A *Currere* Journey Towards a Humanizing Curriculum: An Autobiographical Consideration of Culture and Disability

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Education

August 2024

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Abstract

This thesis looks at how curriculum can take a humanizing approach through the lens of my own experiences and secondary literature. I specifically use *Currere* to journey along cycles of time exploring and discovering meaning relating to pedagogical approaches and curriculum theorizing. I use *Currere* to tell my story and detail my observations within the sphere of education. Using periods of time: past, present and future, I analyze how educators can approach curriculum with an eye towards humanization. I point to the need to acknowledge and embrace the diversity of students and the value of their experiences while being cautious to avoid negative sanctions and dehumanization through politically charged agendas. I discuss the hidden curriculum and its elements along with the need to incorporate equity, diversity, and inclusion into pedagogical considerations. I use the stages of *Currere*, namely regressive, progressive, analytic and synthetic to examine the elements of autobiographical curricular theorizing concluding with both pedagogical and personal considerations. The literature review contained herein discusses some of the key themes that arise during the regressive stage, specifically belonging, control, and loss. I discuss how I believe the education system can be incorporative rather than segregating and integrate the needs of diverse students from both a cultural and disability standpoint.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply thankful for my patient, kind and long-suffering supervisor, Dr. Adrian Downey. From the inception of this thesis to its proposal defense to its completion he has provided invaluable feedback that pushed me to depths of understanding I would not have achieved on my own. The journey through *Currere* was a challenging one, and Dr. Downey's unflinching guidance brought me to a multitude of realizations. In times that I felt inadequate or flailing, Dr. Downey consistently built me up with instructional words of encouragement and direction.

I am also indebted to Dr. Alicia Noriega-Mundaroy for her tremendous effort offering edits and suggestions, helping me recognize needed technical elements and the impacts of content. I immensely appreciate the multitude of conversations and moral support I received from Dr. Downey and Dr. Noriega-Mundaroy. I could not have asked for better sounding boards and providers of constructive feedback.

I would like to thank my son, Liam Cavanaugh for giving up his computer for countless hours and constantly offering moral support and encouragement. His words bolstered my efforts and helped me to continue at times I felt fatigued both mentally and physically. I hope I have set an appropriate example for him and helped prepare him for his impending university journey.

I also thank my best friend Amanda Broderick for tirelessly listening to me talk about my thesis and its varied stages while offering kind words of encouragement. I am grateful for her constantly checking in on me and extending her support.

Chapter One: Introduction

Opening Thoughts

Sitting at the kitchen table with a makeshift office setup watching the rain, little rivulets of water running down the windows, it feels like an appropriate setting to begin authoring this thesis. Rainy days for some are depressing and demotivating, yet I find them invigorating. Sunshine is a call to arms, a demand to be productive, exercise, and create accomplishments. I feel pressure on sunny days that rain does not place upon me. Rain says, "slow down, reflect; introspection is on the agenda". It is this introspection that is the guiding rule in this thesis. Recognition of the past, its impact both on me currently and my future, is the theoretical direction I take. The past will never truly pass; it is never forgotten in place of the current or the future. The past informs one's being. It directs one's thought processes, and it pushes one in concrete directions. Those processes can be derailed, however, with revelations that occur in the present. For me, these revelations tend to take place in the sphere of education, and they bring me to the point of my writing.

My current path revolves around education and paying forward that education to the masses by reflecting on my own experiences and applying this reflection to curriculum studies—lightbulb moments where learning milestones are achieved are career changing, mind building, and life altering if you allow them to be. Learning is transformative if you have the right mindset—if you are open to letting learning transform your epistemology. In this thesis, my mindset is a marriage of all the time cycles: past, present, future, and their connection to my education along with their connections found within curriculum studies. The impacts education has on me are both measurable and remarkable. I learned early in my studies that I was approaching my education with a closed and muddled mind. Once I recognized this stumbling block, I discovered worlds opening to me around understanding society and my place in it. I

learned how coming from a closed and controlled mindset to one that is open to discovery is an arduous journey, and I share this journey in this thesis.

In this thesis, I write about my past and about my present and future aspirations. I explain *currere* (Pinar, 1994) and why I am using this method. Throughout my writing, there will be times the experiences within could be triggering, so I add this content warning now. Specifically, this dissertation touches on abuse and sexual assault.

I approach this thesis in an unconventional manner that I believe is fitting to the *currere* method. I intersperse my findings and research with personal reflections and literature. The use of *currere* calls for a level of introspection, self-analysis, and realization through process, to attain new synthesis. Such reflective writing calls for forms that distance themselves from the conventions of social sciences research (Adams, 2021), shaped as many of them are by a response to the false claims of objectivity that dominated early 20th century research. This is subjective research in the purest sense of the word; it is an inquiry into subjectivity. I am a large part of the research. The form this research takes, then, centers the personal and the subjective. Writing this way is also part of a wish to humanize my findings and the research process, focusing on producing thought-provoking material.

In this thesis, I examine issues surrounding the hidden curriculum, loss, control, and belonging through the context of my own experience. In my experience with education, I have not always felt it to be humanizing, yet the potential has always been there. What humanizing the curriculum means to me is a recognition of the diverse needs of students, creating spaces for students and their lived experiences. Humanizing curriculum should be inclusive not segregating or alienating. It should be incorporative of student experience and reflexive, where meaning making is fluid. Considering that “much of education continues to prioritize dehumanized,

decontextualized, and disembodied ways of knowing" I seek a curriculum of change (Lyle & Caissie, 2021, p. 221). I also believe a humanizing curriculum is one that embodies an equity focus. Along with inclusivity there should come agency, with students feeling empowered rather than dictated to. I call for curriculum to recognize the humanity of the student, acknowledge their complexities and varied needs. There is a tendency to dehumanize and create civil soldiers in education "who fit the ideals of state" (Downey, 2023, p. 249) over individualization. Humanizing curriculum is not about conforming to politically idealized notions, nor is it a removal of cultural attributes. It is not "situated within bureaucratic, racist, and colonial social systems that effectively work to dehumanize those who operate within them" (Downey, 2023, p.253). It is about embracing diversity, encouraging self-expression, recognizing the student experiences as valuable, and acknowledging the interconnectedness of humanity.

Toward these goals, the research question I seek to answer is: How might my lived experience contribute to better understanding of how curriculum can have a humanizing affect that speaks across culture and disability? As Paulo Friere puts it, "Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality" (Friere, 2000, p. 43). Though I return to it only at the end of this thesis, humanization is, indeed, at the core of this work.

Positionality

Reflexivity is a crucial element for researchers, especially those centering subjectivity as I do here. Reflexivity is defined as awareness that the researcher and the researched are in a mutual relationship with each other. Furthermore, "reflexivity calls for attention to how thinking comes to be, how it is shaped by preexisting knowledge, and how research claims are made" (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019, p. 1.). Reflexivity is a self-consciousness open to revision while

aware of biases, preferences, and practices of the researcher. It is a fusion of the subject and object in research (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019). Stating my positionality here is a reflexive exercise in recognition of that.

My position is one of privilege, and it took me a long time to both admit and understand that. I had to understand that privilege does not mean a life of riches and untold bounty. It means I had opportunities based on my race that were not afforded to others. It means that being white opened doors that were closed to others. I recognize and acknowledge my privilege. I also come to my studies as a female who fought hard through education and employment to reach stations that were occupied in male dominated spaces. From taking on the school administration to allow me into Industrial Arts over Home Economics, to playing football and working out in the weight room, I was determined to ensure my place was everywhere and not limited to the expectations of my gender. I was raised to 'know my place' and that place was subservient to male authority. That never sat well with me and once leaving the trappings of religion, I pursued even harder an equity that I still struggle for.

Due to a traumatic, near fatal car collision I am coming from a permanently disabled space. It is a space I still wrestle with as knowing my limitations comes with knowing my frustrations. I push myself daily to perform, and days that I must rest are days full of guilt and mental conflict. Being disabled but ambulatory also comes with its own set of exasperations. Firstly, I do not look disabled, and I do not emote my pain. My friends forget on a regular basis my restrictions and admittedly I let them. Every two weeks I silently go to my pain specialist and have Marcaine (an anesthetic) injected into my muscles from the back of my skull down to my lower spine. They are painful and necessary, so I simply suffer them quietly. Apart from the damage the car accident left me with, I have several afflictions from IBS to NAFL that

complicate my days. Each day I wake up, I can deal with any number of physical triggers. Each of which I tell no one about. So, it is fair to see my friends and cohorts expect performance beyond my abilities. On top of physical challenges come mental obstacles. I suffered a stroke at the age of 16, and my memory is reliably unreliable. I can forget the past or the immediate present in an instant my mind blanks regularly. For academic purposes, it creates an almost overwhelming challenge. I must read, reread, make notes, read again and again, revisiting texts for days until it takes hold within my mind. It was a great fear while teaching that students would ask questions I could not answer, as being put on the spot is a "memory trigger" for me. What I mean as a memory trigger is that once I am questioned with an expectation of an immediate answer, my mind wipes itself. As a teacher, I did extensive preparation for classes, trying to think ahead to any possible spot of confusion my students might encounter so that I was able to respond as needed. Secondarily, this was an incredible challenge as well because I would often forget instructions seconds after they were given. I would have to put my tail between my legs and re-enter an office to ask for the instructions once again. I learned quickly to carry notepads with me wherever I went and to note every minute detail of instruction.

In scholastic efforts, I was equally hindered when a particular course was heavy on memorization. In fact, my initial major was not Sociology/Anthropology but Psychology. I was fascinated with the inner working of the mind and eager to learn more. Unfortunately, Psychology was laden with memorization, and I had to find a major that resonated with me on a deeper level rather than one that relied on memory. This brought me to Sociology/Anthropology. It was within these subjects that I felt an intense connection, as much of the covered material related to time periods I lived through. I could draw on my own experiences and inject those into

the required writings, providing a space I could thrive in instead of feeling mired in failure. Perhaps that is why I was drawn to *currere* as an approach to research.

Sociology was, of course, not without memorization; I needed to understand the myriad of theories and their applications. I learned the way to embed information, to have it take root in my mind, was to write out by hand the information I wanted to store. I wrote pages upon pages of notes, and even more pages of copying from books, all to be able to regurgitate it onto exams and papers as required. I brought this practice of writing out what I need to retain from my high school days, where I needed to memorize massive amounts of information for exams, often unsuccessfully. The most common comment from teachers was that I 'could do more' that I was not working to my capability. I wanted to scream at my teachers, "I understand, I just cannot remember it all!"

I recount these stories to share examples of the challenges with education from which my inquiry emerges. It is from these spaces of challenge that I wish to provoke education and its offerings through this research. I wish to find a space of equity not equality—a space that welcomes difference, embraces it; a space where learning is not disabled by assumption and ignorance and where disability and culture are taught to, rather than left to fall through educational cracks.

Curriculum theory, the field of study in which this thesis is rooted, provides the analytic tools to affect change within curriculum and within the hidden curriculum. From this positioning, I want to change pedagogical approaches to envelop the ever-changing landscape of classrooms today—especially in the area I live, where classrooms become more and more multicultural, filled with students from all over the globe and from every socioeconomic category, including students coming from war-torn countries that may not have the educational training local

students have long since adjusted to. These students may be unfamiliar with the pace and routine of our schools and find the experience overwhelming as they simultaneously work to grasp the language spoken here. Teachers need to recognize the varied needs of their students and teach them accordingly. To do this effectively, teachers must understand comprehensively the system of education and intervene with a pedagogy capable of successfully reaching all students equitably.

Context

Having discussed my positionality and broadly introduced my research in this chapter, the next chapters look at these time cycles and educational impacts, review several literary papers/articles, and combine them with *currere*, a method of autobiographical curriculum theorizing. I struggled to find what method would fit me personally and my goal of creating a thesis that informed pedagogical practices by demonstrating the need to look at teaching from an intersectional viewpoint inclusive of culture and disability. In searching for a methodology, I looked at ethnography, grounded theory, and historical analysis mining for the right methodological fit. All this research culminated in a meeting with my thesis supervisor, Dr. Adrian M. Downey (2023) who introduced me to the c*urrere* method. This felt in my very bones to be the way to go, and I ran with it. I explored my own past, how it affected my learning journey, how it shaped me as a human and what themes emerged from it all. I learned how the hidden curriculum, control, belonging, and loss played central roles in my own development from their absence to their addition. My writing here attempts to show the reader some of what is emergent from that *currere* process.

Throughout this thesis, I use the stages of *currere*: regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical to tell my story. Structurally, this thesis closely follows that *currere* process in the

following way. In this chapter, I began writing about how I came to this current point in my educational journey and why I chose this thesis topic. I then provided an introduction describing my position in the world of academics and discussed my challenges along the way. The next chapter discusses the methodological framework employed in this thesis, *currere*, as an autobiographical method of curriculum theorizing. Following that is a literature review focused on the themes that emerged in writing this paper: the hidden curriculum, belonging, control, and loss. Then I begin to employ the *currere* method with regression (chapter 4). I then move to the progressive (chapter 5) to write about my desired future. In the analytical stage (chapter 6), I evaluate and *analyze* reactions and responses to the previous two stages. The last stage is the synthesis (chapter 7), where everything comes together to form a fleeting synthetic conclusion. In a final chapter (chapter 8), I add to that conclusion the necessary academic requirements of a thesis: a summary as well as discussions of this study's limitations and future directions for research.

Chapter Two: Methodology

My goals for this thesis are: 1) to impress upon the educational world the need to incorporate intersectional pedagogy; 2) to find ways to recognize the humanity of the student; and 3) to develop my own capacity to teach on a multidisciplinary plane that incorporates culture and disability. I wish instructors, administration, and any members of the educational community to innately feel the need to meet the requirements of diverse learners. I ask for recognition of the changing educational landscape of curriculum studies, a reformation of sorts, that answers the call that students sound. I have the unique privilege of spending time both as an instructor and as a student, giving me a specialized perspective on the subject. I desire a place of learning that envelops students in secure environments promoting the expansion of their minds while addressing their diverse needs. I hope that through the reader's journey to my past, future desires and present, an understanding develops that impresses upon them the need for such reform as it has impressed upon me how urgently I wish for change. The process of c*urrere* teaches me that through my experiences both positive and negative, I deeply desire transformation within the education system.

As stated in my introduction, I think that *currere*, which is well suited to the task above, often bucks against the language of social sciences research. Yet, I acknowledge the dominance of the social sciences in educational research. Thus, in this section I use both conventional and unconventional language to describe the "methodology" for this thesis: *Currere*, a method of autobiographical curriculum theorizing.

Study Objectives

The following comprise the main objectives of this study:

- Develop a reflexive understanding of the need for pedagogical reform in the areas of the belonging, control and loss
- Highlight the need for diversity, inclusion, and equity to be incorporated into pedagogy
- Encourage educators and curriculum to move toward a humanizing pedagogy cognizant of culture and disability

Research Question

In addition to the above, the following research question guides the research process: How might my lived experience contribute to better understanding how curriculum can have a humanizing affect that speaks across culture and disability?

Methodological Approach

This thesis aims toward autobiographical curricular theorizing. In some ways, it is similar to qualitative analysis as it involves a personal connection to the research rather than a focus on statistical data. This research does not seek to establish causality, rather it takes an in-depth look at issues (Leko et al., 2021). In qualitative research, the researcher can be a part of the research. Qualitative study can involve methods from ethnography, narrative, interviews, case studies, and focus groups. Unlike qualitative research, however, autobiographical curricular theorizing makes the researcher the primary focus of the research. The method I have chosen—*currere*—is, thus, not typical status quo research project, and my thesis reflects this. Ultimately, *currere* differs from qualitative research in significant ways, but it remains a rigorous, countercultural way of thinking through experience.

In this next section, I detail what the *currere* method is and how I use it to look at my educational experiences, desires, and thinking. I employ the *currere* method as an effective way

to tell my story. My journey through academia, essential to this thesis, is one that contains many obstacles. I hope that through my journeys and experiences I may embolden others who have experienced similar hardships, while highlighting the need for educational reform.

The *currere* method provides an autobiographical framework for thinking curricular experience through cycles of time. Currere is a four-step research method that "seeks to understand the contribution academic studies makes to one's understanding of one's life (and vice versa), and how both are imbricated in society, politics, and culture" (Pinar, 2012, p. 45). Using this method allows the writer and reader to take a train of thought and end their travels in a place of reflective analysis. *Currere* is fundamentally a method of autobiographical curriculum theorizing, and in the following section, I will further elaborate how I understand it as such.

To begin, what the *currere* method entails is an introspective view of educational life and how it relates to the world around the author—an examination of self in education with a view to the societal self. As Sardinha (2022) writes, "*Currere* offers … possibilities in that it asks the researcher to remain mindful of our point of view in relation to all external expectations and look at it, loosen ourselves from it, detach from it, and bracket it" (2022. p. 43). Curriculum theorist Marla Morris (2015) adds that "*Currere* is about exploring lived experience as it is related to deep understanding of education" (p. 1). *Currere*, then, is about recognizing how past educational experiences and our aspirations inform present educational choices. This reflection must remain critical in nature because as Paulo Freire (2000) notes: "To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity" (p. 47). *Currere* can, thus, facilitate a deeper understanding of one's humanity.

There are four stages to *currere* outlined by William Pinar (1975), who introduced the concept of the *Currere* method at an annual conference of the American Education Research Association (AERA) in Washington, DC. The four stages consist of the following: regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical (Pinar, 1975). The first stage is regression and that is the stage I begin my thesis with. I focus on the past to broaden one's memory reflecting on the environmental, cultural, religious, educational, and political aspects that influence one's present. The regressive represents a view to the past without becoming vulnerable to it: "to observe functioning of the past... the focus of the method is educational experience" (Pinar, 1994, p. 23).

The second stage is progression where the focus is on the future. Here, one meditates on future possibilities and "how the future inhabits the present" (Pinar, 2004, p. 36). It is here one can imagine future endeavors, aspirations, possibilities. In my progressive moment, I use a fictional narrative as a point of reflection on my desires for the future.

The third stage is analytical. Pinar describes it the following way: "Phenomenological bracketing; one's distantiation from past and future functions to create a subjective space of freedom in the present... an intensified engagement with daily life, not an ironic detachment from it" (Pinar, 2004, p. 37). It is an analysis of what was exposed in the prior two stages—though it is more interested in reactions to the past and the future and how they inhere in the present than reiterating their contents.

The fourth stage is a coming together of the culmination of moments, a synthesis. It is "about pulling oneself towards a higher level of knowing and being" (Wang, 2010, p. 276). As Le Grange puts it: "The individual re-enters the present with a renewed sense of self, able to see the wholeness of past, present and future, and asks what this means and what can I do?" (Le Grange, 2021, p. 10). This understanding of time in the *currere* method deals "specifically with

the dynamics of inner time, external time and pedagogical time – to understanding the process of enabling transformative change" (Wang, 2010, p. 275). In my thesis, the synthetic moment attempts to render the transformative change *currere* has enabled for me.

Beyond the stages, *currere* works actively within the realm of curriculum theory, and this is crucial to understand before moving into my own story. I draw on the writings of Pinar to explain. In the book, *The Character of Curriculum Studies: Bildung, Currere and the Recurring Question of the Subject*, Pinar (2011) states:

> The verb form of the Latin concept curriculum – *currere* – underscores the lived experiences of study, in solitude and with others, those 'others' being one's contemporaries as well as those who speak to us through print and on screen... *currere* emphasizes the formation of the subject as it dwells on the meaning of academic study for life, restructuring – as new events and research occur – questions of culture, society, politics and the economy. (pp. 124-125)

Currere is, thus, a reflexive method that examines the relationship between self and society, a collaboration between oneself and the past, present, and future in relation to curriculum studies with a view to transformation. It is a "reactivation of the past in the present through academic study" (Pinar, 2011, p. 156), and a method "focused on self-understanding through academic study" (Pinar, 2011, p. 187). All of this directly impacts the way we conceive of teaching and curriculum. Pinar continues:

> To teach autobiographically, I suggest, is not to introduce personal matters into classroom discussion, although these can on occasion be appropriate. To teach autobiographically ...is to thread one's subjectivity through subject matter, converting private passion into

> public service attuned to the historical moment. Such autobiographical labor takes allegorical forms, knowledge that is simultaneously specific and general. (Pinar, 2011, p. 187).

This implies a recognition of the impact of the past on the present to inform the future, particularly concerning education subjectively. It means that we must accept the subjectivity of teaching and the ways social elements that have impacted us throughout our life's journeys inhere in the curriculum. Academic knowledge, professional ethics, technical expertise, personal experiences, and "a passionate sense of public service, all threaded through the subjectivity of the socially engaged individual" arrive as a "historically attuned intellectual judgement" (p. 43). Furthermore, the *currere* method "provides a strategy for students of curriculum to study the relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interests of self-understanding and social reconstruction" (p. 44). One cannot look at education, at curriculum or pedagogy, without reflecting on their past and the connections one has to them. In short, *currere* is an autobiographical method of curriculum inquiry *and* it understands curriculum as essentially intertwined with the lived realities of those involved in bringing it to life.

Personally, the use of this method took me from the very beginnings of my exposure to education, spending extensive time in the regressive stage to thoroughly expose my background experiences. I then moved to progression detailing my hopes and dreams in relation to the education I have received to date. From there, I moved to the analytic stage and look at how the past and future can bring about change and the transformation that takes place in *currere*'s stage four, synthesis.

This thesis uses c*urrere* to both write my story and provide a pathway towards transformative change for those inspired by my story. In the regressive moment, I began at the

start of my educational experiences and dive deep into the occurrences that shaped who I am as a student of curriculum. Again, there are triggering stories that could upset the reader, but I include them unabashedly. From strife comes growth; from challenges comes strength. I hope that some who have similar experiences can recognize there is no shame in them. I always say what happens to me is not who I am. The damage belongs squarely on the perpetrator's shoulders and not mine. It is through the stages of *currere* that I become transformed and hope to transform my readers. This transformation should be one of understanding, acceptance, acknowledgment, and a call to action. Whether an educator, a student, or an administrator, you will see how in your part of the educational sphere you can create and motivate change. It is important to recognize teachers embody a sphere of control, demonstrate a modelling of behavior and can contribute both negatively and positively to the learning journey.

Having now discussed the method of *currere* and how it informs my thinking about curriculum, I return to the conventions of social sciences research to articulate how *currere* guides my data gathering and analysis.

Data Gathering and Analysis

My data consists of working with my own experiences. The first stage of *Currere* involves regression. I wrote the regressive stage looking at my past and its connection to education. I have analyzed how my past and past choices affected both myself and my experience with education. In my regression, I noted varied themes that emerged and honed in on these themes for my literature review.

The next stage of *currere* is progressive, and there I use a fictional narrative to illustrate my desired educational future. Though the progressive moment, I seek to better understand my desires for education and what I believe classroom environments should look like. I discuss what

pedagogy should entail from the perspectives of disability and culture through the lens of my own desire.

During the analytic stage, I analyze the gaps between my own experiences and desires, looking specifically at how to navigate past experiences with a view to correcting them in the present. The analytic stage consists of two parts, in my understanding, firstly the description of my current educational reality and secondly introducing theoretical lenses to analyze the gaps between past experiences, present reality, and desires for the future.

In the synthetic stage everything comes together. Here, I aim to marry theory and practice. The true synthetic moment takes place in the classroom, in the cafeteria, and in the hallways. With that said, the synthetic moment is represented in this thesis through the amalgamation of the previous three stages and functions as a general conclusion to the thesis.

Having now discussed my method, I move on to discuss a variety of literature around the themes of hidden curriculum, loss, belonging, and control. I explore the many facets of each theme and how they are both experienced and not experienced. I look at my connections to the material and often my disconnections from the material discussed.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review the literature in curriculum studies around four themes emergent from my regressive writing—hidden curriculum, control, belonging, and loss. While conventional literature reviews attempt to represent the academic literature objectively, here, taking inspiration from the centrality of subjectivity to *currere*, I opt for a more personal approach. I have selected readings and concepts that resonate with me to demonstrate the situatedness of my research within wider curricular conversations. Additionally, throughout this literature review, I often refer to things teachers need to or should do. This is not intended to be prescriptive, *per se*, nor is it intended to blame teachers for systemic issues. Rather, the intent is to communicate how I, as a teacher and a student, am understanding the ethical imperatives imparted through the literature. Again, it is an approach to literature review that centers subjectivity. Before continuing, I briefly discuss each in terms and its personal connection to me here before moving into a more thorough discussion based on the literature.

First, control discusses the loss of the ability to think for myself, to choose my own paths, and the control exerted by others. It discusses the loss of control over my own education. Control is also discussed when it is regained and the consequences therein. Along with these, also addressed in the literature review is control over the classroom and the role teachers play, from modeling behavior to power relations, along with the lack of control or powerlessness experienced by students.

Belonging is addressed from a state of not belonging to finding a sphere I could belong in. To date, I struggle with belonging and how living as an outlier impacts my life. I discuss how belonging exists on multiple levels yet simultaneously does not exist in various forms. The

impacts of belonging are far reaching and multifaceted. Students have a need to feel a sense of belonging, and it is important that educators recognize this.

Loss is written as existing on several plains similarly to belonging and control. From the loss of familial units to the loss of control, to the loss of self, loss is a complicated entity. I touch on how loss is experienced and managed through my journey of self-discovery and acknowledge its impacts. As much as I have experienced loss in life, I have experienced gains through education both as a student and as a teacher.

Unearthing the hidden curriculum is the space that exists for educators to create real change. It contains the unspoken rules of expected behaviors and highlights the social environment that impacts learners. The hidden curriculum can also be a dark place of forced formation and assimilation. My discussion of the hidden curriculum focuses more on *how* one is taught, and the unwritten rules of conduct imposed upon learners.

In summary, this literature review focuses on four major themes—belonging, the hidden curriculum, loss, and control—that collectively contribute to the understanding of curriculum's impact on students with specific relations to factors relevant to this study. The literature explores how belonging is identified and experienced, revealing connections between it and society and highlighting the effects of exclusion. The literature examines the multiple levels of belonging, such as attachment, social groups, geographical, historical, and temporal belonging. It also discusses *loss* from varied angles. The literature on loss examines strong relationships between power, codependency, and loss of self and tackles the act of shunning. The literature also looks specifically at the loss of self and the 'why try' effect along with lost discourses and the need for an inclusion of both love and mystery within the curriculum, along with what makes for acceptable grieving and ways of coping with grief. Before offering concluding remarks, the

literature review highlights issues pertaining to *control* from educational/curriculum control to capacities for control within the classroom.

Having now given an overview of the literature review, I move on to discuss the hidden curriculum. The section afterwards provides an overview of how control can be exerted on teachers in relation to subject matter and subject expectations while educators can exert levels of influence that can be lastingly harmful to students and their learning experiences.

Hidden Curriculum

Significant impacts are felt from a student's learning to their overall well-being because of the hidden curriculum. What students learn that is not directly part of intentional curriculum planning can have a lifelong impact on them, including how they perceive themselves and how they perceive the world around them. When studies of curriculum look at the social construction of knowledge and the role of curriculum reform, they often include the hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum often overlaps with elements of the null curriculum—things taught through their absence—and the enacted or lived curriculum—what some call pedagogy.

What I found missing in my own experience was the examination of curricula that not only addresses the hidden curriculum from an application space but also how the hidden curriculum could be revealed to correct/enrich learning spaces with a recognition that conformity impacts learning. In other words, the humanizing potential of unearthing the hidden curriculum with students remains absent from my own education. Here I hope to bring it forward. Ted Aoki calls to humanize curriculum theories as he looks for “one, which is grounded in human experiences within the classroom situation” (Aoki et al, 2005, p. 3). Aoki exhorts that curriculum studies needs to be reflexive in its practice, providing the opportunity for educators to reflexively

understand what is going on around them and to the children they are educating by critiquing instrumentality and western reasonings (Aoki et al, 2005). A critical understanding of the everyday realities of the classroom is what is aimed at here through *currere.*

This section of the literature review first explores the hidden curriculum before moving onto an overview of literature that looks at missing discourses around gender, inclusion, equity, and diversity and its social pressures.

The curriculum as lived (Aoki et al, 2005) involves those teachable moments experienced in real time that shape how students and teachers learn and form the relationships that exist between instructors and students. Lived curriculum is crucial to educational reform. This is the space occupied outside of formal instructional restraints and control. It is where teachers can insert the personal along with the professional and step outside the inelastic guidelines. It is the space that exists for teachers to move out of institutional learning and help their students grow their understanding outside of rigid, enforced curricula handed down from civil authorities. It is also where the hidden curriculum resides.

According to *The Glossary of Education Reform* (2015), the hidden curriculum is the "unwritten, unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values and perspectives that students learn in school... the unspoken or implicit academic, social, and cultural messages that are communicated to students while they are in school" (para. 1). This hidden curriculum features values and messages that are not explicitly taught in the formal curriculum but shape a student's experiences and mindset. It involves cultural expectations, cultural values, cultural perspectives, curricular topics, teaching strategies, institutional rules, and school structures. How educators influence their students can be found in educators' pedagogical practices and in the sanctions educators enforce. By rigidly following colonial ideologies, for example, educators ignore the

present diversity in classrooms. These colonial ideologies create a space where one culture is dominating, and other cultural ideas become stifled. A dominant reliance on formal learning structures and pedagogies can lead educators to focus less on the impacts of informal learning. Educators need to be hypervigilant on how formal and informal pedagogical practices impact student experience and learning.

The hidden curriculum can greatly impact student experiences and engagement and pedagogical effectiveness (Gatto, 2002, p. 14). In John Gatto's (2002) *Dumbing us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, he highlights the way the structures of schooling do not allow for authentic learning reflective of students' lives. As Gatto impresses, students tend to fall in line, lose their independent states, and bend to norms around them. Instead of providing a space of learning that encourages diversity, embraces it even, the hidden curriculum can promote conformity to rigidity. Gatto (2002) succinctly puts it: "School, as it was built, is an essential support system for a model of social engineering that condemns most people to be subordinate stones in a pyramid that narrows as it ascends to a terminal of control" (p. 39). Within this system of control, there needs to be a balance of equitable understanding. The school's discipline demands students holster many obligations from timely attendance to countenance to homework. This demonstrates a rigid socialization, a churning out of civil soldiers over critical thinkers. In the book, *The hidden curriculum in higher education*, Margolis (2001) discusses how schools perpetuate the status quo. In so doing, they validate particular ways of being while invalidating others, demonstrating how schooling can reflect society at large.

By stifling a student's ways of being, we repress their individuality. Education should be a place that embraces diversity and encourages expression and critical thinking. From gender to

culture to issues of equity, the hidden curriculum has the opportunity to foster diversity and create safer spaces that bolster student's self-worth.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and the Hidden Curriculum

Hidden curricula frequently serve to reproduce and reinforce dominant hegemonic interests at the expense of marginalized groups (Keshtiban et al., 2023). There is a need to understand there are intersectionally disadvantaged students whose experiences are not easily folded into conventional approaches. Consideration of these diverse students' needs is necessary to combat pull of hegemonic neoliberal ideologies embedded within the hidden curriculum. Explicitly and implicitly, students are directed through schooling based on gender performance. For instance, instead of encouraging students to choose paths that are best fits for them individually, there was a push to make specific course choices based on gender. Though there is a movement for change in this regard, Perriton et al. (2022) pointed out that, within curriculum, there is a lack of equity focus. Focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion among university graduates, the authors found that students graduating and entering management roles without being able to challenge discriminatory behaviors (Perriton et al., 2022). It would be interesting to see what inclusion would look like and some suggestions to implement same in management curriculum as well as other curricula.

Classrooms are places of diverse learning needs, and there must be focused attention on diversity, inclusion, and equity. Studies like Perriton et al.'s (2022) highlight the absence of this needed focus while pointing to the need for more equity content, in particular relating to gender. Fighting for gender equality within the small sphere of education is often an isolating battle. Being a minority voice in a hegemonic institution can leave one feeling exhausted and alone. Power needs to be given back to the student reinforcing a more socially responsible curriculum.

For example, many students in Perriton et al's (2022) study grew up in a world where management was solely "located out of Western white male academic tradition" (p. 61) and female managers were nonexistent. Critical and feminist studies have pointed this out and worked to rectify this towards more equitable hiring practices.

To understand this phenomenon of gender power dynamics and why it is maintained through the hidden curriculum, we can look at how the importance of preparing students for working with diversity is often absent from formal curriculum (Schwabenland & Kofinas, 2023). Despite the importance of the topics of equality, diversity, and inclusion many courses do not cover them at all. The absence of discussions of diversity from formal curriculum constitutes a null curriculum. As above, curriculum can be thought of in three mains ways: overt, hidden, and the null curriculum. Overt curriculum is both taught and learned, hidden curriculum is not taught explicitly but learned nonetheless, and the null curriculum is neither taught nor learned. What is chosen to be excluded from the curriculum constitutes the null curriculum (Cahapay, 2021).

Tokenism is yet another form of discrimination present in both hidden and null curriculum. Tokenism is an example of inadvertent stereotyping where a student may be asked to explain a cultural perspective. Yet "a tokenistic approach to student voice may well have an adverse effect by disenfranchising and alienating the very young people [teachers] were aimed to engage" (Charteris & Smardon, 2019, p. 307). By using one individual to speak for an entire group, teachers run the danger of further marginalizing and even alienating that student from their peers. Tokenism can have several negative consequences from isolation from social and professional networks to increased attention that exacerbates performance pressures (Yoder, 1991).

There are several actions that can be taken to resist hegemonic ideologies and address equity, diversity, and inclusion deficits. As Korica (2022) states:

> we can burst change into existence. Yes, some of us will find ourselves with more capacity to enter power structures and advocate for better conditions from within, and to keep trying after every inevitable hurdle. Yes, the consequences of such choices are unequally applied and the effort they take rests on disproportionally burdened backs. Our personal challenge therefore is deciding what each can work toward doing more of, recognizing that those of us who have more should do more too. (p. 1524)

In other words, positions of power have the opportunity to reverse, rather than reinforce, hegemonic stereotypes. We all have the responsibility to act within our own means.

It is this space where the hidden curriculum resides, in the unspoken yet spoken—in the silence that is deafening in its absence. The absence of equity, inclusion, and diversity serves to further marginalize and dehumanize. The hidden curriculum does not have to be a negative space; it can be a point of departure for meaningful learning. It can be a space of reformation over rigidity. Educators can take back this formally formal space and incorporate practices that provide positive learning experiences for diverse students. Margolis (2001) posits the theory of dialectical critique rejecting the 'one-sided structuralism' and posits that: "hidden curricula is plural and that contradictions open spaces for students and teachers to resist mechanisms of social control and domination and to create alternative cultural forms" (p.15). It is here one encounters resistance theorists who "do not want to see the educational system as a reflection of the capitalist order with students and teachers as mere pawns moved by the logic of capital" (p. 16). Pulling back the curtain and revealing the hidden curriculum provides a space for meaningful interactions leading to systemic change.

Belonging

The hidden curriculum can affectively shape a students' sense of belonging. Students all wish to find spheres in which they belong, whether those be social, academic, or otherwise. Schooling should be a space where this belonging is fostered and encouraged. The student experience should involve shared participation and understanding. When the hidden curriculum remains hidden, exclusion on the basis of gender, race, ability, and class is reinforced. By revealing the hidden, we begin the process of true inclusion, a basis for belonging.

Socio-economic factors, peer involvement, teacher involvement and parent involvement all play a role in a student's sense of belongingness (Ahmadi et al., 2020). *The Cambridge Dictionary* looks at the noun of belonging to mean "a feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024, web). This contrasts with Aoki (2005), who discusses belonging as a state that breeds togetherness, a *belonging* together over belonging *together*, which resides not in togetherness itself but in belonging. One cannot understand belonging as an isolated concept; it involves a binding that is social, environmental, emotional, and even political. The politics of belonging examines how belonging manifests in societies and "how it is influenced by political and societal powers, ideologies, norms, values, restrictions and regulations either in society as a whole and/or in specific contexts" (Piskur et al., 2022, p. 354).

Attachment is a central theme in belonging. Students need to feel an attachment to both the subject matter to aid in learning and an attachment to the social organization of the school. When students do not experience this crucial level of belonging, it affects their ability to learn and to make important connections with their peers. Educators need to note when students are

being excluded or lacking a sense of belonging, whether that be curricula or social exclusion. By taking an active role, educators can foster a sense of belonging and work with students to create spaces of both acceptance and positive relationship with peer groups.

My attention to the concept of belonging is inspired by my own lived experience. Much of my life was spent in a space of not belonging, of living as an outlier. The following articles discuss how belonging is central to being, a norm that cannot be ignored in how it shapes a person, and how it adds to one's identity. Belonging in education can be in and outside of classrooms. From peer groups to a particular classroom, it is important to understand how belonging is central to curriculum studies and education.

Lähdesmäki et al. (2016) examined belonging as a concept. The authors reviewed articles that commonly discuss how people can 'belong' in varied groups and places. In addressing the materiality of belonging, the authors note literature primarily addresses a person's attachment and dependence on the physical, pointing to micro-levels of belonging. discussing earlier work by Killias (2014), Lähdesmäki et al. (2016) note material practices can be a hindrance to belonging. This can be manifested in multiple ways. Student groups are often formed on a fiscal scale, and belonging is shown by material possessions like brand name clothing. This can serve to isolate students without similar financial means.

Anthias (2002) explored the relationship between self and society, particularly its impact on individuality and its constraints or freedoms. Belonging, which connects a person with the social, can be understood as an everyday mode of being, and it is a multidimensional experience that "interweaves many aspects of our being in the world" (p. 370) and can be "depicted as a trajectory through time and space" (p. 372). This article shows the connection between belonging and society—that experiencing belonging exists on many trajectories and encompasses the world

around me showing me how disconnected one can be. When you look at belonging as a state of being, you can see how you exist within a society based on your connections to it. When those connections or states of belonging are absent, and you are not directly connected to any elements or groups within a society, you can experience yourself as floating above or around a society rather than within it. The lack of belonging to social or secular groups can place you in a space that is disconnected from mainstream society. Moreover, there are concrete ties to experiences of exclusion and constructions of identity (Anthias, 2002).

The paper "Belonging from afar: nostalgia, time and memory" (May, 2017) focuses on belonging as a temporal experience anchored in both place and time. May attributes a sense of belonging from distance as resulting from temporal displacement as a person ages, and May also explores how we construct our sense of self as both continuous and anchored in the past. Belonging can relate to a sense of afar, from a nostalgic place where one 'travels down the slope of our past'. That belonging exists in a place of memory, lives in various temporal environments and in an attachment to past experiences. This highlights the critical points of time in development of self during school years. That construction of self and biographical nostalgia needs to be taken in consideration in particular for our students who have emigrated from afar. It is important to note, for educators, to understand how our diverse students are constructing their sense of self from memory, attachment to homeland and culture, and their reconciliation of same with their current surroundings. An important question to take into consideration is "the question of what happens to 'identity' in the migration and settlement process" (Anthias, 2002, p. 491).

To summarize, belonging represents an attachment to something. It means to have a common understanding with a group, a place, or a memory. My past gave me a sense of belonging, being ascribed to a religion and a part of a family, yet this continued a controversial

disconnect I had to remove myself from. Now, I struggle with the concept of belonging in those terms and redefine it to encompass my present. From my research into this topic, I realize how disconnected I have been and currently am. From the lack of belonging to a particular locale, to the absence of temporal belonging, to the missing connections to societal groups, I recognize how much I live apart from typical measures of societal belonging. Viewing my past as a place of belonging is yet another miss, since it is not a place I belong to now. Yet, this was a place of belonging, belonging to a family and religious organization, thus I have experienced what that can mean. These articles impressed upon me the various facets of belonging, some of which I can identify with and others I have had no experience in. Today, I belong in academia. I belong to a social group of friends. I belong to a family, albeit small, being a mother and sister. This is enough for me. This is where I belong now. I explore that personal sense of belonging more in the next chapters.

Regressively, from a state of not belonging emerges a state of loss and this is my next discussion. This theme of loss is closely connected to belonging and explores how loss is experienced on a multifaceted level. Below, I discuss how loss is both dealt with and encountered including the losses of self, of power, and of identity. I address the loss involved within the practice of shunning, and its impacts. These impacts have been felt on a deeply personal level and are still areas I struggle to process. Loss can be felt in so many ways, not just the loss of a relationship or the death of a person of importance but the loss of connections, of information, and identities. The following section looks in-depth at how loss is navigated and studied.

Experiencing Loss

Loss is the absence of something that once was held; it could be a loss of discourse, of identity, or of opportunity. *The Cambridge Dictionary* (2024) defines loss as "the fact that you no long have something or have less of something; a disadvantage caused by someone leaving or by something taken away; the death of a person". From losing my entire family and network of social connections to losing my sense of self, I have dealt with loss on multiple levels. My history is one of loss—a world that no longer exists involving a family that disappeared and a religious direction no longer taken. My education revolved around loss from the inability to form a common identity like my peers to losing out on higher learning after I completed public school. In the following section, I discuss loss including loss of power to loss of connectivity, and educationally the loss of important discourses. I connect with these varied forms of loss and feel these views important to express.

Cowan et al. (1995) examines the relationship between the three elements of codependency, loss of self, and power. Cowan et al. (1995) reveal a strong relationship between the three elements of power, codependency, and loss of self across both genders. It seems that regardless of gender, loss of power affects one similarly. With an increased sense of loss of self came an increased feeling of loss of power within relationships. With codependency comes interconnectedness, and the loss of this can provide an anchorless experience. Students who are forced to relocate and continue studies in new environments will be doing so absent of former supports and would experience this loss of power and codependency along with potentially loss of self. It is important for educators to be aware and proactive in this respect by providing additional support. During the initial loss of family, I lost a codependence—a reliance on support that no longer existed—and I began a search for purpose and self. The next article touches on a

personal experience and examines the consequences of my exit from my family's religion in more detail.

To examine an area relating to loss, in particular the practice of shunning and its psychological impacts, I look to the article '*You're Going to Go into Some Really Dark, Dark Places in Your Mind': Loss and Disillusionment of Being Shunned From the Jehovah's Witness Community and Its Impact* (Grendele et al., 2023). The authors discuss the grounds for shunning and how the practice takes place from public announcement to its enforcement. Aptly stated: "From being alive, the shunned members become symbolically dead in the eyes of their fellows, and the community treats them as non-existent" (p. 2). Respondent's narratives detailed the 'experience of loss' and a 'betrayal of close relationships' along with experiencing levels of shock and negative impacts on self-esteem. Grendele et al. (2023) discuss how social networks and community support being withdrawn have negative effects on those shunned having lost emotional support and, at times, loss of identity. According to Grendele et al. (2023), shunning can also lead to financial, not just social, hardship, and the practice is not age limited. Minors can be shunned, leaving them without a place to live or means to support themselves. The research revealed themes surrounding a 'rebuilding of self post-shunning' dealing with spirituality, autonomy, new opportunities, new relationships, prioritizing family bonds, and conquering of existing fear. The act of shunning is not located solely in religious circles, as the next article highlights.

The article, *The Identity Formation of the Victim of 'Shunning'* (Tanaka, 2001) investigates the concept of shunning focusing on the victimizing process. Tanaka presents two cases of classmates who experienced shunning in Japan and presents varied positions of the victim's reactions corresponding to 'identity statuses'. This has deep implications for educators

to both be aware of the harmful practice of shunning but also to be attuned to the potential consequences. Crucial to consider are the long-term effects that can persist into later life from the act of being shunned. It is important to note how the victims could 'survive' the shunning process and redeem their loss of self. As Tanaka (2001) points out, a loss of self "is not only a devastating catastrophe but also a multiple breakdown of basic trust in the internal and external world... which means a damaged capacity to make a coherent narrative" (p. 474).

The multidimensional impacts of the practice of shunning are clear. They range from a profound sense of multiple losses to the work involved in rebuilding those losses. Self-esteem and self-concept are negatively impacted "being that the family is the primary and central social environment" (Grendele, 2022, p. 209). As with loss comes rebuilding and constructive outcomes can emerge through this 'rebuilding of self' including increased levels of freedom, self-ownership, self-appreciation, and resolution of trauma.

Shunning creates a null curriculum; it teaches through absences, specifically the absence of authority, love, and mystery. Authority, love, and mystery themselves are shunned by scientific educational discourses (Wright, 2009). With an in-depth look at love, authority, and mystery ensuing, connections to these themes follow. As the Wright states:

> Without the connection between love and authority education can only (re)produce uniformity… Without the connection between love and authority students cannot flourish as students, because teachers stand between the students and the world, and a punctual and egocentric perspective is maintained (p. 6).

In the absence of these discourses, a discipline exists and impedes the unpredictable creating problematic tendencies. With the incorporation of mystery comes the formation of rights for

students to be 'authors of their own lives... respected for being who they are' (Wright, 2009, p.6). In other words, shunning robs the shunned of the sense of wonder core to the educative experience.

I found in my teaching experience that a stifling of emotive was encouraged, and ambiguous areas of instruction were to be avoided. Yet, it is in this ambiguity that learning genuinely takes place. Students need to be encouraged, their differences celebrated and acknowledged. We often look at the curricula required to cover and search for more inventive ways to teach, to broaden perspectives, and increase understanding. Mystery needs to be incorporated into learning and embraced rather than avoided. Love for the profession of teaching, love for learning, love for students are all crucial elements to pedagogy. The absence of those things, as in shunning, creates a pedagogical loss, and dealing with that loss is a complicated process.

Loss as a concept in curriculum studies can also apply in less affective ways. A preoccupation with curriculum standards, for example, can create losses in creativity. Teachers need not be so strictly bound to curriculum that they lose their ability teach creatively, employing multiple methods and theories. Content standards can be defined as what teachers are 'supposed' to teach and what students are 'expected' to learn, yet this does not necessarily meet students' diverse needs. Noddings (2013) adds to this: "Instead of recognizing and supporting different talents, schools measure everyone by the same yardstick and claim that they are providing equal opportunity by doing so" (p. 211). Yet, this practice is depriving students and teachers of exercising their varied talents and interests and disadvantaging others. Teachers should have the freedom to use their professional judgement responsive to their students' diverse needs, abilities, and interests.

The last area of loss I wish to discuss revolves around summer learning loss. This time period can prove crucial to either widening or maintaining the achievement gap. Yearly measures of achievement fail to factor in the summer months where learning often falls short. On average declines in academic areas are taking place over the summer months (Sandberg et al., 2013). It is important to note that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are demonstrating higher losses in reading in the summer months over students in higher socioeconomic brackets (Cooper et al., 1996). Combatting these losses comes from understanding the alterable factors in learning losses leading to the development of prevention programs. Providing parent/caregivers with education, training, and resources to counter these learning losses along with school sponsored information sessions "on summer enrichment and [the provision of] ideas for inexpensive, feasible activities for their student community [along with] packets of differentiated activities and summer assignments could be sent home with students over the summer" (Sandberg et al., 2013, p. 751). Summer reading loss, though seemingly disconnected from the earlier discussion of the affective experience of loss, serves as another manifestation of that which is lost through shunning and a broader lack of care. In short, losses are both academic and affective, and remain affecting for the remainder of a student's life.

The next section of literature reviews discusses the theme of control. I look at issues discussing control within the classroom in relation to content, in relation to teacher transformation, and how loss of control is experienced. There is a strong connection between power, control, and loss. Note that with positions of power/control comes the potential for negative interactions, and I also raise this in my discussion of the following articles.

Control and Power

A third theme that emerged from my journey into the regressive stage of *currere* is control. From complete and utter lack of control to possessing a total level of control, control can exist as a matter of life choices and can exist as a mental state. One can exert control over the mind with varied levels of influence, especially considering power dynamics. Some research suggests that the motivational style used by teachers has a direct influence on levels of control dependent on the use of autonomy style motivation versus a controlling style (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Within the scope of education, one can:

> describe power, as violation, in terms of a simultaneous process of building and breaking, of construction and destruction, which seeks its surplus and satisfaction in the injury to the very identities it is complicit in producing... Power ceaselessly raises up and tears down, alternately developing economies, identities, and social meanings and then laying them low through abandonment or active destruction. (De Lissovoy, 2012, p. 464)

There was a time where my mental state was under the control of others, speaking to a lack of control. This culminated in a time of regaining control over my own mind. From an educational standpoint, I had little control for the formative years of my life. Once I entered the later years, I took control of my education and learned within that sphere how education is being controlled itself. The following discusses control of educational rights and the capacities for control within the classroom. I chose these themes to speak to my experiences within the education system both as a teacher and student.

As for teaching and control: “teaching combines all three logics of control, straddling the boundary between professional and non-professional statuses” (Zarifa et al., 2007, p. 262).

Teaching itself lacks some of the hallmarks of professionalism and 'theories of pedagogy' are vaguely characterized giving teachers a 'social trusteeship'. Change brought on by new public management is shifting control over "school content, student evaluations, and educational assessments from teachers to the grip of provincial officials" (p. 263) while simultaneously 'decentralizing trends' are providing parents increased levels of decision-making as to where and how their child is educated (see also Giroux, 1994). The trends both top-down and deregulated markets result in "an encroachment upon teachers' professional jurisdiction" (p. 264). Large numbers of respondents believed "teachers should be required to follow a plan of continuing professional education...further, schools should hire only graduates of government-approved teacher training programs" (p. 270) calling for regulated professionalism . In short, teachers no longer have the same degree of control within their classrooms as they once had (Giroux, 1994).

This begs the question as to who is regulating 'government-approved' teacher training programs and their content of same. From my experience both as a student and as a teacher, I see glaring absences in the incorporation of new technologies and multicultural-focused pedagogy. The system of education for teachers needs reformation and the incorporation of a multicultural lens of inclusivity.

Next, I look at the consequences of negative interactions with teachers demonstrating potential detrimental effects. Teachers who abuse their positions of power have long-lasting implications.

Instances I encountered left their imprint both on my views of education and teacher roles. There is a need for recognition and documentation of 'relations that students recall as negative, unfair or hurtful' (Uitto, 2011, p. 273). Noting how these core memories can be impactful, the impacts can be felt both on student learning and personal development. Teachers

play a role with accompanying power. An exertion of control over both their classroom and their students and the use of this power or control can have a detrimental effect on students learning when encountered negatively. Often within the hidden curriculum and specifically within hegemonic spheres it is found that:

> Education is a crucial site for ...organized assault: its ostensible curricula of personal and intellectual development in fact prepare students, in general, for a fundamental demoralization, marginalization, and punishment. This can perhaps be most clearly seen in the tracking of students not only into a segmented labor force but even toward academic failure and incarceration, as well as in the relentless fracturing of learning experiences and aspirations. (De Lissovoy, 2012, p. 465)

Teachers have the power to influence and impact their students' choices of study and further propel issues of racism, sexism, and classism. Certainly, the most impactful memories I have of teacher interactions are primarily those that were negative, hurtful, and controlling. Many of the stories written in Uitto's article dealt with the 'teacher's power over them' and 'powerlessness as a student'. Punishments become negative memories, and I certainly agree. Personally, I remember more than once receiving the strap and similar physical punishments. I recall a method I used to avoid getting the strap too many times. I would take a piece of hair and lay it across my palm so that when I was strapped the skin would break, and I would bleed. Then I could avoid further hits. All these sanctions created a disregard for the teaching profession and learning itself. A lack of control contributes to a feeling of powerlessness and calls for an examination of the power relations between teachers and students with an addressing of same in teacher education. Uitto (2011) states: "Memories show that it matters how you are as a teacher and how you relate to and treat your students" (p. 288). Furthermore De Lissovoy states: "[teachers] should

recognize the persistent integrity of students, beyond and in spite of power... we can perhaps construct a new kind of critical education, one that follows the lead of the autonomous interventions of students themselves" (p. 479). What is called for here is agency—agency for students to challenge colonialism, hegemony, racism, sexism, and other unjust hierarchical systems of relation; a return of power and control to the students' hands.

Control can morph into independence, and transformative change is an essential part of pedagogy. With an in-depth look at a teacher moving from conformative to transformative teaching, one can "identify the contexts that a teacher may need to consider when transforming" occurring with reflection over pedagogic transformation (Lanas & Kiilakoski, 2013, p. 343). Considering that an "individual teacher exists in an invidualized teaching culture" (p. 344), an examination of individual experiences is needed. Transformative change comes from within the individual through a negotiation of identity. In following one individual's teaching transformation journey, one can learn of the specific turning points that prompted such radical change from conformative to transformative.

Through reflection comes change, and that change does not rely on external factors; rather, it focusses internally. I learned from the act of teaching, and not studying teaching, that students required different approaches. Pedagogical change came from reflexive practices and papers like this highlight how transformation can occur individually with a gaining of control over an existence of being controlled by forces such as regulation, governing bodies, and surrounding staff.

The role of schoolteachers as 'street-level bureaucrats' is based on their abilities to institute policy, or 'rule-making power' (Taylor, 2007). If legalities are being minded there is expansive room for policy enforcers to use discretion in their implementation. This is just as true

for policemen as is true for teachers. The classroom provides a forum for discretionary decision making that may or may not be in line with a student's diverse needs. As the Taylor goes on to note:

> Teachers, like other professionals, had their own self-policing processes and were subject to relatively little managerial control. The school system depended so much on the actions of teachers that they could not be controlled 'for fear of generating opposition to management policies and diminishing accountability still further'. (p. 558)

With new demands technologically and politically, a push to skills over theory can have a negative effect. Yet, I feel that technology affords a whole new area for the betterment of curriculum. New demands can be new opportunities for growth and a widening of pedagogical viewpoints, never mind the addition of pedagogical tools. Taylor (2007) coordinated a survey of teachers to look at their perceived levels of discretion in the form of semi-structured interviews. Most teachers reported loss of levels of discretion but not power: "There was a dichotomy between the extent to which teachers believed that they had lost discretion and the extent to which they had actually lost it" (p. 568).

There has been a noted change in the last few years toward technology and a disconnect between teachers and students. As I see my son using and relying more on technology, I see him struggling with teachers who continue to steer away from its use. Theories behind the use of technology generally view it as a positive vehicle for change, and I hope that teacher instruction programs begin incorporating technological instruction into their curricula. One can see the use of technology in teaching as a positive avenue to increase understanding and connection with students, especially with the use of adaptive technologies. Teachers can use their discretion to incorporate new epistemologies, especially the incorporation of new technologies to aid in

instruction and evaluation. The next article I choose addresses the demands that can tax a teacher and its subsequent manifestations within anxiety dreams.

With change comes conflict. Looking at how the frequent restructuring of England's educational system has negatively affected teacher's emotions, Adams (2002) purports this to have implications for students' well-being. Adams (2002) writes, "This feeling re-emerges in school-related anxiety dreams, the content of which was studied in a sample of 10 teachers and four headteachers" (p. 183). Adams goes on to discuss the background of educational changes after acknowledging the shared anxiety dreams many teachers are having as to loss of control in classroom management. Teachers are experiencing higher levels of loss of control, powerlessness, and a decrease in professionalization. Adams continues "This includes the loss of skills, work becoming a routine, too much bureaucracy, the loss of time for reflection and the weakening of the individual's control over the job" (p. 186). Adams details the shared dream experiences of teachers realizing similar school-related anxiety dreams and discusses its implications both spiritually and on their students. Adams discusses the implications with respect to management, noting the need for policy makers to reconsider their methods of educational restructuring. All of this sounds similar to the conditions of teaching described by Zarifa et al. (2007) as well as Giroux (1994).

I cannot help but think of my last parent-teacher meeting where I questioned the teacher on her lack of practice exercises ensuring students were grasping concepts before testing them on them. I was met with an elaborate gesture from the teacher reaching for a large volume of data and expressing her frustration at the overwhelming amount of information she was to cover by tossing a large binder on her desk. It was clear to me that her frustration was taking over and that students were suffering because of it. It is understandable to feel overwhelmed when confronted

with large data sets and this needs to be taken into consideration when making demands on teachers to cover vast amounts without the time to 'teach' and evaluate learning outcomes. Students can feel this level of frustration, and it can just as negatively impact them and their learning.

Control as a concept in curriculum studies can encompass control over choices to control over education to how control is exerted or experienced as loss. As a student, I resented the level of control teachers could exert, and as a teacher I recognized how students did not understand they were not as powerless as they thought. It was not until I was much older that I could control my education. Being a mature student opened my eyes and mind as to how epistemologies and pedagogies varied. I learned to learn in university much differently than my experience in public school where regurgitation of data was the focus. I could take more control of how I learned and what I learned. As a teacher, I took control over how I would teach and spent a lot of time looking for alternative ways to instruct to meet my diverse student needs. I was fortunate to be in a situation where creativity was not stifled.

What my reading on the concept of control taught me is that the room for advancement can be bureaucratically stifled and room for pedagogical growth is vast. The articles taught me how great of an influence a teacher can have over a singular student and that reflexive practices can be greatly informing.

Having now reviewed some of the literature related to the hidden curriculum, belonging, loss, and control as curricular concepts, the next chapter begins the work of *currere* comprising of the first stage, regression. I detail my experiences from the beginning of my studies and take an in-depth look at how those experiences inform my being. Beginning with my first day of school and culminating in my current studies, I take the reader on a journey of self-discovery.

Education has had great impacts on my life and formation of being, both negatively and on more positive notes. I learned how control, belonging and loss shape my thinking and actions and continue to have bearing on my choices educationally and otherwise. The next chapter focuses on the past, on regression, and on how I became who I am becoming.

Chapter Four: Regression

I start this regressive, stream of consciousness journey with my first day of school and my experiences with the institution, teachers, and fellow classmates and the myriad of issues I attempted to reconcile while learning. I learned to read early in life, before I began school, but my birthday was situated such that I had to wait until well after turning six to begin my studies. My homelife was tumultuous to say the least, and I welcomed the escape to school along with the opportunity to learn. I leapt out of the car with joy, so excited to begin schooling, escape home, and discover a new world within the educational institution. I immediately slammed my hand in the car door. Looking back, it was a fitting first experience of pain as my years ahead would garner much more.

One teacher was a nightmare experience. As previously alluded to, I was part of a religious order that restricted me from patriotism. Class began with the national anthem being played while a student stood at the front of the class holding a flag. I was expected to leave the room for this or remain seated while my classmates rose and sang. I could not have stood out more, nor could I have offended the sensibilities of my teacher further than in my act of patriotic rejection. In the back of the classroom were a myriad of toys—a play kitchen and such—and all I wanted to do was to get back there and play with all the things I did not have in my house. My teacher had other ideas and ensured that I never had the opportunity. There was always a mistake or something missing in my work somehow that kept me in my seat while my classmates eagerly played. I felt the animosity from my teacher palpably.

Another teacher taught another subject and clearly shared her views of me, which culminated in an episode that continues to shake me, literally. A classmate whispered something in my ear during class, and I leaned over to say “what?”. This teacher leaped to his feet and

rushed over to me, picked me up, shook me, and slammed me on the ground for talking in class. I feel a tremor just writing this as I can see his angry face even to this day.

I was looking to school as an escape from the battering I received at home only to face more in a place that was supposed to be safe in the hands of authority figures that were supposed to uphold my safety. I felt in my bones that I was a child not worth safety. My home was one of fear and pain. I was not allowed to make any mistake for fear of physical punishment. This did not mean a simple spanking—the "go to" disciplinary action of my generation. I was to drop my pants and receive a meter stick or wooden spoon to the back of my legs and buttocks. Often, I would not be able to sit down without extreme discomfort. Mistakes could be not getting to sleep early enough or not getting up in the morning quick enough. It could be forgetting a chore, of which there were many, or a disagreement between my siblings and me. There could be very little reason to find fault, but it was found daily. Fear became my closest companion.

To add to the tumultuousness of the home, I was being sexually abused beginning age six and continuing until age 12. So, school was the escape I thought I would have, but another prison it became. It became another place I could do no right, that I did not fit into and experienced even further ridicule. I felt wholly isolated and withdrew into any book I could find. This became my escape and during this time of my life I spent most of it hiding with my face buried in someone else's stories. I am grateful for *Reader's Digest* and their volumes of stories as I devoured them constantly along with the extensive series of books by Louis L'Amour. Losing myself in western romance and intrigue helped give me a mental escape where I could not find a physical one. School marks were another area where beatings would occur if perfection were not achieved. I think the most common comment I ever received on report cards was that I could do

better; I was capable of more. Perhaps I was, but the trauma all around me overshadowed any scholastic abilities.

The next section looks specifically at how belonging, or the lack of belonging, affected my growth. I look at the theme of belonging and how I understand it to be a state of being that eludes me now, but both existed and did not exist as a child. You will read how my quest for belonging continues and despite belonging to a part of a religious organization I found belonging to society unreachable.

Belonging

To add to the disfunction I was enveloped in, I was desperate to make friends. This desperation was palpable no doubt and repelled many from me. Let us not forget I was in a religion that dictates everything from what I think to what I do and did not allow participating or celebrating most holidays. This pushed me even further from mainstream society and my classmates. A wall of black cats colored for Halloween and one pink cat is an image I never shook from my memory. No matter what, I stood out like that pink cat—a part of society but apart from it in every way possible. I was bullied relentlessly, and I was in my fair share of after school fights. I learned being strong meant being physically superior, and I worked very hard to build that toughness.

I think of the phrase, “The self cannot be understood in a vacuum but only in the context of the world around us” (Morris, 2015, p. 103). The world around me seemed to be telling me I did not belong in it. I was living on the outside looking at the world around me, surrounding me. There was no place for me but to step aside, step away, fade into the background. Belonging meant taking part, taking part in customs, norms, traditions. I could take part in none. The very definition of a society is based on culture, norms, traditions and by this definition I did not

belong in the society I was living in. What actually is 'belonging'? It is a feeling of being a part of something, with people who have elements in common. What did I have in common with my classmates? Nothing except the base evidence that I was a human being. I could not participate in their traditions; I could not identify with their lifestyles. When the Canadian anthem was played, I was expected to leave the room, when everyone was coloring black cats for Halloween, I was coloring a pink one. I could not have stood out more as an outsider. I was a fringe element, an anomaly. In a world where different was ridiculed, I was a walking target. More often than not, I was confronted with groups of classmates waiting for me on my way home from school to fight me, make fun of me, antagonize me in any way they could think of. I learned to fight at an early age. It was a time where belonging was understood as absent.

I remember another event that further illustrates how my teachers treated me as different and unwelcome. I was later walking home from school; everyone had already left, and I was alone. I had barely crossed the school grounds when a dog came running up to me. This did not alarm me as animals tend to gravitate towards me and still do. I reached down and petted and played with the dog for a few minutes. The minute I stopped petting the dog, it attacked. I had a snowsuit on fortunately and the dog had a hard time getting through the thick, padded exterior. As the dog latched onto my leg, I screamed for help and watched a teacher pull up in her car as they exited the school. I pleaded with them for help, but they simply turned their head and drove away. I was in such shock that I was disliked so intensely by my teachers that they would ignore my pleas for help. I will never forget the feeling of complete abandonment, unworthiness, and utter disregard. I recall being so worried to tell my family a dog ripped my snowsuit while in such disbelief that someone could drive away during the attack. School was just another prison and another place to feel unaccepted, pushed aside for more worthy humans.

During this time, I was taught that whatever I learned in school was to be weighed against the teachings of my family's religion. I learned quickly that I did not have to respect authority, especially when it conflicted with what I was told to believe. As described above, I left the room for the national anthem as patriotism was considered idol worship; I did not participate in any holiday celebrations or activities, and I did not have to listen to my teachers. This was a recipe for scholastic disaster. I began to rebel against authority, having been met with such disrespect and disregard, I was not motivated to develop any sort of inner respect or regard. Perhaps I became the thing teachers had already declared me to be. It was the beginning of how I felt ousted from society and began living outside of it.

I did not have a place of belonging, so I retreated inward. I began observing society, trying to find a place within it somewhere, while attempting to reconcile that there was no safe place for me. I did manage to develop a couple tenuous relationships with classmates, but I put them to the test so regularly that I eventually pushed them away. I had a desperate need to be loved, cared about, accepted on some level but anyone who did that had to be tested to find the extent. I was not in the mindset to learn; I was in the mindset of survival.

The next section deals with control from the total lack of control to attaining semblances of control, I move through life continually seeking it. It took me time to understand how control and the lack of control was central to my being. Once I attained control over areas of my life discord arose complicating my understanding of what to control and what control itself means.

Control

Everything changed at the age of 12. The family moved from one small town to a slightly bigger small town, and that meant new schools for my siblings and me. I confronted my abuser and stood up to them to stop the abuse. Remarkably it worked, and I was no longer the recipient

of sexual aggression. This spiraled me into thinking I could have stopped it sooner had I spoken up and many years of confusion ensued along with attempts at suicide. During this time my schooling took a turn. I was just another student, not one to be mocked and isolated, as practices like standing for the anthem were no longer observed and coloring for the holidays was a thing of the past, and I found my niche in the soccer team. Instead of standing out for my differences I was finally making friends and finding some success on the field. I won MVP that year for soccer, and it was one of the proudest moments of my life.

On the soccer field, I was in control of something. So very little in life lived in a place of control. My actions were constantly under scrutiny, my thoughts ever being analyzed; choices belonged to the religion, to my family, not to me. Yet for the first time, I belonged to something. There was kinship among my teammates and a recognition that I had a place that I contributed to. I could make all my own decisions as to how I would play and interact with my teammates. I could take ownership, proudly, of possessing a skill set and succeeding, in however a small manner, in something.

Educationally, I was still floundering. Junior high was the time to begin looking at the next scholastic steps from trade school to university. What did you want to do with your life? Well, my choices were devoted to religion. I was not offered the option for any kind of career because my career was to be solely in the interests of religion. University was frowned upon, which meant that it was not an option, and trade school was only on the cusp of acceptable. While my classmates talked of scholastic next steps, I simply reminded myself that I had none. Yet again I found I have no control over my future, it is dictated to and understood to be pre-determined.

This certainly did not ingratiate me into scholastic endeavors. School became the thing I had to do but not necessarily succeed at towards higher education goals. I was expected to make high grades as I was to be an example of an exemplary Christian but not to achieve or attain any higher learning. Instead, I began working and developing a secular path. Here I could find a semblance of control, so I started cleaning offices at the age of 12 and working full time at the mall at the age of 16. I knew that a career was out of reach as religion was to be my focus and career. I knew that I was to challenge the teachings of my teachers if they were in conflict with my religious teachings. This created an internal disconnect. I thirsted for knowledge but was met with one obstacle after another between being pushed by my family's religious beliefs and my own desires to learn what life could be outside of the religious walls. I shoved myself through the remaining years of school finding friends but not finding knowledge breakthroughs, and I kept my nose to the religious grindstone.

It is important to note the extreme level of control exerted by this particular religion. I was not to associate with anyone not affiliated with the religion, so any friends I made at school I could only see and spend time with at school and nowhere else. I was only to read literature from the religious organization and to limit all media exposure to G-rated offerings. My mind and body were under overwhelming control then. A level of control that was all encompassing. There was no room for individual thought or expression. I was to follow as instructed in every aspect of my life. My very thoughts were regulated through constant attestment. I was attending ‘meetings’, as they were called, on Tuesday nights, Thursday nights, and Sunday afternoons; Saturdays were spent in the ministry going door to door to preach to anyone who would listen. Meetings consisted of speakers going over scriptural references and instructing members on actions and thought. Members were encouraged to pre-read covered material and comment

during question-and-answer periods. The constant reinforcement of the religion's messages gave little room for individual expression. Preaching was considered something to be done constantly, and I was expected to do so in any given situation. I felt that breathing itself was regulated and dictated too. It was hard to see options in life, hard to see any alternate pathways, and hard to accept the fundamental level of control exerted upon me. Like sheep being herded to a pen from enclosure to enclosure I prodded onward, head down in reticent acceptance.

Loss

I now take the time to look at loss and how I understand it. There is a close connection between control and loss, and I felt it fitting to move from the subject of control to that of loss. I have experienced levels of deep loss, from loss of identity to loss of family to loss of loved ones, that continue to impact me. Although I do not discuss the loss of dear friends in my regression journey, I wish to address it. I have watched a few friends pass from illness; one even passed in my arms after a brief and brutal battle with cancer. It is a complicated process, grieving, and I acknowledge there is no time scale that dictates when grief should end. The loss I focus on is more of a loss of support and identity and the implications of those particular losses.

Once I graduated high school, I began my foray into the corporate world to support my religious goals. School was a thing of the past, and university or any level of higher education was understood to be out of reach or interest. Now that I had finished public school and had worked for a bit, I found myself questioning my position within the family religion. I made the difficult decision to leave and was immediately shunned. When I say shunned, it is literal, it is immediate, and it is painful. In the blink of an eye, I no longer had parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, or grandparents. I was suddenly alone and lost a large part of my identity. That part is associated with having a family and religion. Not only did I lose my relatives, but any friend I

made within the religion is gone just as abruptly, as you are not allowed to associate with anyone outside of the religion. This was a level of loneliness I was unprepared for—a type of isolation that ensued and further propelled me from mainstream society. I was an island in a sea of people. Not only did I lose a support system, but I also lost a part of myself, my identity. I had taken control of my life with such an immense decision but without understanding its implications. I was not just a taking of control in a decision to leave but taking control of my own mind for the first time.

I floundered for a good space of time wondering how I would continue—how I would go forward with all I had lost. Fundamentally, who was I without a family and a religion guiding my thoughts and actions? What ensued was a time of self-discovery that continues today. I had to uncover what it is that I am in every aspect of being human. Was I this judgmental individual who weighed the actions and words of others to deem worthiness as I was raised to be? The religion taught that anyone who does not belong to it is considered "worldly" and "bad association" but that is what exists around me now. I was now surrounded by the 'worldly', and this did not just open my eyes, but my mind began opening to the possibilities that the 'bad association' was less noxious than described. Doing inner work alone, in total isolation, was an incredibly good experience. I was on the outside looking in on the rest of the world and discovering a kindness of which I was previously unaware. Now all the opportunities that were out of reach were now within reach. Yet the programming that had been instilled in me for my entire life thus far was still deeply entrenched in me. I had to learn to think independently; I had to learn to feel unabashed; I had to create my own support system of virtual strangers and culminate relationships with them. It was as if I was an infant starting off in the world, at least mentally. I realized I was not the judgmental elitist I was raised to be. I did not condemn the

sexually diverse as I belonged among them. I accepted being a bisexual woman, no longer shrouded in shame for the attraction to women I had felt my entire life thus far. Yet, I still felt the weight of judgement from above. I was living in Toronto, working temporary jobs, and dating. I was still figuring out who I was at my core. Now, career options were attainable, and I began thinking more concretely about what direction secularly I would take. Not having any higher learning put me in a lower employment bracket and restricted my reach. I wanted an office, a door, and a room, no longer satisfied with being stationed at the front door. I grew with my employment taking on any challenges that were possible and learning what I could on the job. All of this time I was battling a severe eating disorder unaware of its toll on me.

At this time, I received the news a family member was dying of cancer. I agreed to allow my family to move me home to Nova Scotia, unsure of how I would navigate this as I would not be allowed to live at 'home'. I moved in with an old friend, living on their couch, so that I could avoid the discomfort of a home that still practiced a religion I had left. I was battling illness after illness and overwhelming fatigue. I went to my family doctor and said that I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. My doctor's response was to ask if I would enter an eating disorder therapy program and I consented. I was immediately hospitalized. Once again, I was in a world where there was nothing but restrictions, and at this time my family member who had been diagnosed with cancer passed very suddenly. The last time I saw them was in the hospital *after* they passed, and I was being forced onto a hospital bed with that ingrained image. I was not allowed out of bed except for fifteen minutes three times a day. I was in a ward that contained the elderly with dementia and two other girls fighting eating disorders. There was no counselling—that was supposed to take place after I gained a specific amount of weight and was discharged. There were other patients suffering from mental illness, and we were all lumped in together. Mealtimes

were awful. The other two girls in the eating disorder program and I were taken into a small room to eat under the watchful eye of a nurse, restricted from talking about many subjects like family. If a portion of food was not eaten the nurse measured how many calories and supplemented them with Ensure, which we would have to drink. Each week was a contract that depended on your weigh in. If you lost weight, you lost privileges. I was not allowed off the floor I was on for the first few weeks and when I finally earned the privilege to leave the hospital floor, I had to use a wheelchair. I was not permitted to leave the hospital grounds until I gained a certain amount of weight and once that was achieved, I was still restricted to the wheelchair. My movement could not have been more restricted. I was also not allowed to shut bathroom doors and was stripped of any privacy. It was an extreme level of isolation, under a magnifying glass. I felt trapped in another foreign world, once again under rules I did not self-impose, and I decided I would do whatever it took to escape. I learned during weekly weight checks that the other girls would place large bottles of shampoo/conditioner in their robes to add weight for the weigh ins. In the end, I did the same just to escape. The experience worked as aversion therapy; I vowed I would never allow my disorder to place me in such an environment ever again.

This time did afford much reflection, but once I was finally released, I discovered I could not return to full time work right away. My doctor forbade me to attain work, and I entered the world of social assistance. I decided this was the time to look to higher education, and after much discussion with my doctor, I was finally allowed to attend classes. I chose a secularly focused business school and achieved my business degree. I decided my future was corporate since that was all I knew and focused my studies accordingly. It was an intense accelerated program where every second week was a midterm and every fourth week a final exam. I am not sure what if anything I retained, as I moved through subjects so quickly. I was finally allowed back to the

workforce, and I was determined to make it a success. I was still floundering to find myself, still learning who I am and how to be human. I was living life without any sort of safety net and felt the anxiety that came with that.

It is here I would like to take a moment and discuss loss on a deeper level. Before I continue on my journey, I feel it is necessary to impress upon readers the situation I was in. When I was shunned by the religious community, I lost all contact with everyone I knew. I liken it to waking up from a coma to realize I had slept through an apocalypse. Everyone was dead, and I was alone. Imagine, if you can, that every person you ever knew simply vanished overnight. It was this loss that I continue to struggle with. I had to walk through the world with no social connection to any other human being. I no longer had a family. I no longer had friends. In a world where it is a social norm to have a family unit, where holidays revolve around family gatherings, I was an anomaly. I felt like an outsider in a strange world. I felt not only a loss of support but a loss of self. Considering that "emotional experience is seen as being formed through the dynamics of social interaction, and social context is seen as constitutive of emotional experience" (Kalman, 2012, p. 3), who am I without a social context? What even was my personality? What were my likes and dislikes? How was I going to navigate my future without any kind of safety net? Could I even do it, or would I fold under the pressure of remoteness? I was not Batman and did not possess a fortress of solitude. I was a simple, short, female who had no direction, could access no guidance and the realization still hits me today. Each time I meet someone new and I am asked about my family, I take a moment to consider just what I will say. As my parents and grandparents have since passed, I can simply say that and shy away from the actual explanation of religious shunning. Yet this feels inauthentic to who I became and often I explain my reality. It is important to me that others understand that loss can be overcome, even a

loss as profound as mine. The reality is that I had to learn to grieve the loss of my family as if they had passed, as if something horrendous occurred and my entire relations were wiped out. Like the grief of losing loved ones, this process is still being wrestled with. There is a strong connection between feelings of loss and feelings of isolation (Kalman, 2012). I can certainly attest to the profound isolation I felt and at times still feel. I loved my family, my friends and there is a direct link between love and grief. Sarah Ahmed said it best:

> Love has an intimate relation to grief not only through how the subject responds to the lost object, but also by what losses get admitted as a losses in the first place... So there is an intimate relation between lives that are imagined as 'grievable'... and those that are imagined as loveable and livable in the first place" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 130)

As Judith Butler states:

> if the attachment to 'you' is part of what composes who 'I' am... then I not only mourn the loss, but I have become inscrutable to myself. Who 'am' I without you?... On one level, I think I have lost 'you' only to discover that 'I' have gone missing as well" (Butler, 2004, p. 22).

Indeed, a profound loss of self accompanies the deep grief from all-encompassing shunning. Self is formed in the relations we have with others; a social dependence exists, most particularly between children and their parents. Kalman (2012) adds "Independence, that is, is not an ontological given, but a relational achievement: the self, in other words, is relational, and even the autonomous self is articulated in relations" (p. 13). Something I must navigate is that in loss comes a necessary self-discovery and a detachment from my former attached self. A true independent self must emerge while acknowledging loss and not shying away from its reality. In this loss what I had to learn, to develop were the attributes of a moral respecter of myself. Those

traits are outlined in a paper by Jean Hampton (1993) discussing selflessness and loss of self. She states three fundamental characteristics:

> (a) a sense of your own intrinsic and equal value as a human being
>
> (b) a sense of what you require, as a human being, to flourish, and,
>
> (c) a sense of what you require, insofar as you are a particular person, to flourish as that particular person. (p. 7)

From loss I would need to develop identity, one beyond what had been formed to what exists without the control, the belonging, and the religion.

Now that I have discussed in more detail the three themes that emerge in my story, I continue with *currere* regression and go on with my tale detailing my experiences teaching overseas in Thailand and my educational voyage.

Teaching Overseas

Since one of my deepest loves is travel, I decided this was an opportune time to take advantage of my unfettered freedom, enrolled in a TESOL course, and then moved to Thailand to teach English. Being in a foreign environment was not remotely unusual for me now, and I adjusted rather quickly. I learned that living in Canada did come with cultural norms. I found myself arrogantly expecting behaviors I was used to, like opening doors for someone and personal space, were behaviors congruent with my region and not located in the country I had travelled to. I also learned that teaching is a multi-layered practice and knowing the source material was not enough to meet the needs of my students. A multi-layered practice meant to me an understanding of not just covering curriculum but taking the time to understand what my students needed to succeed in their next steps and working to meet those diverse needs. I began

teaching to the students rather than teaching above them. As I moved up in the teaching ranks, I found more and more challenges. I was eventually teaching advanced English called 'intensive' courses for students who were going abroad to complete their masters. I realized the curriculum itself was not enough; these students needed to be prepared for the culture shock they were inevitably about to experience. I decided to focus on the hidden curriculum (Snyder, 1973) and supplemented my course work with additional challenges that touched on the differing norms and practices that take place in different cultures. I had my students practice a play entitled "The Crucible" as it was laden with stark expression and loaded with gestures. Most of the students were Western bound, and I felt this was an appropriate challenge for them. I had them practice with script in hand rather than expect memorization. Administration caught wind of my extraneous missions and asked me to have my classes perform the play on the main stage. Suddenly, rather than an extra exercise it was a full-blown production where my superiors, the Thai administration and school officials, were all to attend. The pressure was immense and due to cultural restraints, we had to learn how to coordinate certain gestures to give the appearance of touch without actual touch. Somehow, we pulled it off, and I like to think I made a long-lasting mark on the school. This was my first foray into understanding the impact of the hidden curriculum. I understood how students took cues from other students and teachers' behaviors that dictated their own. I also learned of the importance to focus on the needs of students rather than solely on the requirements of curriculum demands. I knew that students would learn from their surroundings how to operate in classroom environments and that this would be vastly different were they to study abroad. The norms and values that they grew up with would potentially be foreign concepts in other societies. I would consistently reflexively make comparisons of Western cultural thinking and practice exposing my students to alternate views

and practices in an effort to create familiarity readying them for their impending Western experiences. I would often say, “In my hometown we would...” or “when I went to school we would...”. Some pedagogical strategies I would employ to supplement curriculum objectives are that I would take my class out of the classroom often and focus on real world application of linguistics. For example, I would take my class outside to sit in the garden and focus vocabulary concepts on their surroundings. I would take my class on field trips to ‘western’ grocery stores, where everything was in English to surround them with their impending environments overseas. Simultaneously, I was teaching in a small school in the area I was living in. It was a completely different pedagogy as I was expected to strictly teach the Automatic Language Growth (ALG) method. The thought process behind this method was duplicating how language is developed from infancy (Birkby, 2013; Brown, 2003). Teaching was done in teams of two. No grammar exercises were allowed. Teachers simply spoke on various subjects for an hour per class and students listened. I did my best to ensure my ‘talks’ were animated but found the restrictions to be too much. I desperately wanted to incorporate more learning into my teaching but was strictly bound and often watched to ensure I abided by the codes of ALG. Eventually, I moved into a larger city and no longer taught at the small school. It was at this school where I could focus on the hidden curriculum and its impacts on my students who would be heading overseas to complete their education. I know how crucial to learning the idea of ‘fitting in’ is to students having experienced the opposite and wanted my students to be as prepared for change as much as possible. An example of such was timeliness. It was Thai culture to run late and it was commonplace to have students arrive significantly later to my class. I instituted rules for lateness and ensured my students understood that there would be negative sanctions should they arrive late for classes overseas. I would also often supplement my expected course materials with as

many extraneous exercises as I could to comprehensively reach more of the class. Gamification was a large part of that (see Bharamgoudar, 2018; Kingsley, & Grabner-Hagen, 2015) and the use of competitive gaming turned into the best way to reach the majority of students linguistically. It was also the best way to ensure I had participation from all students and not just those eager to participate. The unfortunate and tragic events that took place at the World Trade Center in 2001 cut my teaching experience short as it was no longer safe for me to navigate the country as a foreigner, and I returned to Canada. I secured employment in the corporate sector, and my teaching/learning days became a thing of the past. After a few years, feeling that I was no longer challenged, I moved up the corporate ladder to another position in another company and felt much more fulfilled. It was at this point that on my way to work I was involved in a near fatal car accident that ended my career, and I became permanently disabled. Once again, I found myself floundering with what to do as I desperately needed something that contributed to self-worth. I worked all my life from the age of 12 and could not fathom a life without secular confidence. I re-evaluated where I was in life and decided that school could not only fill the gap that being unable to work created, but also provide a different career path. I planned to get my teaching degree and substitute teach. This way if my health forced me to take a break, I would not lose my job I would simply not take any substitution assignments until I was able to function again. I began university believing I possessed an open mind, excited to take on this new challenge. My educational pursuits could be best described as a search for "self-determination, freedom, emancipation, autonomy, responsibility, reason, and independence" (Pinar, 2011, p.66). I quickly discovered my mind was fairly closed; I was still feeling the effects of the religious doctrines that had me second guessing my teachers. I was fighting a battle in my own mind to accept what I was being taught. Initially I chose Psychology as my Major and French as my

Minor. Due to having had a stroke at age 16 my memory does not function very well, and I was quickly overwhelmed by the level of memorization needed for Psychology. Night after night I wrote and rewrote out my notes determined to commit them to memory, determined to perform well on exams. The necessary option of electives brought me to the world of sociology and anthropology, and I felt myself grow an academic confidence I had not felt previously. Professors were teaching concepts I had lived in and through, and sociological methodologies sang to me. I understood them and even felt the ability to apply them in my papers. I found my educational niche and changed my major. I was on a journey that was to take more turns, that is still underway, but I was on a path and I could see my future. I wanted to help in some way—to make a societal difference. I felt a deep-seated desire to fill a need in the society I lived in. Though this very society placed me as an outlier I felt no resentment. Through my sociological journey I was going to find purpose and that purpose was going to revolve around filling a need. The opening of my formerly closed mind continued. One such learning opportunity came in a class on Men and Masculinity. I learned how my mind formed assumptions as to what masculinity entailed along with much of society. I learned to look at how I was raising my own little man and made sure to allow him to develop without societal expectations. I taught him not to 'be a man' but to be his authentic self however that would look. I am proud of the kind, caring, and considerate young man he is today. As much as I was determined he would never suffer the way I did, I was equally determined that he would be kind to the society he was raised in. Understanding suffering was an important element of the pedagogy of parenting. That he would acknowledge and accept he lived in a place of privilege was an important component of that pedagogy. I use the term pedagogy as parents are in fact teachers, and their role is fundamental in the growth of their children both mentally and spiritually. We teach our children;

we do not passively expect them to learn without guidance. I take this guidance role seriously and as I form knowledge breakthroughs in my schooling, I impart these to my son. With a lump in my throat, I can proudly say he has applied and was accepted to university with clear goals and expectations I know he will meet with fervor.

Having never lost my love for nature it was on one such hike I found my end goal, my purpose, where I would direct my studies. I was on a guided hike with a friend, and we struck up a conversation with fellow hikers. They were newly emigrated to Nova Scotia and attended the hike for an opportunity to hopefully practice their English. I questioned whether such a facility existed where they could learn English as a Second Language in any comprehensive way and they assured me none existed. I knew then and there I would build a school—a school that embraced newcomers and understood their needs; a school that recognized teaching language means teaching the culture behind the language, that language is multi-faceted, complex and location specific.

While my story can certainly continue, I choose to end here as these experiences are the ones that most directly impact how I understand myself. The next chapter contains the next stage of *Currere*, progression. In the next chapter, I detail my desires for the future around curriculum and education and provide a glimpse into what my imagined ideal school experience would entail. I discuss the need to examine the backgrounds of students cognizant of culture, how my past influences my desires for the future, and speak to the necessity for inclusion of students with disabilities. I point to the need for recognition of student accomplishments and adaptations for multicultural classrooms along with a call for social connectedness.

Chapter Five: Progression

This chapter, framed as Pinar's progressive moment, discusses how I see the educational future—my hopes and wishes for curriculum and for classroom management through the lens of my own desires. In this chapter, I meditate on future possibilities and "how the future inhabits the present" (Pinar, 2004, p. 36). I further acknowledge how the past informs future desires and creates pedagogical aspirations for the future. As my supervisor, Dr. Adrian M. Downey, has said several times, "the progressive moment is about stating desire, and stating one's desire as a teacher remains a difficult and countercultural project because nothing in the education system wants to, or even can, hear teachers' desires" (A. Downey, personal communication, July 15, 2024; see also Giroux, 1994). This is how I understand the progressive moment, and this is why throughout this chapter I so explicitly state my own desires for education.

I begin my writing of the progressive moment as an imagined utopia—a short narrative to demonstrate how my vision for future classrooms takes shape, describing what I would reflectively wish for the future of curriculum and what a classroom would contain, along with how it would affect my pedagogy. In doing this, I draw inspiration from the work of Bell et al., (2021), who use imagined narrative to discuss curricular futurity. I then discuss how I envision my future pedagogy and what I desire for student encounters, from a sense of belonging to the possession of agency. I echo the thoughts of Ngokobi (2022) who states:

> It is imperative that, as a future teacher, I consistently revisit my idea of the ideal classroom in order to avoid partaking in a vicious cycle of rebranding a system that is lacking in inclusivity and authenticity. As such, my own pedagogy will mostly be student-centered, where students are made agents of their own learning and around which the teaching will occur (p. 63).

After the narrative, I first highlight the need to delve into the backgrounds of students demonstrating the need to recognize cultural influences. Second, I point to the needs of students with disabilities and my desire for an inclusive classroom. Third, I reflect on my past experiences with education and how it motivates my desires for the future. Fourth, I look at how I see education changing and adapting for multicultural classrooms including the myriad of students working with varied disabilities. Finally, I discuss my desires for social connectedness and call for a recognition of student accomplishment and promise over limitation. I readily acknowledge that my desires for the future of classrooms are built upon overwhelmingly negative experiences in my past, and I express my desire to heal through the amalgamation of positive pedagogical practices.

As Young (1999) writes: "without a commitment to developing alternative possibilities, educational research loses its critical element and becomes little more than a servant of policy" (p. 465). I believe that the key is agency, the ability or power to make educational choices ranging from how one learns to what one learns. This agency takes place in the form of learning about the cultural backgrounds of students, adaptive processes for students with disabilities, and suitable application of that knowledge within pedagogy. For students, this agency transpires with the power to make educational choices from subject matter to learning methods. This chapter examines the areas I wish to see a renewed commitment to academically, from a curriculum and pedagogy standpoint.

In the story below, I imagine what it would be like in my ideal school setting. Considering my regressive experiences and future desires, I detail what I wish my students to experience. The story is told from the student's perspective, as that is the perspective I am focused on. Rather than concentrating on myself as the educator, I try to think about how

students experience schooling and the hidden curriculum; thus, I thought it would be more appropriate to put myself in the place of a student instead of an educator.

My Ideal Future School Experience

I walk into my future school and am immediately greeted with walls that are covered in narrative. It is if the walls are alive, breathing welcomes in varied languages, posters abound detailing different cultures and their traditions. There are a multitude of clubs promoted that provide a variety of support, and I am sure I will find my niche. I immediately feel welcomed and supported, and I have not even begun learning.

As I enter my homeroom, I see a kaleidoscope of students from so many backgrounds of cultural diversity. Everyone is animatedly talking to each other, and surprisingly the noise is not overwhelming. The teacher is engaging in conversations and laughing. The teacher looks up at me and beckons me over with a wide smile. I meet my first teacher somewhat shyly, but she quickly engages me, asking my name and encouraging me to meet my classmates. The teacher tells me we are discussing where we are all from and how we like living here. The teacher asks if I know anyone else in the school, I say no, and the teacher assures me that I will make friends quickly. The teacher asks if I noticed the number of clubs posted on the school walls and if any interested me. When I mention a few, there are a few students who pipe up and say they want to join them too. Immediately, I feel a potential kinship with my fellow classmates.

It is time to begin class, and the teacher lets us know a copy of the lecture is available online and printed out for any that need a physical copy. The teacher motions to a pile of papers on the desk and tells the class to grab them on their way out if they wish. I have a hard time retaining what I am listening to, and I feel relief wash over me knowing I can take a printout to help me remember. I am looking forward to the next classes, as I chose courses that piqued my

interest and played to my strengths. At the end of class my teacher asks me to stay back for a moment. The teacher asks me if I would be interested in helping some of the students with disabilities in the class should they need some extra help. I was glad the teacher asked and happy to assist. The teacher let us know the year's assignments are online for viewing and that students can work on them at their own pace. If we wanted to get a head start, we were welcome to, and feedback would be offered to give students a chance to make changes before due dates. If a due date is difficult to meet, the teacher lets us know we could chat about it and there is some flexibility. I immediately feel a pressure release and simultaneously feel supported. For each class, the teachers are welcoming, bolstering and encouraging feedback. I meet so many of my fellow students today, and I am excited to get more involved in my new school.

My Vision of Progression

As mentioned above, in the storied narrative I present myself as the student; for the rest of my progressive writing, I position myself as an educator. I write from the perspective of an educator to speak to fellow educators and because I see the culmination of my education located in the position of teacher. I present myself as a student in the story to reflect more genuinely how I wish my students to feel, and what I wish for them to experience.

The future looks like a quilt to me, a mosaic of diversity from a cultural and disability standpoint. I see my classrooms with walls decorated in greetings from a variety of languages. My classroom is welcoming of diversity and gives students a sense of belonging. Just like in the narrative, the student enters the school greeted with walls decorated in varied languages and cultures providing a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging is not just being greeted in their home language but found in the discussions that I (now the educator) initiate. These discussions surround the varied customs and traditions found among diverse students. Just like in the storied

narrative, I want to demonstrate an awareness of the different cultural traditions, epistemologies, and pedagogies that are practiced around the globe visually and verbally. I want my students to feel a sense of belonging in my classroom. I want my students to learn in their respective ways not in an ideologized perspective of how they 'should' learn. I take this position as a response to my own experiences. I reflect on an experience with an educator who told me, as I was typing, *not* to write down any notes, that they were available on PowerPoint. I was so frustrated at the time because manually taking notes is how I retain information. Reading simply does not imprint knowledge from a retention standpoint for me. This is one reason why it is important to recognize that students learn differently, and one method of teaching does not serve all students equally.

I look at how I could foster a sense of agency in the students with whom I work. I would do this with constant discussions and check-ins with students. I want students to feel heard, comfortable and welcome and possess a sense of empowerment in my classroom. If they ever feel otherwise, I have work to do and hope my students feel the power to inform me of what they need to feel heard, welcome and empowered. This is important to me because I come from a place lacking control. In my experience in the education system, these factors of being heard, welcomed, or empowered were missing, impressing on me their importance. When I attended public school, I did not experience any level of agency; instead, I felt wholly powerless. I was treading water rather than actively swimming and full of resentment. There were no relationships with educators, no conversations taking place in the way of checking in and feedback was restricted to report cards. This is not about giving power and control over into the students' hand wholly but creating a setting where an adequate sense of agency exists. When I think back to my early educational experiences, I believe I could have performed at a much higher level had I felt

any sense of belonging—any minute sense of agency. I desire to foster this in my future students to further enhance the learning experience and help my students reach learning milestones absent of misunderstandings that are culturally rooted. Like the teacher in the narrative above immediately engaged with their students, so too I wish to captivate my students.

I learned through trial-and-error while teaching overseas that simple gestures can be incredibly offensive in some cultures while inoffensive in others. For example, students in India sometimes wag their head side to side to demonstrate agreement, which could be interpreted negatively in Western cultures as if to mock the receiver rather than show understanding or assent. As a teacher, I need to look at the backgrounds of my students with an eye to understanding not just cultural differences but educational differences. It is crucial to spend time looking at what their classrooms look like in their home country and *how* they were taught. I need to know whether students have emigrated out of necessity for their safety, or if all students are familiar with the norms of traditional Western schools. I must spend the time to discover if they understand the bells and whistles that other students are conditioned to respond to.

I desire my classrooms to be wholly inclusive. Students with minor to severe disabilities all belong in my classroom. I wish to ensure I have adaptive technology available to all students who need readers, properly captioned videos, lectures available in PowerPoint, or other word processing software. I need to establish if I have students with behavioral issues and investigate how I can best help them adapt to my classroom. I am a big proponent of field trips, for some of my students I may need to arrange virtual field trips to accommodate physical or otherwise limiting abilities. It is important to spend time looking into how the students with disabilities have been assessed for skills in the classroom. Perhaps there is a need for further assessment, to ensure they have not been pigeonholed and placed below their abilities. I wish to search out

whether I have empathetic students who would make good helpers and maintain that level of help throughout the school year. Looking specifically at inclusion, the type of conforming that is expected if any, should be considered. I must look at what behavior and actions are expected of students and whether this is fair to all students disabled or not. I also need to examine what it is that I want my students with challenges to be included in. Society would have students with disabilities categorized and placed in separation. This practice is echoed within school walls. I look to my past experience in public school and remember how these students were placed in their own classroom and kept segregated from the remainder of the school without the ability to immerse themselves in school activities and social involvement. All I knew, at the time, was that they were in a class called Special Education and that the general thinking about that class was that it contained students who were challenged in a way that made them unable to take part in regular classes. I often wonder how it must have felt to be wholly segregated and assumed to be less than.

In thinking about how I wish my students to feel, I must reflect on how I want to feel as an educator. What do I want to impart and how, along with how do I feel I should feel? I know there will be challenges as an educator, depending on the age and behavior level of my future students, and I need to think about how I will meet those challenges. My past educational experiences included many negative sanctions, from receiving the strap to detentions during lunch hours or after school. I know from my research and personal experience these negative sanctions have a lifelong impact. I need to be aware that my facial expressions, my tone of voice, and my gestures in response to challenging circumstances will have a lasting impression and dictate future interactions. I desire to establish a level of control without being controlling. I wish to be a teacher that students feel they can freely express themselves to, yet there needs to be a

level of respect that exists in harmony. I do not want to lord over my students. I do not want to impose my own belief systems on students. I want to encourage learning milestones that allow for fluidity over rigidity. I wish to teach in a style that conforms to my students' needs over my own. I wish to teach without boundaries, to take my classroom and place it on a global stage. I feel a deep-seated need to root my teaching in real world situational thinking and application. To take my students beyond the four walls of my classroom through imaginative exercises and exploratory journeys. When I added to curriculum in the past, it was with an eye to what my students really needed to learn, versus what was prescribed for them to learn. Each supplemental exercise was geared towards their future desires and goals. This prompts a desire to meet my students on equal staging—to be a source of inspiration and encouragement, to foster interest in learning and demonstrate the benefits of knowing. There is power in knowledge, and I believe I can teach my students how to build their knowledge base from a campfire into a raging inferno. To do this I need to feel the power within myself. I need to build my confidence as an educator. I remember how overwhelming it was initially, walking into a classroom with wide eyes looking back at me trusting that I would be a suitable guide on their educational journey. There was an immense feeling of responsibility and formidable recognition of the faith students placed in me as an educator. I could not help but think of the trauma I endured in my time within the public school system and resolve myself to rectify this in my own pedagogical practices. A positive relationship with my future students helps counter the negative relationships I had with educators in the past.

I desire education to be a place of safety, of support. These places did not exist for me in public school. I floundered around education without direction, without a desire to learn and without any attachments to schooling. Learning in a supportive environment during my time in

university built up my desire for knowledge and recognition for the benefits of learning. I desire education to teach and embolden. I want education to build students into skyscrapers where each floor reveals a new opportunity for growth, for expansion. I want, as an educator, to facilitate this growth. I want education to provide the needed resources to meet the needs of diversely abled students. I want education to be culturally responsive and responsible. I want inclusion to look like all students, disabled or not, are equally represented and supported.

With classrooms echoing the society in which they reside, I desire a society that embraces diversity. Changes in our society are moving towards this acceptance. As Barnes (2007) states: "the emergence of disability studies and the growing interest in the socio/cultural dynamics of the process of disablement by social scientists generally gives cause for cautious optimism" (p. 139). Thomas adds it is clear that "whether or not desegregation proceeds and mainstream schools become more inclusive will hinge on society's values and its attitudes" (Thomas, 1997, p. 104). Those values can be fostered within the classroom environment towards inclusiveness especially if the society around it is doing the same.

> '… while [people's] natural endowments differ profoundly, it is the mark of a civilised society to aim at eliminating such inequalities as have their source, not in individual differences, but in its own organisation, and that individual differences, which are a source of social energy, are more likely to ripen and find expression if social inequalities are, as far as practicable, diminished. (Durkheim in *The Division of Labour in Society*, quoted by Hargreaves, 1982, p. 57)

I dream of a social connectedness that does not push aside difference or cast out what is considered outside the general norm. I noted during my schooling experience that difference was often ridiculed, shoving further out those students who did not conform to the current norms. I

abashedly admit when I arrived at a school where a level of empowerment existed for me, I took part in that culling behavior. Students who stayed true to themselves and existed outside norms were targets for ridicule and taunting. This impresses upon me the need to foster an environment where these departures are encouraged, stimulated and embraced rather than discounted and mocked.

I came from a space of difference with a desperate desire to fit in and be included in popular circles during my time in public school. I never knew how to accomplish this. My desires for the future of classrooms are built upon these overwhelmingly negative experiences. As I see society gradually changing towards a space of acceptance, I desire a classroom that is an inclusive of all culture and environment. Where I did not feel acceptance, I desire a sense of togetherness for future students. This is why my designs for the future are as such. Society wants to categorize, differentiate and consequently segregate (Thomas, 1997). Whether a student is socioeconomically challenged, linguistically challenged, mentally or physically challenged, should not be delineated and have their opportunities muted. We need to "view more readily the child-as-learner characterized by flexibility and plasticity and not by immutable characteristics" (Thomas, 1997, p. 103). These factors greatly influence the success or failure of students and what opportunities are available. As Barnes (2007) highlights, with the rising numbers of students with disabilities comes evidence that the students that benefit most are those that are socially advantaged. Looking forward, educators must look at the promise and not the limitations of students and recognize how their backgrounds can affect their choices and opportunities educationally.

Having now discussed my desires for the future of education and pedagogical practices, I transition to the third stage of *currere*, namely the analytic stage.

Chapter Six: Analytic Stage

This stage of *currere*, the analytic stage, looks at what was exposed in the previous stages and applies it to present day. This is described by Pinar as: “Phenomenological bracketing; one’s distantiation from past and future functions to create a subjective space of freedom in the present... an intensified engagement with daily life, not an ironic detachment from it” (Pinar, 2004, p. 37). What I am trying to accomplish here is to articulate how I land in my current educational pursuits via the journeys taken in the regressive and progressive moments. As stated by Wang (2010), “writing *currere* can build bridges between difficult emotions (such as shame, guilt, fear, anger) and multicultural awareness” (p. 280). This is what I aim to achieve.

I begin by reflecting on elements missing in my past and move to the recognition of what drives me forward. I first point to the connections of nature to education and its healing properties. Next, I discuss the driving forces behind my desire for curriculum reform. I then acknowledge how society, politics, and culture play roles in pedagogical practices encouraging self-reflective practices. Following this, I point to the need to recognize how segregation is manifested in society and education. From this point, I move to discuss how my healing journey impacts my educational journey and is influenced by trauma guiding my pedagogical toolbox. I conclude the chapter by pointing to the need for compassion and safety in the educational environment. It is, in fact, true that “the flow of time through returning to the past and imagining the future leads to a more complicated view of the present” (Wang, 2010, p. 282). I wrestle with a myriad of emotions writing the analytical part of this thesis. As Pinar (1994) asserts "only via deconstruction can a reformulation of self begin” (p. 210). So too do I, from deconstructing my writings in the regressive and progressive chapters, come to an analytic place of understanding.

To begin, I think about the paper by Stephanie Bartlett "Walking on This Earth, Finding Belonging: Ruminations of an Unsettled Settler" and find kinship with the phrase 'unsettled setter' (Bartlett, 2021). I too find solace in nature. It is a place of acceptance, and I could find belonging knowing the earth, the trees, the lakes, and the beaches all remain places in which I could take refuge. I could find an escape from judgement and breathe. I could walk in the woods and feel joy in my natural surroundings. A break from humanity that ridiculed me and made demands of me that I could not ever expect to meet. Taking deep breaths and focusing on my earthly surroundings brought peace to my soul. Though these lands belonged to others, I felt a sense of belonging within them and a break from the social violence that surrounded me. I often retreated to the forest behind my house when I was a child, climbing rocks and trees and seating myself in high places where I would spend time in reflection or lose myself in fantasy. As Sandra Styres, who is of Kanien'kehá:ka, English, and French descent, notes that "Land is spiritual, emotional, and relational; Land is experiential, remembered, and storied; Land is consciousness—Land is sentient" (Styres, 2019, p. 27). Though I cannot claim these Indigenous teachings as my own, they do resonant with me.

The idea of hope was foreign to me. I had no hope of changing my situation. I had no educational hope either. An excerpt from the Bartlett article spoke to me, saying:

> Paulo Freire writes that, 'without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope . . . dissipates, loses its bearings and turns into hopelessness. . .. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope' (Friere, 1995, pp. 8-9) (Bartlett, 2021, p. 216).

Hopelessness, lack of control, lack of belonging—I had very little to cling to other than the inner workings of my own mind. Perhaps even then I understood the need to seek out places of joy like

the woods behind my house. Perhaps even then I understood the importance of finding a place that afforded me safety, peace, and comfort, to keep me from the darkness around me telling me to give up and end my life. In the past, I did not understand, but I now recognize how I react to the healing properties of nature, of the woods and streams and oceans that make my heart smile and allow me to breathe just a little easier. Today, I return as often as possible to nature. I allow the sights and sounds of forests, lakes, and beaches to wash over me, envelop me, flooding my soul with peace and washing away any stressors. Connecting to the land gives me a full circle moment, a culmination of my educational experiences binding me to my locale. I recognize the need to continually seek out nature as much as I need to constantly seek out new understandings educationally. With the discovery of new pedagogical reasonings, I achieve new confidence, like a breath of fresh air come new understandings and connections being formed through theoretical explorations and applications.

When I look back to understand what drives me towards a need for a reformed curriculum and expansion of the pedagogical toolbox, I realize that the overarching emotion is anger—anger for being let down by the education system and anger towards educators that marred my educational experience. With the most common comment on my report cards being that I could achieve more than what I was, I wonder why no teacher ever tried to help me. Had a single teacher invested a minute of time into speaking or working with me, I might have thrived educationally. It is this anger that pushes me towards bettering the educational futures of students.

Keating and Coombs (2005) point to the need for a self-reflective awareness on the part of the teacher especially considering the sociocultural world and calls for attention to be given to real world application. This recognition translates into a responsibility to educate ourselves as

teachers about student needs and backgrounds, which I addressed in my progressive stage. Curriculum based on externalized practices and pedagogies is focused on the dissemination of information to be regurgitated back to the teacher to assess learning and teaching effectiveness. This fails to engage students and educators in the search for deeper meanings and authenticity in their work both in schools and in the lives outside of school. A teacher as the narrator and students as receptacles has "participants becom[ing] anesthetized because of the lack of dialogue and engagement with the world through an epistemological curiosity... there is something more meaningful that we should be doing with education and the curriculum to engage students with the world" (p. 83). Curriculum is not simply an objective text to be narrated to students (see also Friere, 1970).

It cannot be ignored that the shape curriculum takes on is one informed by politics and power. Central to any critique of curriculum theory are questions of representation, justice, and power. The politics of curriculum are demonstrated in that "state governments, locally elected school boards and powerful business and publishing interests exercise enormous influence over teaching practices and curriculum policies" (Giroux, 1994, p. 36). The underrepresented are many, and it is not possible for teachers to become agents in the classroom without an expanded understanding of both politics and the unrepressed possibilities it provides for thinking about and shaping their own pedagogy. Encouraged here is a self-reflective practice of looking at pedagogical choices within the classroom recognizing the influence of political power factors. There are a multitude of dividing factors within the school environment and not all can be bridged but awareness of these can be incorporated into pedagogical practices.

In my regression, I detailed how segregated I felt due to my religious practices and lower socioeconomic standing. In my progression, I noted how these kinds of segregations take place

both in society and within the education system. By discussing these differences with students, you are creating a deeper awareness of society itself, not just life in the classroom, and revealing how power structures can influence epistemology. Educators are critical agents who can navigate between theory and practice and take risks making positive differences for their students and the society in which they live in (Giroux, 1994). Education should be an empowering source of strength for students to exercise agency and control over ways they acquire knowledge. There is a call for constant dialogue with students and solidarity among educators.

> ...teachers need to provide the conditions for students to learn that the relationship between knowledge and power can be emancipatory, that their histories and experiences matter, and that what they say and do can count as part of a wider struggle to change the world around them. More specifically, teachers need to argue for forms of pedagogy that close the gap between the school and the real world. (Giroux, 1994, p. 44)

The areas in which I found a lack of control, a lack of belonging, or an absence of hope could be re-imagined to be places of power, of emancipation, and, importantly, learning through pedagogical practices.

In analyzing how I have arrived in this state of learning, I recognize how important it is to acknowledge the driving forces behind my approach to pedagogy. By enduring negative sanctions from influential people in my past, I am propelled to create positive spaces of learning and "to provide pedagogical conditions that support students' own course of folding and unfolding in time" (Wang, 2010, p. 282). Educators need to take into consideration how research suggests that powerful skills like empathy and awareness of one's own feelings can steer students to positively contribute to the society in the broader sense (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003).

Perhaps in my efforts to create inclusive, empowering, and encompassing spaces of learning for my future students, I am healing from within. Garcia (2019) highlights how "the complexities of race, class, and gender within classrooms offer opportunities for teacher solidarity in healing, particularly within historically marginalized school communities" (p. 64). My experience as a student could only serve to enrich my experience as an educator. I can take my pain from the strap, from the negative sanctions of beatings, from the isolation I encountered, from the loss of my family, and provide a positive pedagogy. I can look at today and recognize how my future ideology is informed by those horrors. I do not have to live as two people, being an educator. I do not have to divide myself into two characters: one that experienced loss and pain that many have no understanding of, and one that smiles through it all masking those calamities, presenting the image of an ideal educator. Instead, I can amalgamate the two into an educator that incorporates a comprehensive pedagogical toolbox and an understanding. As Garcia (2019) asserts:

> Teachers are expected to attend to the healthy emotional skills of our students, but many of us casually neglect our own needs as struggling, grieving, and healing individuals. This amounts to a chasm of classroom and professional support that teacher educators must bridge if we are to take seriously the career-long needs of educators in all contexts ... nuanced intersections of violence, race, class, and gender are too often glibly overlooked in the day-to-day work of classroom educators. (pp. 66, 68)

By recognizing and realizing my own paths down trauma laden memories, I acknowledge that students are experiencing similar tribulations. I look at my son's high school and the number of lockdowns that have endured over his high school years. There must be a toll being taken on his

teachers during these trying times as well as the students. Violence in school is not a new issue and escalations around the world create troubling conundrums for students and teachers alike.

I recognize how violence in my past informs my feelings in the present. I am shy around certain people; I do not handle confrontation with confidence, and I tend to avoid overly negative people. Encountering violence has morphed my personality and choices informing both how I wish to teach and how I wish students to learn. I note the importance I place on this during my progressive writings. I believe this is why I presently feel that a sense of safety is paramount in classrooms and within the school system as a whole. Simultaneously, I recognize that caring for students and not taking care of ourselves as teachers does both ourselves as educators and the students we work with a disservice.

Looking at my past and my desires for the future, I see a theme emerging, one of cautious compassion. As it is pointed out in the *Introduction, The Uncommon Core* (2015):

> The real core of education is the relationship between the teacher and the student, and the extent to which that relationship nurtures the longing of the child to matter in the world, and the longing of the teacher to nurture and fulfill that desire. (p. 15)

In both my progressive and regressive writings, I point to relationships between teacher and student and between teachers as being fundamental in achieving learning milestones. I recognize that student engagement can depend on whether a positive relationship exists between themselves and their teachers.

Assuming reality is a process, learning, teaching, and human development can be viewed similarly (Regnier, 1994). Medley (2012) tells us that teachers should have an awareness of students social and psychological context especially with regard to trauma. They go on to

suggest three important elements that need to be taken into consideration: learners will encounter frustration when there is no healing from trauma, "teaching approaches that are sensitive to the needs of the trauma-affected comprise good instructional practice for all learners; artful acts of instruction in themselves can be therapeutic and build resilience in all... learners" (p. 111). Teaching in diverse cultural classrooms may mean teaching students who have experienced various levels of trauma. Of course, teachers are not therapists, but there are pedagogical practices that can aid educators in understanding and reaching students who have experienced trauma. Creating a safe environment is an aid to all students, and this can be achieved through predictable routines and ensuring students are notified of deviations, not introducing new tasks too quickly, using small group work tasks and using sanctions that do not embarrass. Community building within the classroom helps reestablish trust as well (Medley, 2012). Clearly, I am discovering how crucial safety is within the school system for students and teachers alike.

I arrive at a place that commands compassion, understanding and flexibility in pedagogical practices. My journey from the past to the future to the present impresses upon me how belonging, control, and loss inform my educational choices and learnings, fueled by anger and love for the institution of education and its many components. My next chapter discusses a synthesis of all that has been discussed. In the synthetic moment I talk about the application of the past, present, and future. As quoted earlier, Le Grange (2021) puts it succinctly: "The individual re-enters the present with a renewed sense of self, able to see the wholeness of past, present and future, and asks what this means and what can I do?" (p. 10). I intend to write towards a culmination of the time cycles and end my journey through *currere* there. I end my thesis with new understandings and goals towards a more comprehensive pedagogy.

The next chapter looks at a culmination of the time cycles of past, present, and future and analyzes them in the last stage of *currere*, the synthetical. I discuss pedagogical considerations like multimodal literacy, socioeconomic status, curriculum of disability, and curriculum design before transitioning into personal considerations.

Chapter Seven: Synthetic Stage

This chapter focuses on the 'what now' of pedagogical practices and educational choices. The synthetic moment takes account of the time cycles of past, future, and present and how they shape understanding, creating a space for accountability. As Pinar (1975) wrote, "before we learn to teach in such a way ... we must become students of ourselves, before we can truthfully say we understand teaching" (p. 412). The aim of this chapter, then, is to render an attempt at articulating what all the study of self in this thesis means for teaching and education moving forward.

In this chapter, I will look at what practices can be put into place, what pedagogical considerations must be taken into account, and how my journey through time culminates in new realizations. I begin with a look at generative pedagogical practices such as multimodal literacy and culturally responsive pedagogies, and point to the need to recognize the impact of socioeconomic status on learning. I discuss the impact of technology on education and how the needs of our current societies have morphed from the curriculum of the 19th century. From there, I look at the inclusion of students with disabilities in the classroom and needed changes towards adaptability for comprehensive inclusionary practices. Finally, I summarize my thoughts in an amalgamation of the time cycles of *currere* demonstrating my newly evolved understandings, pointing to the need for a humanizing curriculum and pedagogy.

Pedagogical Considerations

In this section, I describe some of the pedagogical considerations that emerge from my *currere* writing, as well as the reading process that informed my research. Each ought to be taken as part of the a wider project of change envisioned through this reflective work.

Multimodal Literacy

The first pedagogical consideration I'd like to discuss is multimodal literacy. Looking at multimodal literacy in a multicultural classroom means a move from language itself to the varied modes of communication used situationally and culturally. Focusing on what is taking place is necessary over privileging particular modes of communication. Keeping in mind culturally plural settings, there needs to be a recognition towards not favoring image over language or gesture over sound. Mills et al. (2017), discuss the many facets of communication, of which speech is only one, supplemented by gestures, facial expressions and other elements rooted in cultural and social practices. These cultural and social practices often dictate "Preferences in the use of modes of presentation, such as linguistic, auditory, gestural, and so on" (p. 5). Moreover, "The regular pattern of use of modes is called a modal grammar, and these grammars have shared meanings within communities or cultures" (p. 5).

Culturally responsible teaching

Utilizing an approach that is culturally responsible is crucial. What I learned from my time teaching overseas is that *how* I taught, including how I gestured, was as important to prevent learning obstacles as *what* I taught. What I wish to see in the future of classroom makeup is an understanding on the part of educators that the cultural backgrounds of students are important to research and teach to accordingly. I think of the makeup of one of my university classes; it was comprised of a majority of students from an African country. It made me wonder how university classes are made up in their home country and how much of a departure were the classes locally. Did they, as we, move their desks and chairs to represent a circle to facilitate communication? Did the circular arrangement make it more or less comfortable for students

from afar? Reflection dictates I have to question how the setup of a classroom impacts a students' learning experience.

Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status cannot be understated in relation to curriculum applications. I came from a lower socioeconomic bracket and felt both segregated and less than due to that. I did not have access to technologies or find myself belonging in groups of higher socioeconomic circles. Field trips or class trips were often out of my reach due to economic considerations. Not all students will have the same access to resources. It needs to be noted that where one area of the globe relies more heavily on screen time for communication, another is restricted from that access and relies more heavily on text and verbality. There needs to be a recognition of this in pedagogical practices when working with multicultural classrooms. Access to technology has brought both unity and disconnect. Across the world access to technology varies and socioeconomic statuses have an impact. Not all schools can provide students uniformly with laptops or access to technology. For those with the privilege of technological access, it can boost learning processes.

Curriculum Design

Curriculum needs to be examined from the perspective of design (Kress, 2000). With this understanding is the knowledge that particular interests have an increased focus over others creating barriers to curriculum reform (Young, 1999). Recognition of epistemologies that perpetuate colonial ideologies is a large part of the realization of the need for future curriculum reformation.

The needs of changing society are very different from the 19th century design our current curriculum is based on. The emergence of COVID-19 demonstrated how learning can

successfully be virtually integrated while highlighting the complexities of the same. Along with virtuality comes the new globalization era and local curriculums will need to tune into global demands for what and how teaching takes place requires a global lens (Young, 1999). Considering the focus on curriculum should be

> not just an educational question of primary concern only to policy-makers and those involved in schools and colleges. It inevitably reflects our assumptions about the distribution of individual capacities and the kind of culture to which we want young people to have access. (Young, 1999, pp. 463-464)

It is crucial to understand the differing societies students originate from and how those differences are reflected in their respective environments. This has a great impact on what subject areas students decide to focus on and what importance is placed on varied courses. Curriculum needs to be approached not just singularly as an educational issue but in understanding its role within society. A view towards the curriculum of the future, according to Young (1999), needs to incorporate three important areas: providing learners agency, focusing on creating new knowledge along with the imparting of existing knowledge, and emphasizing the interdependence of knowledge areas and the relation between curriculum and societal issues. Culturally competent material needs to be made explicit and attainable in future curriculum with a focus on real world application.

Technology Shift

The landscapes for education are changing and this includes an increased participation of technology. Technology was a minor factor during my public schooling experience. Personal computers in the home were not common, and curriculum did not offer courses on technology aside from instruction on audio and visual devices (video recording, photography, book binding).

Current times call for an increased focus on technology and comprehensive training for educators on the use of technology from devices to programs. Technology can aid students working with disabilities and students working with language obstacles. As Kress (2000) puts it, we are entering a

> new media of communication and, in particular, a shift...from the era of mass communication to the era of individuated communication, a shift from unidirectional communication, from a powerful source at the center to the mass, to multidirectional communication from many directions/locations, a shift from the `passive audience' ... to the interactive audience. (Kress, 2000, p. 6)

The future of education and curriculum is demanding reformation and an amalgamation of new resources from adaptive ideologies to adaptive technologies where possible. As stated by Ibarra and Kalich (2022): "Because of the evolving availability of information and rapid innovation of technology, the curriculum design needs to allow for continual change and determine how technologically infused pedagogical practices can help students become producers of knowledge" (p. 60). Future curriculum must make priority what the curriculum of the past neglects providing opportunities for more participation-based learning across communities.

Curriculum of Disability

The final pedagogical consideration emergent from my research process is disability. This needs to include active classroom learning and community-based experiences. As discussed previously, my experience with students with disabilities was stunted by segregation. There was little to no exposure to students with disabilities and thus a lack of understanding. Where students experiencing learning challenges could have been included, they were instead shuffled

off to designated areas and sequestered from the rest of the student population. Disability-related knowledge needs to be incorporated into future curricula. A substantial portion of society is made up of persons managing disabilities. There is an increasing need for advocacy for inclusion of disability awareness curricula. One area that encounters difficulties incorporating persons of disability is field trips: "For individuals with disabilities, field trips can create challenges for students and educators, including medical issues, accessibility issues, behavior management issues, and processing issues" (Elleven et al., 2006, p. 4). What I see in the future are virtual field trips as an alternative for students who would struggle to attend in person.

In readying students for the challenges of the current workforce and future workforce, themes such as adaptability, change, diversity, and technology need to be incorporated into future curriculum. Real world requirements need to be understood by educators to better meet student needs, including those with disabilities (Elleven et al., 2006).

The social benefits of inclusion for students with disabilities have been well researched, yet there is limited research available related to curriculum strategies directed towards functional skills acquisition and academics (Dymond et al., 2001). Looking forward there is a call for more research into curriculum content when students with severe disabilities are incorporated into classrooms with students without disabilities ensuring learning outcomes are met universally. The article "What Constitutes Effective Curricula for Students With Severe Disabilities?" identifies six core areas where future development needs to take place: "methods for addressing functional skills in inclusive settings, methods for making instruction in the community inclusive, curriculum emphasis in inclusive classrooms, postschool outcomes, access to general curriculum and student progress, impact of state standards on curriculum design" (Dymond, 2001, pp. 118-119).

The future for students with disabilities requires a focus on skill building, not just societal membership. Over time helper-helpee relationships in the classroom can deteriorate with a propensity towards hypervigilance initially to be followed in the second half of the year with a marked decline. Future strategies need to bolster teachers in the planning and implementation of adaptive learning experiences that benefit students, which will contribute to developing functional skills. This develops opportunities for relationship building as an inclusive community (Billingsley et al, 1999). Another area of future development for students with disabilities is community-based instruction, which can aid in enhancing membership and social relationships with classmates. Equal value should be placed on societal membership, relationships, and skills. Students with disabilities, severe or otherwise, should not be overlooked when universities come to canvas potential applicants. One such experience was outlined by a blind student, Ann who stated:

> I only had a vague conception of college growing up. I started learning more during late middle school/early high school when representatives from universities would come in talking about college. But they would not go to the classes where students with disabilities were, like the resource room . . . It was as if the disabled students in the resource room didn't need to hear about college and scholarships. (Elmore et al., 2018, p. 12)

Educators need to provide supports for all students, disabled or otherwise, to dream about possible futures connecting early learning with successful transition into high school and ultimately into future university and career plans (Grigal et al., 2019).

The use of assistive technology for students with disabilities, from readers to e-books/laptops, needs to incorporate training periods for educators and users. Financial assistance

must be in place for economically disadvantaged students to use assistive technology. Relating to the use of such technologies, an article on disabled higher education students' perspectives on use of technologies states:

> The students felt that technology enhanced the course concepts and skills, increased organization of course material, increased convenience, and improved achievement. More interestingly, they felt that accessing asynchronous online information provided a 'disability coping mechanism'; it helped them self-accommodate the impact of their disability." (Seale et al., 2021, p. 1691)

Disability, then, proves a core consideration of the pedagogical future I envision.

Personal Considerations

Having now discussed the myriad pedagogical considerations that emerge from this research process and come together as part of the synthesis here within, I now give some consideration to the personal elements of my research. *Currere* is ultimately about personal reflection and transformation, and I would now like to make clear how this process has affected me as a researcher and a teacher.

There will be times where traumas emerge and affect both teaching and learning, and educators must address them productively while ensuring their own health is minded. Trust is an important factor here as Edwards (2021) iterates the need for the creation of inclusivity honoring difference and a push towards collaborative construction of knowledge, building understanding. Edwards notes that the crucial element is the building of trust giving all students a feeling of validity and as Amy Lee (2017) wrote, "have better opportunities to learn in ways that reflect, utilize, and value who they are" (p. 16).

My journey through time has impressed upon me several necessities. Students need to be allowed to exercise a variety of epistemologies. Students need to be encouraged to learn in ways that best fit them individually and blanket teaching practices will only serve to frustrate and potentially oppress. As Kheang (2022) puts it:

> teachers should trust that every kid is unique in terms of how they learn certain things, and those kids should be encouraged to use any learning style that they believe can help them learn the subjects. In other words, teachers should not play the role of authoritarian, but rather that of facilitator in supporting students' learning processes. (p. 17)

Factors such as socioeconomic status, local politics, and family dynamics all play crucial roles in both how pedagogy is applied and how it is learned. Inclusion means work and research into ways that best benefit both educators and students with an eye to what resources are available. Students and educators need to feel a sense of security within the school system along with feeling supported and emboldened. A sense of agency is equally important to instill, and multiple theories of pedagogy can exist simultaneously. Educators must be open to varied pedagogical practices to reach all their students from multiple ethnicities and backgrounds. As Kheang (2022) exhorts, educators need to "design pedagogy and instruction according to subject matter differences, individual differences, and situational differences so that diverse students ... can relate course content to their cultural contexts" (p. 20). Classrooms today look vastly different from the past, and their echo of the societies in which they reside cannot be ignored. Teaching and learning need to take place in areas that are convenient to students and learning schedules need to exercise flexibility corresponding to students learning styles (Kheang, 2022). As educators we need to keep a real-world focus in our pedagogies. Students thrive when they find material to be applicable and appropriate to themselves and the world around them. Cordi (2021)

exhorts educators to consult with students to discover narratives over a reading of narratives, connecting strongly to the world in which they live. Conversing with our students can bring about greater understanding, build connections and help achieve deeper learning milestones when educators discuss and involve real world applicable material. Finally, educators need to embrace technology. It can be the gateway to inclusivity, to strengthen connections with students and provide useful pedagogical tools. As the Ibarra and Kalich (2022) article concludes:

> The internet and social media possibilities afford an endless array of communication modes for practitioners to engage in dialogue beyond the classroom to extend globally. If lived experiences, including virtual dialogues, are nurtured in the classroom, then the curriculum will become partially socially constructed by the participants' discourses, making room for curricular opportunities not explicitly part of the written curriculum. (p.61)

This calls for an increase in educator training and interest to meet the needs of technological proficiency. Yet with this proficiency comes a great expanding of the pedagogical toolbox and an increased ability to reach both disabled and non disabled students across cultures.

My understanding of curriculum, pedagogy, and education as a whole has changed during my *currere* journey. I acknowledge how the lack of a humanizing curriculum and pedagogy created a resentful and underperforming student in me. I recognize how my past has guided me towards reformation, towards compassion, and towards an acceptance of how my past inherits my present while directing my future. I acknowledge how my disabilities guide my desire for inclusivity and the insertion of adaptive components to pedagogy. My time teaching overseas has impressed upon me the need for mindfulness when working with different cultures from the gestures we use to the tone of voice and more. My current educational pursuits after gaining two

Masters have taken me from a focus on achieving my PhD to achieving my teaching degree first and using my revelations to enrich student experience. As Montgomery (2022) tells us, in looking back at how we as educators acquired our pedagogies, we can more easily determine the location of our biases and collaborate to more effectively teach to diverse students. I will be taking my new understandings and incorporating them into new pedagogies that include a variety of theories and technologies. I will be acutely aware going forward of how education can segregate and delineate culturally as well as for differently abled students and vow to bridge gaps towards true inclusivity. I know that I can channel my anger into positive productivity while keeping in mind the need for creation of safe spaces for educators and students alike. I will focus on a humanizing pedagogy that recognizes difference and embraces it. I will continue to seek out new technologies for incorporation and new strategies for trauma management. I can use my own experiences, both positive and negative, to build a platform from which to teach more effectively. More than anything I understand the need for curriculum reform and educator solidarity while acknowledging the many needs of diverse learners. Students are human beings and require a curriculum that is humanizing, not segregating, not debasing, and not disempowering.

Now that I have discussed in depth the four stages of *currere*, I end this thesis with a summary conclusion.

Chapter Eight: General Conclusion

This thesis takes the reader down the path of retrospection. It is within this uncovering of the past that I look to answer the question of how my lived experiences can contribute to a deeper understanding of how curriculum can have a humanizing effect that speaks across culture and disability. The learning landscape is a diverse and multifaceted one, and I hope with my research that I bring to pedagogy some clarity, direction, and acceptance.

My use of *currere* works as a compass, helping me tell my story and navigate this thesis journey with my regression focusing on past experiences in life within the sphere of education. My relationship with education is an ever evolving one that was not always positive. It is these occurrences that inform my present research and end goal for this thesis. From spaces of challenge, I work to push pedagogy towards inclusion. Being a disabled student from a position of privilege, and having spent time as a teacher, I am able to bring a unique and informed perspective, with the aid of research, to curriculum studies.

The literature chosen herein focuses on the themes that emerged in the first stage of my *currere* guided journey: hidden curriculum, belonging, control, and loss. Each of these themes are both multilayered and complex and have strong ties to education. Within the articles summaries and my life experiences, I discuss the impacts of each theme from a life and educational standpoint. I found through education a place of belonging, a place of self-control, and a way to manage past losses with newfound gains. Initially I focus my thesis on the hidden curriculum, then I move to discuss practical class pedagogies. I do this to impress upon the reader the need to understand the impacts the hidden curriculum can have on student success. Since the hidden curriculum is not taught explicitly, I felt the need to move to implementable strategies.

From a tumultuous home to a school laden with prejudice, there were many obstacles to overcome. I realize looking back over my educational journey that I could have mired myself in the negativity and avoided higher learning as a result. I am so glad I chose a path towards enlightenment rather than one of avoidance. Taking control of my education later in life empowered me to be able to view my past objectively and look forward with more clarity. This clarity drove me to want to change how one is educated, how one receives education, and how one teaches to the diverse learners in classrooms today.

As my thesis concludes, I wish to continue my educational experience with yet another foray into education by building a school founded on a pedagogy of acceptance, of inclusion, of mindfulness and care. Our educational landscape is very much like a quilt of diversity. We have students from all over the globe, from varied backgrounds full of challenges and differing abilities. I believe those needs can be met and taught comprehensively in a way that embraces diversity. Toward the goal of reiterating the main points of my thesis, below I summarize each chapter.

Revisiting the themes in my literature review and regressive chapter, I wish to address how each is impactful going forward in relation to curriculum and pedagogical reform.

The hidden curriculum is complicated space where students are shaped by what is not explicitly taught. It is important for educators to be aware of the impacts of the lessons that are implicitly imparted and not to contribute to the colonial ideologies often imbedded within curriculum and exercised in pedagogical practices. Curriculum needs to have an increased equity focus, and pedagogical movements require more inclusion-based exercises.

Belonging is a crucial element to student success. From belonging to academia to social circles, students need to feel attachment. When that element is missing, it affects students' ability to learn and achieve learning milestones. Socio-economic factors, peer involvement, teacher involvement, and parent involvement all play a role in a student's sense of belongingness. Belonging in education can be in and outside of classrooms. From peer groups to a particular classroom, it is important to understand how belonging is central to curriculum studies and education. Being aware of how important attachment and belonging is to students, educators can make strides incorporating this into their pedagogy.

Loss is felt on a deeper level and educators can be cognizant of its impacts from loss of support systems for those students who have emigrated from overseas to loss of discourses that can negatively impact pedagogy. Acknowledging the impacts of shunning, educators can provide support to counteract and bolster students who are experiencing this from their social circles. Loss of discourses can be reintegrated into curriculum using a variety of pedagogical practices.

Control can encompass control over choices to control over education to how control is exerted or experienced as loss. In the literature review discuss the power dynamics around teachers and students and the social trusteeship given to educators. Research shows that the motivational style used by teachers has a direct influence on levels of control, dependent on the use of autonomy style motivation versus a controlling style (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). I feel it necessary to acknowledge how negative sanctions can impede a student's educational progress and how they create impactful core memories felt both on student learning and personal development. Educators have the power to influence students' choices and recognition of this should highlight the need for students to have agency.

Chapter One of my thesis introduces and sets the scene for my writing. I discuss my position as a white, privileged, disabled, student and provide context for my writing. I recognize that my writing is heavily influenced by experience and my desires for an inclusive curricular experience. It is this influence that directs me to the use of *currere,* where the researcher is the research and introspection is paramount to understanding.

The second chapter discusses more in-depth my methodology, the use of *currere,* to both tell my story and answer the research question pertaining to humanizing curriculum and education as a whole. In Chapter Two, I also outline my study objectives and elaborate on my methodological approach, data gathering and analysis.

Chapter Three contains my literature review, which I based on the themes that emerged in my regressive stage of *currere* and my personal desires, discussing the hidden curriculum, equity, diversity, inclusion, experiencing loss, control, and power. It is here that I discover how fundamental control plays a role in both my life and the life of students. From the need to ensure students have agency to ensuring that educators do not exert undue influence, I recognize how my experiences with control or lack of it influence my choices and desires. Similarly, I acknowledge how belonging is a crucial element for students to possess based on the research articles contained herein and on my own journey of being an outlier detailed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four begins my inroads into *currere,* beginning with a regressive story detailing my experiences with education and some triggering past happenings. My regression centers around the themes of belonging, control, and loss and provides a launch point into my desires for the future detailed in Chapter Five. In Chapter Four, I uncover how my desires for curriculum reform developed from traumatic educational experiences and mold my educational choices going forward.

Chapter Five takes the reader into the future and details what direction I wish curriculum and education to take. I spend time dreaming of how I want students to experience schooling from attaining agency to developing a sense of belonging. I provide a short story of an imagined utopian experience and discuss my desires for education and curriculum in the future.

Chapter Six spends time analyzing the present. It looks at the past and the future and brings the reader into the now. I detail how nature provides a space of healing and sense of safety that is crucial to the educational journey and how the forces of politics and power influence the shape of curriculum. I point to the realities of segregation and call for compassion and a recognition for students to feel safe and heard.

Chapter Seven takes the past, present, and future and synthesizes them into a culmination of understanding. From looking at technology and multimodality to personal revelations the chapter wraps up the *currere* journey.

Having now summarized the chapters of my thesis, I conclude with a few thoughts about the limitations of this work, avenues for future research, and some larger takeaways.

The limitations of the research contained herein are that the research is based solely on the experiences of the researcher and not a pool of participants. This restricts the research contained herein by limiting it to individualized experiences. The degree of generalization can be called into question due to this limitation. That said, *currere* is subjective, autobiographical research, and as such, this limitation is inherent to the methodology. Moreover, there is value in subjectivity and personal perspective in research—value that has been marginalized by dominant strains of research for far too long.

The future path research needs to take is one of pointed discovery. Future studies may be interested in investigating the themes discussed in this thesis using greater sample sizes or more traditional research methods, such as interviews or surveys. Another question raised by this work is how epistemologies around the world affect understanding and curriculum application? While some have certainly discussed that topic, there is always more to be discovered in that area. Indeed, as the recent proliferation of *currere* work demonstrates, there is always a need for more storytelling in research broadly. Additionally, in an effort to promote humanization within the curriculum, studies need to take place that focus on the negative effects of colonized thinking manifested in our current curriculum and the involvement of localized politics on the formation of curriculums. Research into expanding the pedagogical toolbox to incorporate deeper inclusion from a student with disabilities standpoint alongside the training of educators in assistive technology should receive renewed focus. All of these areas of future research aim toward the goal of a more humane pedagogy for students—which is the overall finding of my research here. I now turn to a discussion of that finding.

My research and foray into *currere* brought me to multiple realizations towards understanding the variety of needed elements to a humanizing pedagogy. My personal journey showed me how my past influences my present and future desires, and it revealed to me certain themes that rule my being such as control, belonging, and loss. Tied to my educational experiences are traumas experienced by many, which can provide enlightening perspectives. Humanizing pedagogy must incorporate these perspectives and understandings attached to diverse students' needs. Diversity itself needs to be embraced, difference celebrated, and encouraged. I know this intimately due to a life of looking from the outside in, spending so much of my time as an island in a sea of people searching for connections to what felt like a foreign

society. The changing landscape of classrooms calls educators to consider student backgrounds, acknowledge societal influences and divides. My research into belonging, fueled by my experience with detachment, revealed how crucial this element is to students' attachment to and motivation for learning. Belonging also requires an eye to inclusivity. Inclusive practices need to envelop the student body, including those with disabilities. Where society segregates, educators need to incorporate.

Another consideration towards a humanizing pedagogy is that of agency, specifically control. I come from a perspective of having control over my education currently yet conversely, experiencing a complete lack of control during my public-school years. This served to create a detachment, even a derision for learning, that impeded educational progress. Students need to feel a sense of agency over their education and subject choices. Educators need to take control of the curriculum and utilize it to intersperse it with real-world applicable material that recognizes diversity. Educators need to talk to their students. As a student, I needed conversations with my educators; I craved some sort of connection between what I was attempting to learn and what I was experiencing. I needed bridges built to cross the many divides between my personal and educational life, which could have formed had those crucial conversations taken place.

As I encountered great losses, I learned from my personal experience and research so too do students wrestle with loss, from learning losses over summer months to the loss of support systems when relocating from afar and being distanced from those relied upon support systems. Humanizing pedagogy needs to recognize loss as another crucial factor to success in learning. Educators being aware of this element can provide additional learning support to meet this challenge and better aid student learning development.

My educational experiences and research led me to a multitude of realizations that I hope this thesis pays forward by providing perspective and an enrichment of understanding towards students plight and educators' immense responsibility. The receiving of negative sanctions left indelible impressions upon me and revealed to me the power educators can have over student learning milestones. My time teaching overseas demonstrated the need to acknowledge culture and its many influences on learning. My experience as a disabled student revealed to me the need for educators to be open to adaptability and inclusive practices. Research into traumas, losses, sense of belonging, and the hidden curriculum all point to the need for students to feel safe and heard and for educators to increase awareness while expanding the pedagogical toolbox. This thesis endeavored to develop a reflexive understanding of the need for pedagogical reform in varied areas through my reflection and readings on belonging, control, and loss. I highlighted the need for diversity, inclusion, and equity to be incorporated into pedagogy, demonstrated via my life experiences and supported by scholarly articles, and I encouraged educators to move towards a more humanizing pedagogy that is cognizant of culture and disability. In the end, humanizing pedagogy needs to focus on the *human* factor and their complicated diverse needs.

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