing the sounds of gunshots in classroom spaces while teaching difficult history. Central to rich and evolving fields that investigate the role of sound in cinematic experiences is Chion's (1994/2019) influential work, *Audio-Vision—Sound on Screen*. In this work, Chion argues that sound is not merely an accompaniment to the visual, but is vital to evoking certain emotions from the audience that are "in relation to the situation depicted on screen" (p. 8). Resonant to this article is Chion's theorization on the sounds of horror when Chion writes,

> Transformed by the image it influences, sound ultimately reprojects onto the image the product of their mutual influences. There's ample evidence of this reciprocity in the case of horrible or upsetting sounds. The image projects onto them a meaning they do not have at all by themselves. (p. 19)

Similarly, Altman's (2012) concept of "semantic/syntactic" aspects of film sound offers a nuanced understanding of how sound contributes to the narrative structure and emotional resonance in cinema. Altman's (1992, 1999, 2012) research underscores the multifaceted nature of sound in film, emphasizing its ability to convey both specific meanings and broader emotional atmospheres.

Expanding on this groundwork are essays included in Beck and Grajeda's (2008) comprehensive volume, *Lowering the Boom: Critical Studies in Film Sound.* While the sounds of violence are not directly included, the authors collectively make a compelling argument for the inseparability of audio from visual when producing intense and immersive cinematic experiences. Taken together, literature on the intersections of sound and film makes clear that sounds powerfully affect a film's audience by transforming both what is heard and what is seen. As such, the next section explores why educators must be mindful of both ocular and sonic encounters when introducing difficult knowledge.

Difficult Knowledge in the Classroom: The Sonic Trauma of Gunshots

When confronted with difficult knowledge that produces a "provocation of affect" (Simon, 2011, p. 433), our often linear or hierarchical systems of understanding the world are destabilized. Such encounters have the possibility of producing new potentials that veer from the well-worn refrains that define our conceptualization of the world and our place in it. These breaks can feel profoundly uncomfortable. The inclination, then, might be to turn away and reject difficult knowledge or re-route it to something more familiar (Garrett, 2011).

This tension presents a challenge to educators. On one hand, there exists a desire to leverage difficult knowledge in ways that "repair severed cultural continuities, enhance inter-group understanding, and destabilize problematic boundaries" (Lehrer et al., 2011, p. 8). On the other, the acknowledgement of the limitations to introducing difficult knowledge through filters of media and the "official curriculum," all while negotiating one's own discomfort with learning and teaching about past violence. This is compounded by our cultural saturation in (and/or obsession with) difficult knowledge—the near constant swirl of bits and pieces of trauma that flow through classrooms and schools (Wozolek, 2020).

Indeed, Lehrer et al. (2011) contend that "simply making people face the horrors humans are capable of perpetrating seems to have lost some of its galvanizing force" (p. 1). Sontag (2003) similarly cautions against obscene voyeurism and treating "history-as-spectacle" (p. 123) and challenges the veracity of compassion fatigue while also acknowledging that "compassion is an unstable emotion" that if not "translated into action" can wither (p. 101).

Teachers, confronted with the potential of student apathy in the face of overwhelming suffering across their study of history, might attempt to initiate a *shock to thought* or a moment when "the expressive momentum hits the body with its full ontogenetic force" (Massumi, 2002a, p. xxxi). A shock to thought is jarring because it halts attempts to merge newly acquired difficult knowledge in ways that produce it as resembling more familiar systems. Dale (2006) writes that "a point of change is the sudden shock when thought realizes itself in the body" (p. 91). Because each body in a classroom is accompanied by diverse and sometimes unknowable worldviews and identities, attempts at provoking a shift in consciousness might have unforeseen consequences.

Although everything has the potential to resonate (e.g., 2020), where some bodies will resonate with each other, finding solidarity and community through attunement of shared experiences and positionalities, others will produce discordant and jarring cacophonies that have the potential to (re)activate hidden traumas. Stoddard et al. (2017) remind us that "trauma can sometimes emerge as a form of difficult history that groups do not want to face or acknowledge— or that they do not want to engage with because they are cognizant of the trauma these representations could induce" (p. 5). In other words, "emotional response is grounded in the individual and collective experiences" of students in shared educational spaces (p. 5).

Each student in a classroom is tethered to a unique blend of inheritances, subjectivities, and encounters. Such differences mean that a sonic shock to thought will produce a diversity of emotional and affective responses in students that a teacher curating such an experience should try to anticipate and make space for, while recognizing that we can never encompass a totality of possibilities in a complex assemblage.

A frequently used vehicle for initiating a shock to thought in students is film. Films provide a sensory experience that saturates the classroom space with sights *and* sounds, immersing the audience in a moment in ways that reading a text may not. The sensory texture produced by watching and hearing a film can communicate a layered and dimensional complexity that plunges the audience into a particular moment (Altman, 2012; Chion, 1994/2019). As such, films can be used in social studies classes to engender historical consciousness and empathy (Donnelly, 2020; Moller, 2018). Anwer and Varner (2019) argue that by guiding students through engagements with violent films, using films not as an "afterthought that help(s) augment an argument or ideas we already knew" (p. 142) but rather as "teaching machines" (Giroux, 2020, p. 68), they are able tap into a deeper understanding of a concept or topic. Through calling "attention to the corporality of the visceral response" they seek to thwart "intellectual tepidness and anesthetizing tendencies that" exposure to violence can induce (Anwer & Varner, 2019, p. 143).

Stoddard et al. (2017) maintain that using film to teach difficult history can effectively challenge dominant narratives, revealing new or unfamiliar worldviews and epistemologies. Walsh et al. (2017) emphasize that showing certain films to students produces affectively difficult history, which "becomes difficult because of the events portrayed and because of the struggle to empathize with the victims, bystanders, perpetrators, and those who resist in order to analyze them historically rather than in a moral, allegorical, or sentimentalized sense" (p. 20). These theorists make a powerful and compelling argument that conscious and collective encounters with difficult knowledge—focusing on the intellectual, emotion, physical, and affective effects of such

knowledge—can create a productively precarious learning environment. These environments challenge students to "explore reactions that don't resort to the cliches of numbness or revulsion" (Anwer & Varner, 2019, p. 159) but instead interrogate the complexity of difficult knowledge.

While the research above makes a convincing case for the use of film to teach difficult knowledge, these studies tend to prioritize analysis that examines how students encounter difficult knowledge ocularly. Though current scholarship certainly recognizes that films are felt bodily (Sobchack, 2004), guidance around classroom encounters with films about difficult history continue to center what students see and do not similarly emphasize supporting students in processing reverberations of violence. The affective scratchings of difficult knowledge can provoke somatic responses that cannot be avoided by removing the visual field (Dernikos et al., 2020). As Gershon (2017) reminds us,

> because people engage their own understandings and imaginations to create visuals with the sonic, these connections can be more difficult to distance from one's self, unlike a video where such distance is clear and immediate and where closing one's eyes remains possible. (p. 188)

Bearing in mind that "the ear analyzes, processes, and synthesizes faster than the eye" (Chion, 1994/2019, p. 10), this area deserves more attention.

The imaginations of students who have experienced gun violence themselves or who live in proximity to gun violence in their communities will be activated differently than students who have only encountered gun violence through film or other media. However, it is likely that *all* students in this country are haunted by the specter of school shootings. In 2022 alone, there were 177 incidents of gunfire on school grounds in the United States, resulting in 57 deaths (Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, 2023). In a national context where "killing is normalized and an expected daily event" (Gershon, 2017, p. 187), it may well be the case that students are both numb to the sound of gunfire and terrified for the moment it could invade their lives.

In an effort to "theorize violence through the prism of sound and sound through the prism of violence" (p. 6), Daughtry (2015) labels the sounds of war "the belliphonic," merging the root for war, "bell," with "phonic," a root word meaning sound. In creating his neologism, Daughtry compels us to recognize that the sounds of war are materially and discursively different from other sounds and should be treated as such. Though American schools are not located in war zones, Daughtry's conceptualization of the belliphonic calls us to consider questions that have important relevance when thinking about learning and teaching about difficult knowledge featuring gun violence in the United States: "What are the ethical consequences of listening to violent acts? How do sound and violence move through the world? What kinds of victims, what kinds of survivors, do belliphonic sounds create?" (p. 5).

Because classrooms are "host to complex sonic ecologies" (Brownell, 2019, p. 551) and audio haptics—being inescapable—can provoke uninvited visceral and emotional consequences, teachers who incorporate the belliphonic into their curriculum should, at the very least, anticipate the impact sonic dread/trauma might have on students. As Goodman (2012) explains, sounds have reservoirs of potential that produce affective "vibes" in and across bodies. When teaching difficult knowledge that includes the sounds of gun violence, teachers should guard against moments when sonic "bad vibes" can transform into a "sonic ecology of dread" (p. 29). While student encounters with the belliphonic are beyond the scope of this paper, further research into the implications of sonic dread on student learning is an important extension of this project. In writing this article, I

hope to open the field to a deeper conversation around the repercussions of belliphonic affective scratchings in social studies classroom spaces. In the next section, I will explore research and curriculum on a film that features the sounds of war in an effort to determine the extent to which sonic trauma is a consideration when showing students a film that depicts difficult knowledge.

Sonic Dread in *Schindler's List*

Criteria for Selection

Following the moment described at the beginning of this article, I sought to develop a deeper understanding of what happens when the sound of a gunshot vibrates through a social studies classroom, producing the potential for sonic dread to invade the assemblage. As my conceptual framework unfolded, I felt the need to ground my theorization in curriculum in order to explore how this idea might be taken up to classroom teachers. Many teachers, children, and parents carry an awareness of the persistent threat of guns in U.S. schools. Gun violence invades the hidden curriculum through the persistent threat of school shootings that manifest in the norms, values, and beliefs that are silently communicated to students—the normalization of lock-downs and shelter-ins, not to mention all too routine active shooter drills.

Gun violence bleeds into a null curriculum that is *not* taught—the content and skills that are ignored in deference to or in fear of guns. The implications of hidden and null curriculum around the sounds of gun violence in U.S. schools demand further study. For this article, I focus my inquiry on a slice of official curriculum—the texts readily available to teachers hoping to teach a difficult history through film.

To this end, I looked for a film that is widely used by social studies teachers in the United States to guide students in learning about a topic considered difficult history. As well as being widely used, I wanted to locate a film that includes at least one scene that featured the sounds of gunshots. In addition, the film had to have several examples of easily accessible curriculum that would attach my analysis to possible teacher practice. *Schindler's List* best fits these criteria.

In a study that explored how and why social studies teachers use film, Marcus and Stoddard (2007) found that the teachers in the sample used "an extraordinary amount of film in class," with 75% reporting that they use some portion of a Hollywood film a few times a week (p. 308). In their study, *Schindler's List* ranked third of the most used films. In his dissertation research, Gudgel (2015) found that 26% of teachers nationwide say that they show the film when teaching about the Holocaust. Holocaust and film education researchers both recommend *Schinder's List* as an effective tool for teaching the subject in ways that develop historical empathy and illuminate multiple perspectives (D'sa, 2020; Marcus, 2020; Marcus & Mills, 2017; Russell, 2012; Samuels, 2007).

Educational Research on the Use of *Schindler's List*

Most research agreed with Russell's (2012) observation that film can "stimulate a viewer's senses and provide images of historical and social topics that a textbook cannot" (p. 157) and that *Schindler's List* is a "visual textbook" that "conveys historical atmosphere" (p. 158). Marcus and Mills (2017) notes that "the challenge of graphic content [in *Schindler's List*] is exceptionally

relevant for using film given the medium's ability to present a narrative through a combined visual and audio narrative that includes special effects to bring the past alive" (p. 180). Though Marcus and Mills (2017) acknowledge the way that the film's audio contributes to an immersive experience for students, generally, research on the uses of *Schindler's List* focuses on the implications of visual content.

Teaching-facing Formal Curriculum for Using *Schindler's List*

To enact the first step of my inquiry, I selected three guides that teachers might draw upon if they plan to show *Schindler's List* as part of a unit on the Holocaust. Each guide is easily accessible to teachers and was developed by a credible organization known for producing trustworthy educational research. After selection, I conducted a basic quantitative analysis (Schreier, 2012) of the guides, counting the number of words that were in reference to sound. I then read the guides more holistically (Krippendorff, 2018), focusing my analysis on language that called for the audience to engage with the film on an emotional or affective level in ways that might make space for attention to the sonic.

First, USC Shoah Foundation's iWitness features a wealth of resources and activities to support teachers who want to show *Schindler's List* as a part of a unit on the Holocaust. Activities invite students to place the film in historical context through researching central figures in order to make sense of how the "individual is influenced by the political and social context of the time in which they live" (iWitness, 2023, n.p.). While the resources provide students and teachers with rich documents and activities to help contextualize and make sense of what they see when watching the film, there is no instruction around what to listen for or how to help students process what they hear.

Next, Echoes and Reflections, an organization dedicated to supporting educators in teaching the Holocaust, provides a companion guide to *Schindler's List* that brings together a variety of materials, including background information, primary and secondary sources, an audio glossary, and a number of writing questions and discussion prompts. Students are asked to describe examples of antisemitism that they observe, analyze the significance of specific quotes or moments in the film, and think critically about the filmmaker's choices. Though most of the learning activities center on what students see in the film, one question does ask students to consider both what they see and hear:

> Schindler's List is filmed primarily in black and white with a few scenes filmed in color. Identify which scenes are in color and why you think Spielberg made this artistic decision. Have students consider other artistic decisions that Spielberg made and their impact on the film. Students might want to consider such things as lighting, camera angles, music and other sounds, e.g., dogs barking, shouting in German. (Echoes & Reflections, 2018, p. 4)

This prompt asks students to think about how Spielberg's artistic choices affected their experience of watching the film yet does not use language that opens space for affective or emotional responses to sensory input.

Finally, *Facing History and Ourselves* (2018) features a resource guide for teaching *Schindler's List*. Of the three examples I examined for this brief study, this formal curriculum is the most steeped in language grounded in potential for students' emotional or affective responses

to content. In its "Viewing: Watching *Schindler's List*" lesson, the curriculum anchors learning in the question: "How can we be thoughtful, emotionally engaged viewers of *Schindler's List*? The tasks that attach to each lesson create powerful opportunities for students to process the emotions produced while watching the film. However, there is no language around the sonic trauma that students may encounter alongside the graphic violence that they see with their eyes while watching the film.

These resources offer teachers incredibly valuable support in their endeavors to teach students difficult knowledge through film. However, this short review serves to highlight the absence of discussions in social studies education around how students encounter trauma through sound—in particular, the sound of a gunshot. Given the absence of findings, I returned again to the film and considered how my own encounter with the sound of gunshots might give rise to sonic dread. Conscious of my relationship to the belliphonic—as a mother with children in school, as a former classroom teacher, and as an American—I revisited Daughtry's (2015) questions: "What are the ethical consequences of listening to violent acts? How do sound and violence move through the world? What kinds of victims, what kinds of survivors, do belliphonic sounds create?" (p. 5). With these, and my own subjectivities, in mind, I watched and listened.

Though there are a number of scenes that include the sounds of gunshots, I listened to one in particular for the way that the sound of gunshots dominates the sonic field. The scene features a Nazi soldier, Amon Goeth, standing on a balcony overlooking a concentration camp crowded with prisoners being forced into hard labor. He holds a rifle and begins to shoot and kill the people below. There is no music, nothing to distract from or dilute the intensity of the intermittent explosions and the screams of terror that follow. It is a thoroughly chilling scene. Watching it a number of times for the purpose of this project unsettled me to my core.

Shutting my eyes and listening to the staccato sound of Goeth's gun firing—straining my ears between the shots in anticipation of when the next might come and imagining the atrocity that attached to the noise—I became aware of a more layered cacophony beyond the sounds emitted by the film. My mind's eye imagined what I knew was happening on the screen, and those images became superimposed onto my own relationship with the sounds of violence. Indeed, Chion (1994/2019) reminds us that sounds of horror are steeped in histories and contexts. They "don't spring from nothingness" (p. 21). The documents I examined prior to this exercise did not account for the feelings of sonic dread that surfaced through hearing. As I listened again and again and again, I wondered: what happens when the curriculum fails to accommodate for this kind of visceral experience? What might happen if we, as educators, call more attention to the affective scratchings of the belliphonic?

Discussion: Seeing and Hearing Difficult Knowledge in a Difficult Context

Lauren Berlant (2008) begins her essay, "Thinking about Feeling Historical," with a 2008 quote from Frank Rich: "These are not ordinary times" (p. 229). Over a decade later, in the midst of a deadly pandemic, ecological collapse, and a lethal resurgence of White supremacy, a phrase echoing Rich's sentiment went viral on social media: "I could really go for some precedented times." Though there are a number of moments in U.S. history that this could be said of—such as the pervasive terror of the Jim Crow era for Black Americans or the persistent threat to many that defined McCarthyism—the confluence of factors listed above, coupled with the extreme surge in gun violence across the country, marks this moment as different. For social studies educators

attempting to effectively teach about historical trauma while also addressing these ongoing present traumas, the historical past and the *historical present* can feel as if they are collapsing into each other. Berlant (2008) writes of this sensation: "This disturbed time is a *historical* present and not just everydayness, because the atmosphere suggests a shift of historic proportions in the terms and processes of the conditions of continuity of life" (p. 231). Berlant goes on to describe how existing as part of a moment that is self-conscious of its own historical significance produces an "affective experience not of a break or traumatic present, but of crisis lived within ordinariness" (p. 231). The collision of turbulent history and the quotidian, a kind of flattening of the past so it coexists with the now, presents social studies teachers with a unique challenge.

As a social studies educator, I feel compelled to support my students as they learn how to distinguish between the past and historical present; to perceive the ways in which the presence of continuity does not negate the achievements of change; and to recognize their own agency, despite the deja vu induced by the iterations and recursions of history. To accomplish these objectives, I often tried to locate and incorporate materials that had the potential to interrupt the refrain and provoke a productive dissonance between past and present. Dissonance, in this sense, is felt as tension between what is perceived as finished and distant and what is felt as immediate and proximate (Christman et al., 2016; Kelly & Fetherston, 2008; Lee & Williams, 2017). To this end, photographs and films are often used as a way to concretize the disorienting feeling that we are constantly "on the verge—of *something*" (Berlant, 2008, p. 231) by attaching the recognizable—a person, a building, a machine, a protest—to the abstraction of political or social systems that produce the constant feeling that we are simultaneously tipping forward into an unknown and falling back into the already done.

Guiding students as they engage with visuals can be an effective and powerful way to teach difficult knowledge. Images that invite viewers to engage with difficult knowledge contain within them the potential to provoke a powerful affective response. In offering a snapshot that captures the "violent, tragic, gruesome, horrific, and painful" (Lehrer et al., 2011, p. 7) moments of the human experience, visuals offer a version of the world that might appear "disturbingly foreign or inconceivable to the self, bringing oneself up against the limits of what one is willing and capable of understanding" (Britzman, 1998, p. 433). Photographs or films that show glimpses of difficult knowledge or history compel us to confront "hard to look at cruelties" (Sontag, 2003, p. 41) and serve as "a means of making 'real' (or 'more real') matters that the privileged and the merely safe might prefer to ignore" (p. 7). Images, both moving and still, allow us to briefly inhabit a different existence. How an image is curated and presented can produce a "shock to thought" that destabilizes or fractures the familiar refrains that allow us to comfortably move through the world (Simon, 2011). Visuals can be a highly effective means of communicating a thought, sensation, concept, framework, or worldview.

However, when confronted with an image of difficult history or knowledge, we can choose to turn away and let our eyes rest elsewhere or close our eyes and retreat from the visual field altogether. This choice becomes attractive when an image invades our psychic inner world in ways that are unsettling. Turning away is not always possible, especially when confronted with a sound or vibration that suggests atrocity. We cannot escape a sound in a classroom, cannot shut our ears as easily as our eyes. Nonetheless, though most humans are not limited to communicating through our eyes, or ocularly, when exploring the communication of difficult knowledge in a classroom, expressions transferred in this way have been privileged over sonic communication.

It is not the task of social studies educators to avoid producing feelings of discomfort in our students, especially when learning difficult knowledge. Indeed, language around safety and

(dis)comfort has been weaponized by those who wish to scrape the difficult but necessary histories of race-, gender-, and sexuality-based discrimination and violence from social studies curricula. However, when introducing difficult knowledge through films that feature the sounds of gunshots, social studies educators should be aware of when, how, and why unsettling feelings might emerge and the affective implications those moments will have for our students within the unique contexts they occupy. For instance, the sound of a gun firing is charged with the potential to generate sonic trauma in students who are routinely expected to engage in such practices as active shooter drills while at school. Because "sound is a being/doing/making" and "sounds form systems of meanings" (Wargo, 2020, p. 442), teachers who include sound in curriculum about difficult knowledge must be attentive to what students see *and* what they hear, especially when teaching the difficult knowledge that evokes the (un)conscious inevitability of gun violence.

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Listening to the Sounds of Healing

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

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

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

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

Listening in English Curriculum

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Listening to the Sounds of Healing

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

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

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

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

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

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

Methodology: Listening to the Sounds of Care

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1
Youth Co-Researchers and Their Research Questions

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

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

Miriam: Assemblages of Sonic Violence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sheldon: Healing through Listening

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nellie: Worldbuilding across Time and Space

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion: What Listening Came to Mean

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

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

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

Statement of Support

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"You Don't Want to Sound Like You're from Alabama"
Resonances of Place and Race in Student Narratives of The South

MAUREEN FLINT
The University of Georgia

because even though I lived in Alabama before I came here,
you always have this perception of what Alabama is,
and my mom kind of put that in there she was like,
    "you don't want to sound like you're from Alabama"
(Annaliese, a Black university student in her fourth year)

THROUGHOUT MY STUDY that explored how college students navigate the socio-historical context of race on the campus of The University of Alabama, "The South" buzzed as a refrain. In walks across campus accompanied by the students in this study, Alabama came to stand in for the American South, The South came to stand in for Alabama, and the University of Alabama became simultaneously the State and The South.

As Alabama and The South became synonymous, they came to stand in for the other and, at the same time, they were explanatory for one another: The University of Alabama was the way it was *because* it was in The South; the texture of how participants thought about The South took shape *because* of happenings at the University of Alabama. These sonic repetitions of synonymity and explanation map discursive, intellectual, and material geographies that refuse and resist traumatic colonial and racialized legacies at the same time as they reify and perpetuate the very same histories and ongoing traumas of white supremacy and racialization.

Curriculum scholar Rob Helfenbein (2010) writes that, by charting the "subjectivity of our relationship to spaces (how spaces speak), [and] the lack of guarantee or determinism in the nature of both social and spatial production (how spaces leak) … point[s] to agency, the spaces of possibility" (p. 314). In other words, through attuning to the sonic and discursive slippages and repetitions in student narratives of navigating campus space, we might not only learn something about our relationship to place, but forge the potential for new geographies and possibilities within

place (for work at the intersection of sound, place, and education, see Flint, 2021, 2022; Gallagher, 2011, 2020; Gallagher & Prior, 2014; Gershon, 2013a, 2013b).

In higher education, campus climate research has long emphasized the ways in which the history of place matters in student experience (Harris, 2016; Rankin & Reason, 2008). For example, Hurtado et al. (1998) wrote that, "the historical vestiges of segregated schools and colleges continue to affect the climate for racial/ethnic diversity on college campuses" (p. 283). And yet, outside of campus climate research, an attention to space—both how it matters in student's experience and its production—is left out of many considerations of higher education policy and student experience. Research on "belonging" and student outcomes often methodologically neutralize campus space in favor of examining inputs, experiences, and outputs (Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Museus et al., 2017). Through attuning to the sonic and discursive slippages between The South and Alabama in student narratives, how place leaks, speaks, and becomes a site of possibility, this paper explores ways that trauma embedded in place come to matter in the ways that students navigate and negotiate campus.

In this manuscript, I explore how the sonic and discursive links between Alabama/The South/race are tied to history and current institutional practice. In what follows, I first provide the theoretical grounding of the paper, drawing on Massey's (2005) "sense of place" defined and produced through geometries of power, before turning to a discussion of sounded methodologies guided by McKittrick's (2006) conception of the demonic, which, together, ground the analysis of this inquiry.

A Sense of Space and Place

This research begins with the assumption, following critical feminist geographer Doreen Massey (2005), that spaces are never neutral, that they are more than simply a surface "where things happen," that they are always under production and being produced, and that space and time are dynamic, interrelated, and co-produced rather than linear (p. 13). Massey describes space and place as interrelated, relational, and multiplicitous: "my argument is not that place is not concrete, grounded, real, lived, etc. etc. it is that space is too" (p. 185). She argues that by paying attention to the interplay between space and place—how places (e.g., The University of Alabama) become spaces (e.g., The South) and spaces become places—we make possible a relational ethics that is grounded, accountable, and responsible to one another.

Helfenbein (2010) draws on Massey's scholarship to argue for a critical geography of curriculum spaces, offering a relational analytic that attunes to the interplay between space and place, a tightening and sliding of the scale of geography, from the school (or university) and its local geography to the global understanding of forces at work (exploring histories of urbanization, globalization, funding, etc.). This attention to the local and global connects the geometries of power that produce spaces (and places), attending to forces and productions. This is an analytic that is interested in following production and possibility, asking: What does this produce? or How did this become possible? rather than asking What does this mean?

Bringing together Massey's attention to power geometries and Helfenbein's interest in space for the study of curriculum and schooling forges what McKittrick (2006) describes as "conceptual connections between material and concrete spaces, languages, and subjectivity" (p. xiii). Through these connections, this paper attends to the simultaneity of how The South/Alabama/race is (re)produced in individual student narratives, following around the

histories, memories, policies and discourses evoked in their tellings. In doing so, I imagine possibilities for engaging differently with the curriculum of higher education spaces, "envisioning an interpretive alterable world, rather than a transparent and knowable world" (McKittrick, 2006, p. xiii).

Sound Methodologies

To pay close attention to the ways in which The South/Alabama leak and speak and become sites of possibility, I draw on sound methodologies and a practice of geographic listening to map the sonic and discursive geographies of higher education curriculum spaces in student narratives. Qualitative researchers who use sound argue that the medium makes possible understandings beyond semiotics (what is said) to a multimodal event that can be seen, heard, and felt (Ceraso, 2014; Gershon, 2013b). As a methodological practice, sound has been incorporated in research studies as a method of data generation, analysis, and representation. For example, Gershon (2012, 2013a) and Wozolek (2018, 2022) use a methodology of sound ethnography where sound is, as Wozolek (2018) describes, "the vehicle through which the depths of experience are understood" (p. 370). Sound also offers the possibility for participatory engagement and an embodied response from the listener or audience of the research, as Flint et al. (2022) write, "enabling an engagement with research that moves beyond a passive encounter of findings" (p. 83). In this paper, I take up Tina Campt's (2017) theorization of sound as,

> an inherently embodied process that registers at multiple levels of the human sensorium to invoke another counter intuition that serves as a second point of theoretical departure, while it may seem an inherent contradiction in terms, sound need not be heard to be perceived. Sound can be listened to, and in equally powerful ways, sound can be felt. (p. 6)

Conceptualizing sounds as an embodied process that encompasses what is heard, felt, perceived, and sensed considers the physical sensation of sounds—audio waves on ear drums—as well as the more inescapable qualities of feeling, such as emotion or memory. In this way, "because everything engages sound, sound acts to link and collectivize bodies and environments, creating different kinds of atmospheres" (Gallagher et al., 2017, p. 9). In this paper, the sonic encompasses both audio captures of student narratives, what is spoken and made audible, as well as that which is not said, the metaphors, aporias, pauses, and unspoken histories and legacies. In this way, the sonic links place and space, and the practice of geographic listening opens up fissures in what is known or understood about place (and space), troubling what is taken for granted, assumed, accepted, and normalized (Campt, 2017).

Throughout this paper, I turn to sound as both a theoretical and method(ological) engagement. As Gershon (2013b) argued, sounds evoke spatial-material ontologies that embrace the interconnected and related nature of bodies and materials (see also: Gallagher, 2020; Gallagher & Prior, 2014; Tate, 2023). In previous iterations of this project, I explored how histories of racism, slavery, and white supremacy continued to resonate in the present through the creation and curation of an audio compilation of student's narratives of encountering racialized histories (Flint, 2021) and also co-created audio portraits with students, where two student co-researchers created a playlist of clips from their original interview audio to create a sonic portrait as an entry point to understand the layered histories of place across individual narratives (Flint et al., 2022).

The audio used for this inquiry included recordings of interviews and focus groups conducted with the 13 students who took part in the study. Students were asked permission to be recorded and also gave consent to have audio of their voice shared in results or reports from the study before they were recorded. Five of the thirteen students were involved with a campus arts-organization that provided funding for the research and participated in initial analysis of the audio clips during a research team meeting (described more fully in Flint et al., 2022). In addition, the audio compilations were shared with all students from the study for comments and feedback, and they were all invited to attend two art-installations that presented the sounded representations, including those that are incorporated into this manuscript.

Through attention to both the sonic (tone, volume, cadence) and discursive qualities of sound (polyphony, multiplicity, aporias, metaphors, and repetitions) the practice of geographic listening opens up a "demonic" analysis of place (McKittrick, 2006). The demonic is "hinged on uncertainty and nonlinearity because the organizing principal cannot predict the future … call[ing] into question the 'always non-arbitrary pre-prescribed parameters' of sequential and classificatory linearity" (McKittrick, 2006, p. xxiv). My analysis maps the non-linear slippages between The South/Alabama/race-history, carrying out the labor of "'*saying*,' imagining, and living geography locat[ing] the kind of creative and material openings traditional geographic arrangements disclose and conceal" (McKittrick, 2006, p. 144, emphasis my own). The demonic is an analytic and conceptual practice of non-linearity, zigzag, and uncertainty.

I began my analysis through paying attention to the moments when The South or Alabama was invoked in the audio recordings of conversations with students. Listening to these moments, I identified narrative segments, creating a clip or boundary around each mention using the open-source audio editing program, Audacity. Thinking with Campt (2017), who writes that "all sound consists of more than what we hear, it is an inherently embodied modality constituted by vibration and contact" (p. 7), after making the clips, I listened back to them again, paying attention to vibration and contact, through sonic elements such as tone and cadence, as well as discursive elements such as metaphor and aporia (Gallagher & Prior, 2014; Hocks & Comstock, 2017). Considering these elements, I began compiling transcriptions of the narrative segments or clips, both in the audio editing software and through ordering and reordering printed segments of the transcripts, thinking about what they said or produced differently in different orders.

After spending some time with these clips, I imported them into another open-source editing program, Reaper, and began ordering and layering them together sonically.

Ultimately, I created two sound compilations—one I titled "Perceptions," where I brought together moments where students considered how they had thought about the University before attending campus, and another titled "Conceptions," where students talked about how they conceptualized campus in the present. As I had composed with the text excerpts, I had believed that thinking about "Perceptions" as a moment-located-in-time *before* encountering the physical place of campus and "Conceptions" as considerations of campus space in the present would help me understand the slippages and overlapping of The South/Alabama/race and how that shifted and changed as students encountered the physical space of campus. However, as I listened and relistened to these compilations and thought demonically with McKittrick, my analysis, rather than moving neatly and linearly from perceptions to conceptions, zigzagged between them. In what follows, I write through this zigzag, listening to the resonances of spaces becoming places and places becoming spaces, attuning to how they speak and leak their sites of possibility. I invite the reader to listen to the compilations, to engage in their own zigzag (they can be found here: https://www.maureenflint.com/dissertation-home).

Leaking, Speaking, Possibility

During my study, I asked students to describe what they had thought about the University of Alabama before attending, the perceptions they had of place. Their answers linked and layered place and space:

> *I just thought I thought it was going to be like <u>real Southern</u>*
> *Just like you know, Alabama small town.*
> *That's like all I had experienced of Alabama,*
> *so that's what I thought The University of Alabama was going to be.*
> *But no, it's the complete opposite just smack dab in the middle of Tuscaloosa.*
> (Clark, a Black student in her third year)

> *I just like visualized it as like the Deep South.*
> *It would be a lot of old white people yelling at you as you walk past and stuff like that.*
> (Sierra, a Muslim[1] student in her third year)

> *I've lived in Alabama my entire life …*
> *Growing up, just kind of knowing that,*
> *in fourth grade you take Alabama history … and you're*
> *like yeah, this state was freaking racist for a long time.*
> *and it still is.*
> *So, I kind of grew up with that knowledge like living here.*
> (Angela, a White student in her senior year)

"Alabama," in these narratives, resonates as a state, as an idea, as materiality that affects the ways that students navigate the campus before ever arriving. In the quote that opened this paper, Annaliese noted that her mother had told her, "*You don't want to sound like you're from Alabama.*" Alabama, the place, shaping subjectivity, "*Even though I lived in Alabama before I came here, you always have this perception of what Alabama is*," Annaliese had continued in her reflection. This was echoed by Clark who imagined Alabama as a "small town," expressing surprise when she arrived on campus that her experiences did not match the caricatured version of The South she had pictured.

In these narratives, Alabama (the University) becomes The South becomes Alabama (the state), and in the interplay between these becomings, Alabama becomes inextricably hinged to the idea of the Deep South, The South, small southern town. Leaking from these narratives is the immanence of race to place and space. We might pause with Sierra's caricaturized perception of the University where "*there would be a lot of old white people yelling at you.*" Sierra's anticipation for what campus would be like is a memory embedded in place, zigzagging back in time: 1963, dozens of angry white faces jeer at Vivian Malone and James Hood as they are escorted to register for classes by the National Guard on the campus at the University of Alabama, a moment immortalized in archival footage and newspaper photographs. Over 50 years later, this moment is not located in a time-since-past, but affects Sierra's perceptions of campus in the present, folding together space and time.

As Sierra continued in her reflection, she went on to say,

> *[but] like what surprised me was a lot of these buildings are named after like eugenicists, and stuff like that.*
> *I had no idea about that until like last year.*
> *And someone said it in class, I didn't learn it in school.*

Listening to the imbrications of her narrative, she works a rhetorical both/and. Old white people yelling at you are located in a time-since-past, but/and, Sierra remarks, they are still there, embodied in the names marked on buildings.

The productions of racialization are immanent in Clark and Annaliese's narratives as well, listening to Clark's emphasis as she says _real Southern_, Annaliese's wry tone as she recounts her mother's advice. White supremacy is immanently tied to place—Alabama specifically, as well as The South more broadly. The facts that make up the "*just kind of knowing*" that Angela refers to is a long history of racial and colonial trauma perpetuated and upheld by logics of white supremacy, embedded in the geography of place. There is the history of the city of Tuscaloosa, where the University is located on lands stolen from the Creek and Choctaw tribes, even as it carries the name of a Choctaw chief, Tuskaloosa. This is layered with the history of the University, built with the labor of enslaved Black people as a military campus that housed Confederate soldiers, the bricks of which were reused after the burning of the campus by Union troops to construct several buildings that stand in the present. Those buildings, and the newer ones that flank them, as Sierra noted, bear the names of white supremacists. As students consider their perceptions of campus, then, history is immanently bound up with how they consider they will encounter place.

There is a specificity to the way that students consider their perception of campus, specific histories tied to the specific place, such as Sierra's "memory" of 1963 influencing how she thought about campus in the present. And yet, even as these events are specific to the place of the University of Alabama, they are refrains of histories of other Southern campuses. They are specific to place (the University of Alabama) at the same time as they (re)produce space (The South) in their repetitions across geographies. As Elizabeth, a white woman in her junior year at the time noted:

> *That [race] is such a thing here at the University of Alabama.*
> *Especially with like, I mean it is in the Deep South,*
> *and the 1800s or whatever early 1900s it was …*
> *And that is the history, and there's,*
> *there's nothing you can do to change that.*

"It is the Deep South," she says, mapping again the immanence of race and space. She understands this relationship as inevitable, "*There's nothing you can do to change it*," she reflected, pointing to the history, but also, ostensibly, the production of race and whiteness and the history in the present. Annaliese had a similar reflection,

> *I know there were comments made when I was decided to go here from family members*
> *and family friends asking why I would go here, knowing the history of Alabama.*
> *And I was thinking,*
> *yeah there's history of Alabama,*

but there's also the history of Auburn,
and there's also the history of every other school in this country.
(sighs)

Annaliese again makes a hinge, a linkage between Alabama (the University) and Alabama the state (through the connection to Auburn, another large public school in the State). In this linking, she both notes that there is something specific about this place (Alabama, the University, Alabama, the state) but/and troubles the assumption that this is somehow unique to this geography, "*There's also the history of every other school in this country*."

Annaliese troubles the assumption that the linkage between place and race is somehow unique to Alabama, The South, to the University. Indeed, as others have mapped, to examine the history of the United States is to examine the ways in which race is deeply imbricated in the very fabric and founding of the country (Kendi & Blain, 2021; Lepore, 2018; Wells, 2020). You can feel the weight of this history in Annaliese's sigh, the trauma folding past and present. And yet, *you don't want to sound like you're from Alabama.*

Aporias and Impasses

In addition to moments of unconscious slippage or synonymity between Alabama/The South/The University in student narratives, there were also moments of aporia or contradiction, impasses between these slips—*this is just how it is*—coming into contact with other physical and discursive geographies of place. Sierra maps to this in her rhetorical distancing from a time-since-past at the same time that she points to the buildings, bearing names of eugenicists. A similar impasse was gestured to by Bruce, a White student who was in his junior year at the time. He reflected,

It's important to not erase the signs of the things that were wrong that happened.
Especially here in the past.
Because you can't change the fact that it happened.
And covering up the fact that it happened
or ignoring the fact that it happened is only going to make it—
I guess you're never going to learn from history that way.
So, it…
[10-second pause]
So, I think it's important for people to be conscious
of the way like racism and stuff was so prevalent on this campus,
but I don't think that the way that we build buildings in a classical style
and kind of maintain the way that things have been done for 150 years.
I don't think that just because these terrible things happened means that we should
change how we do everything,
to say like we're making this total separation from that time.

It's important not to erase it … you can't change the fact that it happened … that doesn't change how we should do things [build buildings in a classical style] Bruce says. In the audio, Bruce pauses for long moments, working a both/and—noting that campus buildings and their style both

echo the history of campus because of their connections to the old South at the same time as he refutes that this has a material effect on the campus. This architecture, (re)produces a sense of "Southern" that is not accidental, but rather codified in the policy of the institution: new buildings are required to reproduce the neoclassical style of the antebellum period (Elbein, 2015; The University of Alabama, 2015). As McKittrick (2006) writes, "Geography is not, however, secure and unwavering; We produce space, we produce those meetings, and we work very hard to make geography what it is" (p. xi).

Leo, a Back student in his senior year, offered another reading, suggesting that the buildings and monuments on campus might reinforce the ways in which the University and The South were co-constituted. He reflected,

> *And I'm thinking about it as we're walking,*
> *and like realizing that one big draw of people to the University is our campus though,*
> *and the traditional college campus and style of buildings.*
> *Like, I have to say it's really like you know,*
> *our campus is beautiful, and I can never take that away,*
> *but it's also very reminiscent of like the old South you know,*
> *and that in itself is whether conscious or unconscious draw to our campus, you know?*

The buildings produce place not just in their connection and mirroring of the old South (aesthetically and through their namesakes), but through what they do—through being reminiscent of the old South, buildings then draw or pull prospective students to the campus. The idea that students might come to campus because it was The South was another aporia echoed by students throughout their narratives. For example, Leo continued in his interview,

> *I've heard people say it before too,*
> *   like I came down here*
> *   because I knew it was The South,*
> *I knew it was different, and I wanted to be in an environment that was different.*
> *   And you know for everyone that difference is—*
> *   I don't know, they have different things that they're prioritizing with that.*
> *So, some are like:*
> *   "I can finally be as bigoted or ignorant or whatever you want to call it."*
> *They can do it because it's The South, right?…*
> *   Because of the whole idea of what Alabama is.*
> *   Not just the campus, but the State.*
> *People who have never been here think that when you come to Alabama it's just going to be a place of complete backwards-ness.*
> *It's just going to be you know,*
> *hillbillies everywhere and n-words flying like no other, but it's not like that.*

In this telling, Leo maps the linkages between The South, Alabama, the State, the University, held together with the thread of race. Within these linkages lies an aporia, a contradiction—*It's not like that,* Leo says, even as he next shared a story of an Alabama sorority woman who had received national media attention earlier that year for using the n-word in a social media post and saying, "I'm in The South now, bitch … So everyone can [explicative] off" (Anapol, 2018). Annaliese

also recounted this same news story, complicating it further as she considered it in relation to broader understandings of Alabama and The South, the discursive links between place and race(ism),

> *Nobody thinks of Alabama as important.*
> *Like we're a right-wing, conservative, extremely conservative.*
> *But for a place like that, we have a lot of things that make the headlines …*
> *and every year like something big happens and there's this big hullaballoo and everyone is like*
> > *"I can't believe UA would do something like this, I can't believe this …"*
> *Like if we talk about the Harley Barber incident,*
> *And then how everybody in the sororities were like,*
> > *I didn't know she was like this like I can't believe, I can't believe,*
> *… she didn't start off all of the sudden saying the n word,*
> > *like this wasn't new to her*

In the audio, as Annaliese spoke, her voice drips with irony at this last section, connotating that, in fact, she can believe it, and yet we (as the University as a whole, individual students, student organizations, the administration) continue to not believe it, expressing surprise each time a new event happens, proclaiming to the national audience that "*I can't believe this.*" Alabama, then, is produced as a place that is both small and resonant—easily looked over in the national consciousness, blurred and slipped into broader narratives of The South, even as the specificity of Alabama and what happens there makes national headlines. Annaliese pinpoints a spatial aporia in the sounds of her telling—I can't believe this; I can't *not* believe this.

Yet these perceptions did not produce a one-way encounter with geography. For example, after Annaliese recounted her mother's advice (you don't want to sound like you're from Alabama), she reflected on her surprise at the flags touting achievements of Fulbright and Merit scholars on the central square of the campus, continuing:

> *but you see all these amazing things that you see people do,*
> *and they have done and that you want to include yourself in.*
> *And you kind of think of Alabama as the underdog …*

Alabama works in multiple ways—affecting her speech—pushing her away, distancing her from place, while simultaneously pulling, Alabama as a place she wants to be included in, wants to be a part of, wants to belong to—complicatedly, it is also about place and race.

Hutt et al. (2010) described how The University of Alabama shifted recruitment strategies between 2005–2010 to increase enrollment. One example of the rhetoric included in this shift is the "*Crimson Is*" marketing campaign, which used narratives from students and alumni to emphasize the strong southern tradition and prestige of the University. Southern-ness in these ads is a recruitment strategy for enrolling high-achieving students from the North who do not qualify for financial aid—a recruitment strategy which also included a $92.3 million increase in merit aid (up from $8.3 million in 2006), 64 new buildings, and an "army of recruiters" (Pappano, 2016). This campaign was followed by "*Touching Lives,*" which ran from 2009–2015, and "*Where Legends are Made*" (2016–present). In each of these subsequent campaigns, "tradition" morphed and shifted slightly, moving away from explicit mentions of The South to capitalize on a more

recent "Southern" tradition: football. *Touching Lives*, for example was "designed to have more appeal nationally as the university expand[ed] recruitment efforts to more states and Crimson Tide [football] games [were] seen on more TVs across the country with the Southeastern Conference's new media agreements" (Jones, 2009, para. 15). The South/Alabama/football/Southeastern Conference, tightly connected through the ways in which the University branded itself as competitive in athletics and in academics. *Where Legends are Made* built on this connection further, launching in a 30-second TV commercial during the 2016 football season opener and featuring profiles from "legends"—notable alumni or figures associated with the school such as Harper Lee, Betsy Plank, and Joe Scarborough, clips of neatly manicured campus lawns and antebellum buildings, and touting the University's merit scholars and statistics of high achieving students. Through these campaigns, the slippage between The South and The University of Alabama and race is not accidental or unconscious, but rather, an intentional and focused marketing effort to link The South/football/Alabama and brand the University as prestigious and selective, a fitting place for competitive students with nationally recognized scholarships and high-test scores.

The focus and implications of national attention have become increasingly prevalent in recent years as the University of Alabama has won multiple national college football championships. The Crimson Tide, Nick Saban, and Roll Tide entangle with the racialized productions of The South and Alabama. For example, in December 2016, Saturday Night Live featured a sketch that included a guest appearance from John Cena. Cena played an Alabama football player who needed to get an A+ on his science project to be able to play in the "big game." Narratives converge, as Cena presented his research on bananas by displaying a piece of plywood with "bananas" nailed to it (one is an orange) and lists five facts he learned about bananas (including: "they are yummy") to a panel of Alabama football-gear wearing professors who have pledged not to give him "special treatment." Football matters, then, in how Alabama is understood and produced in national understandings. Furthermore, interconnecting and entangling with other understandings of The South, this particular portrayal of Alabama becomes differently, matters differently than had this sketch been of another team. This portrayal only becomes possible through the specific material configuration of Alabama/football/whiteness/The South. Leo reflected on the intersection between national and local spaces regarding his participation in an organization protesting the playing of the national anthem at football games, noting: *"because we're such a football school we're in a national spotlight. It [becomes] a national conversation too."* Football zigzags out from the campus, producing Alabama (and The University in turn) as visible in national conversations. For Leo, this meant that his involvement with protests and advocacy on campus as a student of color became compounded and multiplicitous. His involvement with the protests became not just about Alabama football, but the national conversation around Black lives and nationalism and sports, and this mattered for Leo's experience on campus because of the specific material configuration of place. This affects Leo's navigation, his embodied and embedded reality on campus. The anthem and protesting the anthem matter differently in context and enfold and resonate with other questions—Leo wondered "*Has it represented <u>you</u>?*" This question enfolds with the context of the University, the place of the protests. He continued, wondering: *Does the anthem represent you? Does the University represent you?* In this material-discursive configuration, the place of The University of Alabama, sitting or standing at the football game during a national anthem matters in ways that would be different or distinct from the same actions at another school.

The production of Alabama as a state and the University in local, national, and international consciousness, the socio-historical understandings of The South, and the reputation of the University of Alabama as a flagship institution of higher education and as a football school maps multiple slippages in the production of place.

Geographic Listening

Initially listening to the narratives of students through the audio compilations, I was pulled to the seemingly unconscious discursive replications and repetitions, how The South and Alabama became synonymous, used in place of the other interchangeably, as well as how they became explanatory for the other: Alabama is this way because it is The South, The University of Alabama comes to stand in for Alabama (the state) or The South. Simultaneously, The University, the State, the region became self-referential: because it's Alabama, because it's The South. In the subtext between these linkages is their inevitability—*but of course this is the way it is*, a subtext, said with a shrug, a sigh, an ironic and wry tone. However, listening to these narratives, other origins of these slippages become visible: monuments, recruitment strategies, the University's response to racist incidents, college football.

In higher education literature, space is often treated as a container, a blank slate where things "happen," methodologically neutralized or smoothed over to control for the effect of experiences and inputs. What this analysis has demonstrated is that the production of space does not suddenly begin when students arrive on campus. This is evident when listening to the audio compilations, the aural and discursive mappings of place in students' encounters with the space of The University of Alabama's campus. These geographies are produced through national news, histories, and associations with The South, and these perceptions fold into how students think about belongingness before and after arriving on campus, how they think they will join up with spatial narratives, and how they navigate campus space once arriving. Alabama is not a neutral place but rather exists in the imaginary of the nation in particular and specific ways. Zigzagging between sonic and discursive narratives—the resonances between perceptions and conceptions— makes possible understandings of how to intervene and how to re-make place and space. In other words, to listen to the tensions between perceptions and conceptions of campus and The South is to orient to space as more than just a container, more than something that "just is." This is to orient to space as something that is fundamentally alterable, able to be otherwise.

An entry point to become otherwise can be found in the ways that students tell stories about learning about the campus history. Threaded through both audio compilations, students talk about "knowing" about the history of campus before arriving, through news articles, family members, knowledge of U.S. History, or just an idea about what The South or Alabama is. When they share about their encounters with racial histories after arriving on campus, they often position it as illicit, as something secret, standing in contrast to the narratives of the University told by campus tours and university brochures and marketing campaigns. As Sierra reflected as she learned about the history of building names, "*I had no idea about that until like last year, and someone said it in class, I didn't learn it in school*." In Sierra's narrative, she didn't learn it in school, as from the University, but rather through another student mentioning it to her outside of the curriculum. Annaliese and Vivian (a white student in her first year) also remarked on this in their focus group. Annaliese reflected that, "*I would never have known this [the history of enslavement on campus] existed if I had never taken that class*," and Vivian remarked that a tour by faculty documenting

the history of slavery on campus had been assigned as an optional assignment in her anthropology course. In each of these reflections, the sanctioned narrative of campus as one that sterilizes history into "tradition" and "prestige" comes up against students' encounters with the trauma and violence of the past in "unsanctioned" spaces. As Leo remarked,

> *On tours, that's such a huge point, all these little details that no one really cares about.*
>   *You're in the president's mansion,*
>   *okay, we don't really care that this chair is made out of mahogany from 1760.*
> *In in other areas, we just kind of gloss over you know, …*
>   *unless you take the time to dig deep,*
>   *you never really know what the full history of the campus.*

Even as students knew or had an idea of the racialized past and how it might impact or influence their experience of campus before arriving, they felt betrayed by the University when they did learn about these histories. Jones and Okun (2001) describe a key characteristic of white supremacy as a fear of open conflict and the right to comfort. By not grappling with their socio-historical contexts of race (and other inequities), while still capitalizing on them for recruitment and marketing, the University persists in reproducing white supremacist spaces. Thus, to name and take responsibility for these histories is to begin to "advance complex re-spatializations that can perhaps move beyond descriptive paradoxical geographies (McKittrick, 2006, p. 144). This is not easy work, as has been demonstrated repeatedly by other campuses and communities seeking conversations about monuments and histories in their spaces, but it means asking critical questions about what materialities do to spaces and how they work, how traumas are embedded in place, and how we might listen to them. Listening, then, might as McKittrick (2006) suggests, "offers a different entry point into human geography: one that recognizes the alterability of humanness, space, and place, and one that imparts the understanding that this alter-ability is a pathway into new geographic practices" (p. 146).

Notes

1.   Students in the original study were asked to self-identify salient demographic categories for themselves. While most students identified their race or ethnicity and gender, Sierra identified her religious identity as most salient.

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Bearing Witness to Violence Through Noise
A Critical Exploration of Runzelstirn & Gurgelstøck's Affective Curriculum

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ATTEMPTING TO DESCRIBE the work of Rudolf Eb.er, a sound/performance artist who also performs under the stage name Runzelstirn & Gurgelstøck, can often feel more like relaying the plot of an arthouse horror film than describing music. The sound collages that comprise albums like *Runzelstock & Gurgelstirn* (Eb.er, 2005) and *Extreme Rituals* (Eb.er, 2012), for instance, pair long stretches of silence with overwhelmingly loud and stressful recordings of dogs barking, bells ringing, objects being slapped, engines revving, and people screaming. These recordings produce a challenging and disconcerting experience for the listener, as Eb.er repeatedly pierces the tension-filled calm with sharp, unsettling noises. Live performances further heighten the experience to one of outright terror. One piece called, "Konzert for Piano and Shotgun," for example, involves Eb.er "[sitting] at a piano and playing stark dissonant chords while sobbing his own name" (Daniel, 2003, p. 21) before pointing a shotgun at the audience, firing a blank, and returning to the overtly theatrical piano performance. Other concerts have involved multiple collaborators vomiting on stage, live birds being placed inside of the artist's mouth, the use of animal carcasses as both props and musical instruments, and more (Kemp, 2010). Watching Eb.er's performances or listening to his albums can invoke feelings of trepidation, disgust, intrigue, and transcendence simultaneously, leaving the audience feeling "shaken and re-energised, yet more baffled and hooked than ever" (Daniel, 2003, p. 21).

Beyond a mere empty gesture of shock value or transgression for the sake of provocation alone, Kemp (2010) argues that "Eb.er insists that we engage with the content and context that he presents to us. His uncomfortable and unquestionably effective … works are alive and vital, showing what is there in all of its ostensibly hideous and valid truth" (p. 67). The confrontation at the heart of Runzelstirn & Gurgelstøck does not merely come from a performer antagonizing an audience but through the audience's own confrontation with a difficult truth about the social world (assuming the performance or recording is effective enough to achieve its intended end). The political thematics of Eb.er's work, like those of other artistic artifacts within similar genres, then

emerge through the generation of affect rather than a clearly stated meaning by the artist (Jones, 2016; Woods, 2021, 2023). However, the artistic potential of Eb.er's approach does not resolve the problematics associated with forcing audiences to witness violent acts. As I have argued previously in relation to noise music, a highly abrasive and dissonant subgenre of experimental music, the haphazard use of violent and fascist lyrics and imagery within this "extreme music" genre can reinforce all forms of oppression (sexism, racism, etc.) despite the artist's intent to challenge the ideologies behind dominant social institutions (Woods, 2018, 2023). Although Eb.er rejects the common categorization of his work into this genre (Kemp, 2010), these critiques of noise music still raise questions about the role of witnessing both within Eb.er's work and at a broader scale. What cultural politics emerge when witnessing the transgressive practices of Runzelstirn & Gurgelstøck? And what, exactly, are audiences witnessing at all?

Placing this provocation into conversation with the theme of this special issue, I use this paper to explore the complicated nature of "earwitnessing," or the act of bearing witness through sound alone. Beyond Schafer's (1977) original notion of earwitnessing, one that centered the process of "writing about sounds directly experienced and intimately known" (p. 6), the expanded conception of the term I explore here draws affective entanglements wherein people hear that which lies past the auditory field (Brownell et al., 2018; Gershon, 2013b; Wargo, 2018). Divorced from its visual or material source, I argue that this expanded form of earwitnessing holds a unique politics that call on the listener as witness to attend to the relations around them because of sound's positioning as an affective technology, or a tool that individuals or groups can use to intentionally construct specific affective relations with and between listeners and other resonating bodies (Gallagher, 2016; Gershon 2013b; Wozolek, 2022). To do so, I begin with an exploration of the pedagogical potential of earwitnessing through noise, relying on Thompson's (2017) affective definition of the term, in relation to the role of affect within education. I then turn towards writings on the potential (and political shortcomings) of bearing witness as a form of pedagogy to propose that noise can center relationality itself, thus creating space for listeners and learners to critically reimagine how they relate to one another and the social world. Finally, I ground this theoretical exploration within a critical analysis of the album, *Runzelstock & Gurgelstirn* by Runzelstirn & Gurgelstøck, arguing that Eb.er's use of increasingly theatrical field recordings draws the listener into a witnessing of the relation of violence itself. The album, therefore, illustrates how noise can embody the curricular potential of earwitnessing as a tool for attending to and reckoning with affective relations that undergird violence, despite reproducing other forms of violence simultaneously.

The Affective Curriculum of Noise

Although multiple definitions of the term exist, I draw on Thompson's (2017) notion of noise as a means to connect the ethical dimensions of sound and witnessing, both of which remain intertwined with affect (Gallagher, 2011; Shannon, 2020; Wozolek, 2020; Zembylas, 2006). To arrive at her definition, Thompson (2017) conceptualizes noise through Spinoza's (1996) notion of affect and its two key components: affectus (a body's ability to affect or be affected) and affectio (one body affecting or leaving a trace on another). Simultaneously invoking Serres's (2007) definition of the parasite, Thompson contends that sound (or any other non-anthropocentric body) takes on the characteristic of noise when it not only allows the milieu to act on the relationship between affecting and affected bodies but reorients or reconfigures that relationship, revealing the

milieu as a (formerly) unheard or unseen body in relation to others. A door unexpectedly slamming in the middle of a conversation, for instance, exemplifies a noise because it reorients the relationship between speaker, listener, and the building where the conversation takes place. Rather than only serving as the milieu for two relating bodies, the building affects the two inhabitants by ending the conversation through the sound of the slamming door, thus reconfiguring the relationship between all three. From this constellation of texts, Thompson (2017) proposes an essentialized definition of noise: "if noise is what noise does, then the … question 'What is noise?' might be answered rather simply: 'an affective relation'" (p. 51). Rather than defining noise through its material characteristics (in the context of sound, this could include qualities like volume, pitch, dissonance, timbre, etc.) or the perception of the listener, Thompson argues that the ontological nature of noise rests solely on its capacity to affect and whether or not it fulfills that capacity. How, what, and the extent to which noise affects depends on the noise, the bodies it affects, and the set of relations noise acts on and through which it travels. Yet the core remains the same, with any and all noises embodying a realignment of affective relations, recognized and experienced as difference or change.

Importantly, Thompson (2017) positions this definition of noise as one that encompasses (but also challenges) the broadly held idea in sound studies that noise represents an unwanted sound, that one person's noise may be a welcomed sound for another (Abramo, 2014; Gershon, 2017; Russo & Warner, 2004). While the perception of a particular sound as unwelcome or painful may allude to its categorization as noise, its noisiness comes from the affective disturbance produced by this encounter. Sounds thus take on and shed the character of noise in different contexts because affectus differs from body to body, with some being capable of receiving an affective trace where others may not. The use of popular music in sonic torture (Cusick, 2020) provides an example. The newly formed traumatic relationship with pop music, the creation of psychic scars on the unconsenting listener, and the embodiment of oppression in the relationship between the torturer and the tortured contextually position this music as noise, not because the listener does not want to hear it. Through this framing, Thompson also argues that noise carries with it a relational and situated ethics, one reliant on the nature of the trace left by affecting bodies. According to the author, "the affective relation between entities is understood to be good or bad from the perspective of the affected body and in relation to an increase or diminishment in power" (Thompson, 2017, p. 117). This framing positions noise as potentially both liberatory and damaging: a blast of loud music can allow subjugated communities to reclaim public space, but the noise from sonic weaponry can also further oppress those same civilians. Untangling the politics and ethics of noise, like all sound, involves tracing the relation between sounding and hearing bodies, mapping affective relationships and how they change through their encounters with noise (Gallagher, 2011; Gershon 2011, 2013a).

In a parallel project to the one proposed by Thompson, curriculum studies scholars have begun to trace the role of affect within learning contexts. Taking a broad and encompassing perspective, Zembylas (2016) highlights three key contributions from the affective turn to education research: breaking down the emotion/reason dichotomy, foregrounding the politics of affect within the classroom, and both revealing and strengthening the intersections of the psychic and the social. In identifying the entangled affective relationships inherent to learning (between affect and reason, the individual and the social milieu), Zembylas amplifies the embodied, relational, situated, and affective nature of learning. Additionally, by highlighting the ethico-political element of affective relationships between human (students, teachers, etc.) and non-

human bodies (schools, curricula, etc.) in learning contexts, Zembylas provides a tool for tracing the non-anthropocentric ethics articulated by Thompson (2017).

Focusing on the ethics of affect, scholars show that attending to the affective economies (Ahmed, 2004) of education can serve as a basis for enacting critical and liberatory pedagogies. In this sense, the foundation for an ethical approach to education lies in the process of pathologizing the violence of the everyday described by Wozolek (2020). Tracing, challenging, and reworking relationships between bodies and the milieu serves as the curriculum for a socially oriented learning process, with educators guiding students through a process of recognizing their own position within affective economies before defining and undertaking strategies to challenge this affective network. Turning towards anti-racist pedagogies specifically, Zembylas (2015) contends that "an anti-racist struggle in schools needs to pay attention to the affective mobilization of race and racism and seek to create pedagogical spaces and practices that free students and teachers from affective investments in racial oppressions" (p. 147). Understood in this way, an anti-racist pedagogy involves, first, revealing the affective economies that define both race and racial oppression and, second, reimagining these relations. Positioning race as an affective technology creates the possibility for this kind of anti-racist action.

Zembylas (2015) illustrates this affective conception of anti-racist pedagogy in the following vignette from a professional development experience at a school in Cyprus:

> [The teachers] began
> to share their own feelings about immigration in general, migrant children and their families in Cyprus, and their everyday interactions with migrant children in their own school. One teacher admitted in front of all of her colleagues that she could not hug Turkish-speaking students because they reminded her of the Turkish troops occupying her house in north Cyprus. [But] the teacher admitted that she might have been unfair to Turkish-speaking students, because these children had not harmed her in any way. The meeting ended after a long and emotional silence and everyone departed without saying much. The following day, the teacher … hugged each and every one—including her Turkish-speaking students—and apologized to them (in tears) for not doing this before. (Zembylas, 2015, p. 156)

Placing this example in conversation with Wozolek's (2020) exploration of everyday violence, the decision not to hug her students contributes to the violence and further racialization directed at these students. But after locating and defining this affective practice of racialization, the teacher can begin to embody an anti-racist stance with her students. Whether this particular choice leads to the kinds of systemic change demanded of anti-racist action remains to be seen, but it still speaks to the value of engaging racialization through an affective lens.

Returning to Thompson's (2017) contention that noise, by definition, disrupts affective relations, I propose that noise represents a potentially liberatory technology within education because of its ability to reimagine oppressive forms of affect (Woods, 2020). Although liberation through noise remains far from universal, since the trace left by noise can just as easily reinscribe oppression as it would catalyze a liberatory future (Thompson, 2017), all systems (including the systems of affective relations that define learning and racialization) cannot change without some form of a noisy disturbance to invoke that change (Davies, 2014). In turn, challenging sociopolitical systems through education requires some form of noise to serve as a catalyst. While this contention does not necessarily have to invoke the sonic, noise as a type of sound can enact

this liberatory reimagining of affective relations. In both formal (Brownell, 2019; Gallagher, 2011; Gershon, 2013a; Wozolek, 2022, 2023) and informal (Gershon, 2013b; Woods & Jones, 2022; Wargo, 2018) learning contexts, research has shown that sonic noise challenges hierarchical power and allows for a reimagining of the affective relations between participants that define learning ecologies. To this end, noise can challenge the policing of bodies through sound (Gallagher, 2011) and produce an ethical reimagining of affective relations both in and outside of the classroom, even if only momentarily.

The Ethics of Bearing Witness Through Noise

Thinking beyond the bounds of noise, sound is ontologically relational and differential, a medium through which bodies can affect and be affected and exists as both material and immaterial simultaneously (Ceccheto, 2013; Gallagher, 2016; Gershon, 2013b). Sound, in so much as it is detected, exists as an embodiment of difference, a manifestation of change on both physical and theoretical levels (Evens, 2005). In other words: when we hear sound, we hear difference. Framing sound (a category that includes sonic noise) in this way creates a theoretical alignment with Oliver's (2001) dual understanding of witnessing: "*eyewitness* testimony based on first-hand knowledge, on the one hand, and *bearing witness* to something beyond recognition that can't be seen, on the other" (p. 16). Oliver's definitions invoke both a relational practice (someone has to witness someone or something else) and a differential phenomenon (the experience of change or difference beyond the aesthetic). The literature surrounding earwitnessing also aligns with these two distinct kinds of witnessing. While Schafer's (1977) original definition and its uptake in criminal justice scholarship (Cantone, 2010; McGorey & McMahon, 2017) center the testimony and description of sounds heard, others position earwitnessing as a process of attuning to relations that audibly materialize (Abramo, 2014; Brownell et al., 2018). Wargo (2018) describes this expanded definition of earwitnessing as "becoming-in-resonance-with phenomena, a simultaneous thinking/living/becoming with that requires reciprocity and active engagement with time/space/matter/bodies" (p. 384), amplifying not only the affective economies of others but also the listener's place within those economies. Sound then provides a medium for bearing witness because of its ability to amplify more-than-representational forms of affect and the unseen ethical dimensions of cultural (and curricular) politics (Aoki, 1991; Fiebig, 2015; Truman & Shannon, 2018). Earwitnessing, therefore, has the potential to enact a relational ethics that centers difference beyond mere recognition.

Turning towards the pedagogical potential of earwitnessing, Zembylas (2006) argues that the ethical use of witnessing within an educational praxis invokes Oliver's (2001) critique of recognition by identifying and attending to the embedded affective politics of learning ecologies. This possibility emerges because of the intertwined and embodied nature of both affect and learning: "students' and teachers' bodies may be understood as the plane of immanence for any pedagogy; without affects, there is no pedagogy" (Zembylas, 2006, p. 312). From here, Zembylas (2006) recognizes the practice of bearing witness as a pedagogical act within ethical education initiatives because of its affective potential to help learners "not only becom[e] aware of victimization and its consequences but … tak[e] response-ability to become a transformative agent of awareness and reception of Others' trauma" (Zembylas, 2006, p. 313). To this end, bearing witness to forms of violence that exist beyond the aesthetic invokes a need to attend to the extant interrelations of affective economies (Wozolek, 2020). Witnessing, therefore, aligns with noise,

since the process of reimagining affective relationships sits at the foundation of both terms. Zembylas (2006) furthers this connection when describing the role of invoking crisis within pedagogies, stating that "crisis is essential in order for bearing witness to occur" and "that teaching should provoke a crisis and strong emotional responses in students" (p. 320), revealing the role that noise can play within pedagogical enactments of witnessing. Bearing witness emerges as a pedagogical act when affective relations sit at the center of that practice, revealing existing affective entanglements and providing the dialogic structures needed to embody new ways of affectively relating to each other (Zembylas, 2006). Noise, as described here, provides one tool for engaging new (and potentially liberatory) affects.

With this expanded and pedagogical understanding of bearing witness in mind, the potential of earwitnessing can begin to take shape. Sound provides an opportunity to recognize current affective economies, recognize previously unrecognized affective relations, and create space to both imagine and work towards new relational systems (Cecchetto, 2013; Truman & Shannon, 2018). The recognition of recorded sound as both a chronicle of a moment in time and an unveiling of the cultural milieu (Fiebig, 2015; Love, 2016), for instance, creates an opportunity to enact the type of witnessing described by education scholars who explore the intersection of witnessing and liberation (Giroux, 2012; hooks, 2003; Wilcox, 2021). If the potency of witnessing as a mode of learning involves attuning to the oppression of others in a way that demands action, then sound as the medium of earwitnessing provides a unique opportunity to bear witness beyond a textual or visual representation of injustice due to its affective nature. This potential emerges because, as Gershon (2017) argues, "sound is not more truthful than text; it can do things that text cannot" (p. 142). One of those things involves reimagining the affective economies of both formal and informal learning. Sound as a form of affect embedded with socially-constructed meaning produces its own educational system as it circulates between bodies, a system that institutional forms of education police as a means to enforce pedagogical control (Gallagher, 2016; Gershon, 2011, 2017; Verstraete & Hoegaerts, 2017; Wozolek, 2020). But sound (and, more specifically, noise) routinely undermines that control, with othered and oppressed students asserting their humanity and agency through sounding processes (Brownell, 2019; Gallagher, 2011; Wozolek, 2023). In turn, sound provides a tool for reimagining affective relations towards a liberatory end if those listening bear witness to sound on its own terms.

Through this affective framing, the politics of earwitnessing begin to materialize (even if they remain contextually defined). As Freire (1970) asserts, the core pedagogical value of witnessing involves a recognition of difference with and acceptance of the Other on their terms, through an a priori acceptance of their humanity. Sound, as a medium in itself, provides the tools for that relation to emerge outside of the kinds of affect produced by both text and visuality (Gershon, 2017). Thinking through issues of racial oppression (and employing the act of witnessing as a means towards challenging racialization), Stoever (2016) acknowledges as much when she says that sound is "a critical modality through which subjects (re) produce, apprehend, and resist imposed racial identities and structures of racial violence" (p. 4). The reproduction described here happens through the imposition of the listening ear, a socially constructed way of hearing the world as racialized (Stoever, 2016). Through this construction, the listening ear disciplines certain actions, bodies, and sounds through the sonic production of race. Sound as a modality for resisting racial oppression and racialization as a whole then inherently challenges this listening ear, inviting a listening constructed outside of this socialized form of hearing and on the terms of sound itself. Earwitnessing demands the same approach to listening, to both hear sound

outside of the affective economies that define the listening ear and further the need to construct spaces where this kind of listening can occur.

Yet scholars have also critiqued the practice of bearing witness. According to Hartman (1997), bearing witness to violence from an outside perspective (specifically, a white witnessing of anti-Black violence) reinscribes power relations and the witness's position as separated from violence without posing a challenge to the act being witnessed. But this reproduction of harm and oppression does not only come from the political failure of witnessing. For Sharpe (2010), the reinscription of violence through witnessing emerges from "an appalled fascination with subjugation, captivity, and torture" (p. 120) rather than an earnest intent to disrupt systems or individual acts of oppression. Bedecarré (2022) locates this fascination within the witness as the focus on their own painful realizations of complicity and grappling with Black violence by picturing themselves in the place of the Black body. This aligns with other critiques of witnessing that reinscribe the subjecthood of the witness while relegating the Other to further subjugation (Farley, 1997; Wilderson, 2020). Understood and enacted in this way, the process of bearing witness further reinscribes the violence of the current condition and indeed does harm. But bearing witness, as a pedagogical act, does not necessarily need to produce this end if it attends to a reimaging of violent affective economies. An example of this exists within Greenbaum's (2001) exploration of teaching about the Holocaust through the lens of bearing witness. Rather than using this process to relegate this atrocity to the past, Greenbaum shows how bearing witness can attend to and reimagine affective relations. In line with Zembylas's (2020) push for an anti-complicity pedagogy of witnessing, Greenbaum's (2001) approach to this topic involves a positioning of oneself within an affective relation to the Holocaust and grappling with that positioning, understanding and challenging oneself to face affects such as "the pleasure of being a voyeur of violence" (p. 9) amongst other ongoing relations.

To this end, bearing witness does not involve only being an eyewitness to the violent trace left on the body of the Other but bearing witness to the violent affective relations that define those bodies. It is within this assertion that the power of earwitnessing as a pedagogical technology holds so much potential because listening to sound involves attending to and hearing sonic affect (Aoki, 1991; Erickson, 2004; Gallagher, 2016; Gershon, 2011, 2017; Wozolek, 2022). Although Stoever (2016) argues that social institutions construct certain forms of hearing, this process of policing via the listening ear does not have to undermine the act of attending to the sonification of affect if that listening can happen on its own terms. Earwitnessing remains susceptible to the same ethical issues present in witnessing through visuality and text, but the foregrounding of affect through sound still produces a significant amount of pedagogical potential. To further explore this potential, I return now to Runzelstirn & Gurgelstøck to illustrate this argument.

Earwitnessing Amid Runzelstock & Gurgelstirn

In the opening moments of *Runzelstock & Gurgelstirn*, an album by Runzelstirn & Gurgelstøck (Eb.er, 2005), the artist constructs and then almost immediately eviscerates a sense of tranquility. A recording of a small bell, the kind that might hang above a door or sit on the handlebars of a bike, welcomes the listener into the sonic landscape before a throbbing bass drum shatters the original inviting feeling. As the drum pounds over and over again, Eb.er layers a recording of someone crying (or maybe screaming?) and what sounds like someone getting hit with a paddle over the rhythmic foundation. But this jarring moment stops almost as soon as it

begins, and the central collage aesthetic of the album takes over. The sounds of audio tape being pulled in reverse through a machine, dogs barking, and the bells and cries/screams from the opening moments of the album cut in and out and mingle with less recognizable squeals, drones, and short rhythmic loops. And then, suddenly, the collage disappears, leaving the screams, paddle sounds, barks, and bell behind. For minutes, the only sounds that emerge from the speakers seem to come from a recording of someone being repeatedly beaten and a dog aggressively barking at the ringing bell.

Listening to this first passage of the album is such a jarring and, frankly, traumatizing experience. Hearing these violent sounds feels so painful and terrifying, raising deeply troubling questions about how Eb.er made the album. Is this actually the sound of someone being beaten? Is it against their will? And if so, does that make the listener complicit in that violence? As those questions begin to swirl, a new soundscape emerges in the form of a fast-paced drum and bass beat mixed with the sounds of a crowd. But on closer listen, the crowd is actually an illusion: what originally feels like a field recording of a packed public space is actually primarily constructed from the now familiar screams and barks manipulated and layered back on top of each other. Eb.er heightens this sudden sense of artifice by dissolving the electronic drum beat into a tape warble, making it sound like the beat was playing on a cassette player the whole time and the tape had suddenly melted. A fast-paced rhythmic loop, one that could almost keep up with a machine gun, abruptly breaks through the silence as the screams, barks, paddles, and bells return. But the timing feels off. Nothing seems to line up and the same recorded segment of a single scream clearly repeats itself again and again.

Flipping the record, the B-Side undermines the authenticity behind the recordings even further. After a passage of insect sounds and some more barking (this time over a lower pitched bell), two measures of a waltz played on an unknown stringed instrument repeat themselves as someone mumbles an indecipherable text and someone else starts shouting. The machine-gun-like rhythmic sample cuts in and out, but an overwhelming sense of melodrama permeates from this part of the composition. It just kind of sounds silly but also seems to nod towards the artificial sense of extremity within the noise music genre Eb.er both finds himself in and rejects (Kemp, 2010). The strings fade away, and the bell returns but slowly transforms into the sound of a phone ringing. The screams have evolved as well, this time sounding less like a pained cry and more like a dull, forced, and overly theatrical laugh. The drumbeat, violent slaps, and dog barks do appear again at times but only sporadically and only for fractions of a second. At this point, Eb.er has completely undermined any semblance of the recordings being anything other than a staged recreation, a set of performative sonic artifacts that at best resemble violence. This theatricality continues until the final moments of the album, as what sounds like a distorted drumbeat drowns out another, much more real sounding recording of a crowd screaming. And without warning, all sound suddenly stops as the needle reaches the inner groove.

To further analyze this album, I propose a listening of *Runzelstøck & Gurgelstirn* through what I describe as an aesthetic pedagogy, an affective opening created by an aesthetic object (such as a painting, performance, or album) to reimagine the social relations that define the micro-community interacting with the work (Woods, 2021). Within this listening, Eb.er plays with the notion of earwitnessing, inviting the audience to bear witness to the sounds of violence before pulling a musical sleight of hand and revealing the artifice that produced these sounds. The gesture, therefore, creates a certain affective relation between the listener and the sound maker before the notion of artifice produced through these recordings reorients that affect. The gesture then embodies Thompson's (2017) notion of noise, drawing the listener's attention away from the

person creating the sound towards the musical milieu (a shift illustrated especially clearly by the routine use of tape sounds and microphone distortion). In turn, the aesthetic pedagogy of the album rests on the nature of earwitnessing. Rather than approaching the recording of the person screaming as a text in itself, an approach that would invoke Oliver's (2001) notion of an eyewitness and Schafer's (1977) original conception of the term, Eb.er forces the listener to bear witness to what exists beyond the recording in terms of the affective relationships between these sounds and the audience. Instead of earwitnessing a violent act, the album invites the audience to bear witness to the relation of violence itself. In doing so, the album provides an opportunity to engage in the pedagogical potential of bearing witness described by Zembylas (2006) by centering the affective economy that produces violence within the broader milieu. This occurs by shifting the focus of witnessing away from a specific subject and towards the set of affective relations that create violence, in alignment with Greenbaum's (2001) approach to engaging witnessing as a pedagogical technology.

Eb.er's invocation of earwitnessing on the album, therefore, sidesteps some of the critiques of bearing witness posed by others. By positioning violence as an affective relation at the center of what is being witnessed, the listener cannot subjugate the victims of violence in the same way as one does when they visually witness violent acts (and specifically acts of Black violence) (Hartman, 1997; Love, 2016). However, examining the album through the lens of earwitnessing produces other critiques. Specifically, the album reproduces the decontextualization of violence that often occurs within the context of noise music (Woods, 2018; 2019). Instead of creating an opportunity for the listener to center themselves when witnessing violent acts, a crucial issue within contemporary forms of witnessing described by Bedecarré (2022), the album centers violence as an affective relation by erasing this subject entirely. The theme of violence flows throughout this album, but the victims of that violence seem buried in the mix at best. Although this seems to be the point of the album, highlighting the structural practice of reproducing and articulating violence beyond the violent act itself, it fails to consider that witnessing should always serve those being witnessed on their terms (Freire, 1970; hooks 2003). While revealing the affective relations that connect these bodies, the album also hides the bodies that receive the traces of violence. This in turn undermines the album's ability to reframe affective economies, an ability that serves as the ethical foundation of earwitnessing within educational praxes.

Conclusion

Much like Thompson's (2017) assertion that the politics of noise remain undetermined (with an ethical potential that evolves in relation to its context), *Runzelstock & Gurgelstirn* reveals the complicated ethics of earwitnessing. While the album creates an aesthetic pedagogy that allows for a witnessing of the affect of violence itself, producing an opportunity to attend to and reimagine the affective economy that produces that violence, the album simultaneously undermines this potential by sonically erasing the presence of those subjugated by that violence. But rather than attempt to resolve this critique, I propose that this album speaks to the potential of sound within pedagogical acts of witnessing to engage affective economies beyond the aesthetic. Outside of this specific set of recordings, earwitnessing can both attend to the forms of affect that define the violent milieu that surrounds us while also drawing us into new affective relations between ourselves and others. Sound (when framed as an affective, differential, and medial phenomenon) then represents a powerful technology within the liberatory praxes forwarded by those advocating

for witnessing within processes of learning. Although this advocacy does not represent an uncritical acceptance of earwitnessing in all cases, it does forward the value of a particular kind of listening, one that goes further than merely recognizing sound and embraces a hearing of relational difference behind an aesthetic veil.

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