

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:

STREAMS THAT RUN INTO THE RIVER OF LIVED EXPERIENCE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF INTERN TEACHERS USING *CURRERE* TO UNDERSTAND CURRICULUM

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This dissertation is the culmination of a phenomenological study of intern teachers using the *Currere* process to gain a broader and deeper understanding of curriculum. The *Currere* process is a written method developed by William Pinar through which participants recall past memories, imagine future occurrences, analyze the themes that arise in both, and synthesize the meaning to more purposefully shape the present lived experience. The connections that arise from using *Currere* as part of a phenomenological study of lived experience suggest pedagogical implications for intern teachers' developing practice in the context of an acknowledged lived classroom curriculum.

Grounded in the philosophical contributions of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, along with van Manen's phenomenological structure and method, this work explores the development of teachers' pedagogical orientation within the context of the lived experience of curriculum.

I first turn to my personal experience using *Currere* and also to the experiences of beginning intern teachers using *Currere* to develop individualized foundations prior to

their coursework and internship experiences. I use the metaphor of the river to open up the phenomenon of using *Currere* to understand curriculum through various sources that reveal relationships with language, dwelling, identity, and hermeneutic phenomenology. The initial themes that arise include moments, in-between spaces, abundance, resilience, and the flow of lived experience.

This study focuses on the lived experiences of five Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) interns as they make meaning of curriculum using *Currere*. Through two individual conversations with each intern and a final whole-group conversation, the interns and I discussed internship experiences, curriculum in the fullness of its meaning, and pedagogical revelations from using the *Currere* process. Renderings of these conversations and the intern teachers' written *Currere* processes reveal themes including navigating unexpected experiences; the difficulties of finding authenticity in a mentor's classroom; the constant state of being watched, observed, and evaluated; exploring the teacher-self; and discovering the curriculum and pedagogy of lived experience.

Based on these emergent themes, I explore ways in which the lived experience of using *Currere* to understand curriculum has pedagogical implications for teacher practice and teacher preparation. My engagement with the texts of *Currere* and conversation suggest that opportunities for intern teachers to use the *Currere* process to understand curriculum can help them discover their own meaning of what it is to be a teacher, develop an orientation of stewardship toward their professional practice, deepen their understanding of curriculum in its abundance, and create a lived curriculum of pedagogical care for the children whom they have committed to serve.

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By

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## DEDICATION

It is with deep admiration, respect, and love that I dedicate this dissertation to my father, Dr. Richard D. Palmer. His legacy as an educator at the University of Florida, particularly as originator and first Director of the university's Training, Research, and Education for Environmental Occupations (TREEO) Center is an inspiration to me and so many others.

This work is only possible because of my Dad's unconditional love, unwavering support, and incredibly specific commentary – not to mention the occasional subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) “nudge” to keep me pressing forward.

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A chance meeting and impromptu discussion with Dr. Michael Glaser in the St. Mary’s College staff workroom led to a deep friendship based on a shared belief in endless and attainable possibilities for education as a transformative place for children—and the adults who care for them. His recognition of me, a stranger making copies, has buoyed me up in times of confusion and distress. His good humor and compassion have kept me aloft in times of great joy. His insights and honesty have helped me stay true to my course. I am so grateful.

David Imig gave me an incredible gift when he allowed me to pursue an individual writing project as a student in his Seminar course. His encouragement led to *Starting the conversation: Using the Currere process to make the teaching internship experience more positive and encourage collaborative reflection in internship site schools*. Tracing the history of my work using and sharing the *Currere* process showed me that this work has promise and potential for teacher education and professional development. Dr. Imig is open to sharing what he knows and also openly stating his enthusiasm for learning from others. His sincerity and curiosity continue to inspire me.

I have been so inspired by Mary Grace Snyder. Her course broadened my understanding of, and perspective toward, curriculum. She modeled excellence in instruction by presenting a well-structured course with limitless opportunities for exploration and creativity. She is a kindred spirit, and I am so thankful for her encouragement.

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All the intern teachers who contributed to this work, especially the intern teacher research participants, are in my heart forever. Their continued idealism is based on both the realism and wisdom they have gained as new teachers. They carry the light forward, and I am proud to walk with such funny, sincere, and dedicated human Beings.

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**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**CATCHING THE CURRENTS OF *CURRERE* TO  
DIS-COVER LIVED CURRICULUM**

As water takes whatever shape it is in,  
so free may you be about who you become.  
(O'Donohue, 2008, p. 127)

The teacher's perspective is an important one. But it has dominated our research and our practice too long, and while it is rarely admitted publicly, it is true we are stuck. What is missing is the student's point of view from the student's point of view. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 22)

I promise...

- To remember what my educational experience was like and to use that when addressing and working with high school students.
- To build the bridge that will allow the travels through maturity development that will take my students to higher places. (Meagan, Intern Teacher, 2013)

Why is it that some teachers get discouraged, burn out quickly, and leave the profession – or worse, stay as negative forces in their students' lives and the culture of their schools? On the other hand, why are some veteran teachers still as inspired, and inspiring, as they were at the start of their careers? Do these vastly different results ripple outward from their earliest experiences as intern teachers?

My interest in the phenomenon of graduate students preparing to become teachers stemmed from these questions that arose over the course of my position as the Director of Student Teaching and Professional Development Schools (PDS) Coordinator for the St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. My role took me into the schools where I saw interns in action in their mentor teachers' classrooms, and I was witness to many different school and classroom cultures. Over time, I became keenly aware of the variation among the mentor teachers' levels of

dedication and inspiration. Although I worked with a majority of wise and generous mentor teachers, I also encountered mediocre, and even damaging, mentor teachers—more than I had expected. I often had to navigate in between protecting the MAT program’s critical relationships with the internship schools and supporting the intern teachers. I learned to find creative and tactful ways of reminding mentors to avoid modeling certain negative behaviors including personal complaints about administrators; telling interns that what they are learning in their courses is meaningless; dismissing the interns’ enthusiasm and idealism as naïve; and even assuring interns that they would soon become discouraged with the profession and quit within a few years. More questions arose: From where do these differing responses and actions arise for teachers? What do they suggest about their prior and current understandings of teaching? Where are they in their teaching? What are they transmitting to intern teachers?

One afternoon, Caroline, an intern teacher who had recently begun her internship placement, emailed with an “urgent” request to see me immediately on campus. When she arrived at my office, her anxiety was clearly evident. She sat down and began fidgeting with the straps on her still-spotless canvas teacher bag. She wanted to share an incident that had just occurred at her internship school and get my advice. Caroline’s mentor was one of two male teachers responsible for the after-school program at her very diverse and challenging internship school site. After the school day had ended, the two teachers and Caroline were in the mentor’s classroom getting organized for the next day before heading to the cafeteria to meet the after-school student participants. The men began discussing one of their male students. One referred to the student as “gay,” and both laughed. Caroline was shocked that these teachers showed no sign of regret for the

joke, and she realized that they had not even considered it important to shield her from their comments. Caroline had been fighting tears since the incident, and once in my office, the tears began to flow. She said she was crying partly because of her intense support of social justice, partly because she herself identified as gay, but mostly because she had not ever expected teachers to behave so disrespectfully. The disillusionment was overwhelming to her, and she needed guidance. Caroline did not want me to get directly involved because she did not want to damage her relationship with her mentor by appearing to tattle, so I advised Caroline to talk with her mentor the following day, and I gave her a few ideas about how to approach the subject. When Caroline touched base with me the following afternoon, she told me that her mentor had apologized and had seemed genuine. That was good news, but I knew damage had been done to the mentor/intern relationship—probably irreparably. I remember more questions coming to mind: How did Caroline’s body receive her mentor’s words? How was the space in which one becomes a teacher altered? Will that experience still be present with Caroline years later? If so, what might be its impact on her teaching practice?

My mantra in working with intern teachers was always about inspiring students, making learning relevant, and leaving an important legacy. Although I certainly had my difficult days and challenging situations as a public school teacher, I never stopped feeling as if my work held great purpose. I made it a priority to share these attitudes and beliefs with the interns while experiences of all kinds cascaded relentlessly over and through them throughout their internships. Each year, I encountered a new group of teaching interns with the sparkle of inspiration in their eyes and idealistic dreams in their hearts. I pondered the changes I saw in them (along with the changes I knew I had not

seen) as they moved through the MAT and internship program with their various mentor teachers. Eleven months later, the interns graduated and became certified to teach. As I read the interns' names and watched them cross the stage to receive their diplomas each passing year, I wondered about the long-term effects of the MAT program as a whole on their spirits and desire to continue as educators. I wondered if I had learned enough and done enough to support them. I wondered about what these new teachers would carry into classrooms along with their diplomas? I tried to imagine the kinds of teachers they would become and wondered about what would influence them along the way?

### **Catching the Currents of *Currere***

I began my doctoral odyssey as a way to develop my understanding of teaching and curriculum in order to integrate what I learned into my professional repertoire as the Director of Student Teaching. Although I never imagined such a specific result of my desire, I found William Pinar's *Currere* method (2004) in my very first doctoral course, the focus of which was on curriculum in its many facets. Perhaps I should say that *Currere* found me.

*Currere*, the Latin source and infinitive form of curriculum, translates literally as "to run a course." It is an autobiographical method designed by Pinar (2004) to help develop a fuller and deeper understanding of one's educational practice in the present. Pinar (2004) formalizes the *Currere* process in four steps: regression, progression, analysis, and synthesis. I paraphrase Pinar as I offer the following descriptions of each stage:

- 1- Regression: exploring the past by remembering and recording concrete experiences.

- 2- Progression: imagining the future by projecting oneself into likely situations and circumstances and recording them.
- 3- Analysis: rereading the Regression and Progression reflections and identifying themes common to both.
- 4- Synthesis: examining the themes as they come together and forming insights that can be used to strengthen one's professional practice. (2004)

On its face, the structure might appear rigid; however, *Currere* is a process of freeing memories and transcending the boundaries of time to bring important thematic insights to the surface and use them toward crafting a more purposeful life as an educator.

### ***Currere: Flowing Like a River***

It is not unusual for me to find myself beside a river wondering at its path, how the land directs the water and how, at the same time, the water relentlessly shapes the land. Rivers run between the stages of my life: tubing down the Ichetucknee in Florida as a child and down the Chattahoochee as an advertising copywriter in Atlanta; moving to Washington, D.C. and walking along the Potomac; settling near the Patuxent River in Maryland and embracing the life of a teacher; then transitioning into teacher preparation at a college on the St. Mary's River. The river is a constant throughout my life, and the imagery of the flowing river captures the essentials of my lived experience: the desire to contribute, the need to create, and the courage to become a beginner again and again.

I have found that the metaphor of the river also works well to represent and communicate the depth of possibilities for the *Currere* process in helping interns interpret the teaching internship. The sand and rocks of the riverbed are the educational policies and structures. The flowing water represents the daily lived experiences of individuals,

and also the group as a whole, in the classroom. Both land and water, as well as structures and experiences, are necessary to perceive the truth of the river as it, like *Currere*, runs its course.

Completing my own *Currere* project was one of the most academically and professionally important journeys I have ever undertaken. I recalled excerpts of my own process from each of the four steps:

I began my *Currere* experience with the Regression step:

I remember feeling frozen in my seat, barely breathing, as I watched my first-grade teacher grimly and roughly tie Robbie to his chair with a jump rope from the playground equipment box. His crime? He could not stay in his seat. Robbie's thin, pale face wore a look of fear and bewilderment as the teacher trussed him up like a sailor lashed to the mast.

Next, I imagined the future in my Progression:

I am standing on a stage at a TED event with sweaty hands but a firm belief in my message. I have received this speaking invitation because of my work in education policy. I clear my throat and look out into the sea of faces, hoping to inspire at least one person to share my vision of schools where pedagogy is the focus and learning is the natural outcome.

In my Analysis:

I sought out connections between my Regression and Progression and discovered that one of the common themes that guides my life is the influence of teachers.

As I completed the *Currere* process with the Synthesis step:

I reflected deeply as I wrote about ways in which I could use this new knowledge in a purposeful way. I realized that a large part of my life's purpose is to contribute to developing a public education system that unapologetically claims pedagogical practice as its foundation.

Upon completion of my *Currere* experience, I was astonished by how well all the elements flowed together to become a unified whole, and I became more convinced of the river as an apt metaphor to represent the parallels between the *Currere* process and the course of lived experience. I began to ponder the meaning of this naturally flowing *Currere* process that brought me into such a powerful place of knowing teaching as it



relates to my teaching self. I realized the deep meaning for my pedagogy as I lived in and connected to these memories I released by patiently nudging them to the surface in my writing. In that moment, I became aware that *Currere* had done something profound and valuable with me. I wondered if my intern teachers at the threshold of their preparation could be moved in similarly powerful ways, so I brought *Currere* into the MAT program and began using it with them.

### ***Currere* – A Compass for Interpreting Lived Curriculum**

I hope to establish an environment where students feel safe to both be themselves and improve themselves with the recognition of their inner-truths. (Erica, Intern Teacher, *Currere* Project, 2012)

My varied roles as supervisor, internship coordinator, and Internship Seminar professor offered me opportunities to help prepare my intern teachers to set their unique professional courses, to work past the fears that can hinder pedagogical development, and to develop the resilience to embrace challenges as opportunities. My accumulated experiences as an elementary, middle, and high school teacher prepared me well (many times by *not* preparing me) for my role as a teacher educator.

Each year, I introduced the *Currere* assignment to my new interns. I explained that the process would help anchor the MAT experience in an awareness of the influences that brought them to teaching and that *Currere* might also become a compass to help each of them develop intentional futures as educators. The assignment was due at the start of my Classroom Management course as the foundation for learning practical and applicable strategies for making the classroom a positive and productive space. My intention was to help the intern teachers develop the insight and grounding from their own self-reflection

to see themselves as more than mere managers of students. I hoped *Currere* would help them recognize more clearly their powerful role as a teacher as captured by Haim Ginott:

I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized. (1972, p. 13)

The teaching internship is a challenging undertaking that influences the course of an educator's career. This is an important time for every intern teacher to have an opportunity to become an intrepid explorer: to examine his or her prior educational experiences and then use these reflections to make a conscious choice about the kind of "decisive element" he or she will become.

I remember knowing right away as I began my own journey as a teacher that some intangible connection existed between my students and me. The feeling was so real, but I could not find the professional language to describe it properly. What I experienced included classroom management, group culture, and relationships; but it also existed in a realm between and beyond those things. I described the feeling using words such as *connection*, *rhythm*, *sparks*, and *flow*. Those early experiences with what I now name as *lived curriculum* remain vivid to me to this day. After my enlightening and influential first experience with the *Currere* method, I found myself wishing that I had accessed all of the information and insights from the process much sooner in my teaching career. It became very clear to me that I was coming to a true understanding of the breadth of curriculum as a river of practice leading to an ocean of possible outcomes.

Curriculum is commonly understood to represent the instructional materials, intended learning outcomes, and learner experiences in educational settings. These

experiences are virtually always evaluated from the point of view of the policy-maker, the curriculum designer, or the teacher. However, a broader interpretation of the term curriculum as Pinar uses it goes beyond curriculum-as-plan to become curriculum-as-lived. It represents how groups (teachers and students) act and interact in the educational environment (Grundy, 1987). Pinar (in Pinar & Grumet, 2015) recommends that the word *experiences* should be replaced by *activities* when referencing curriculum-as-plan. Because “experience is what one senses, one feels, one thinks: it is one’s living through of one’s life,” *experiences* is the word best suited for describing and creating curriculum-as-lived (Pinar, in Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 23). Pinar goes on to describe how a student’s experience of curriculum includes physical sensations such as temperature, emotional aspects such as feelings about those by whom one is surrounded, and mental processes, all of which can be private and individual or made public and shared. But in this way, the lived classroom curriculum is inevitably uniquely designed by each member of the classroom community.

I have come to know *Currere* as a generative process for broadening one’s awareness in order to recognize curriculum-as-lived. The process is also a specific, structured method for exploration of the lived experience of curriculum which integrates its material, structural and existential aspects. Grundy characterizes curriculum as a “cultural construction” that is a “way of organizing a set of human educational practices” (1987, p. 5). Because *Currere* translates as “to run a course,” and because the process offers a way to understand and dwell in lived curriculum, I use the term both in reference to the method itself and also to the course of curriculum as lived experience.

I have learned the value of the *Currere* process as a grounding experience for intern teachers at the start of the MAT program from my reading and responding to their projects over a period of six years. My awakening to a formerly nameless understanding of lived curriculum and concerns about the role of the internship in shaping interns' practice brought me to the realization that there are deeper, and broader, opportunities for exploration using *Currere*. I began to wonder about these possibilities. After seeing so much insight leap from the pages of intern teachers' *Currere* projects completed before the internship even began, I wondered what the potential might be for the process over the course of the internship itself. The intern teachers' lived experiences captured through *Currere*, and the resulting ideas and insights came together like tributaries to a larger stream of thinking as I turned toward my phenomenon of study to form the question:

**What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?**

I wanted to learn about the ways that *Currere*, as an ongoing, in-depth process throughout the internship, might become an essential and elemental part of the being of these intern teachers and how curriculum might show itself from these experiences. As interns step into the unfamiliar waters of this year-long internship determined to brave the unknown and dwell in uncertainty, I remember the clear calling to study the possibilities for *Currere* as a guide for their journey.

**Unpacking the Meaning of Curriculum**

Knowing and dwelling can be two quite different things. Knowing is an intellectual beginning of the journey, and dwelling is finding a home and a sense of peace in what is known. The river of lived curriculum flows whether it is known or not. I

learned through developing my practice that, while I must know and observe this river, I must also dwell within it by gently guiding my course from time to time. I discovered themes along my journey that have become the stars I steer by as I choose to enter into the conversations that arise from asking my phenomenological question. Almost immediately after my *Currere* experience, I began to seek a way to appropriate what I had learned. It did not take long for me to realize the great potential of *Currere* as part of teacher preparation, particularly in helping interns set a purpose for the internship and broaden their understanding of curriculum. I began meeting with interns prior to the start of their MAT program, explaining the *Currere* process and purpose, and assigning each to complete a *Currere* project of their own prior to the start of the MAT program.

As I experience turning toward my phenomenological question, I first want to illustrate my understanding of lived experience in the context of five elemental components that have revealed themselves to me. I have considered these core elements as guiding aspects of lived experience since the beginning of my journey to discover the lived curriculum of the internship experience through phenomenology. These elements are not frameworks to be imposed; rather, they have served to help me recognize what I have experienced as I immerse myself and my students in this space of lived curriculum. I am drawn to the phenomenological lifeworld existentials: lived body, lived space, lived time, and lived other (van Manen, 1997) that are found in these notions: moments, in-between spaces, flow, abundance, and resilience. As I define and describe these elemental ideas in terms of my research, I illustrate each using interns' pre-MAT *Currere* process excerpts from years past. The voices of Gabriella, Whitney, Stephen, Julie, Mike, Sabryna, and Mia continue to resonate.

## Momentous Moments

What is a moment? Is it the end of the past, the beginning of the present, its own entity? I suggest that the moment is the space that contains all the lived experiences of the past and all the possibilities of the future. The moment is the space of becoming based on knowing/living, and, therefore, the space between past and present where the twain overlap. It is its own eternity because of the infinite possibilities contained within it; therefore, a moment cannot exist as a static unit of time. I conceive of the moment as an opportunity to explore the space between experiencing and meaning-making; the river of moments carries us along as it flows with a sense of purpose and destiny. Gabriella's remembered moment is surprisingly specific, and that single moment permanently changed her view of art:

Ms. P. was a most disagreeable and generally grumpy person. Art class was fun, until she came over and told students her honest opinion of their artwork. Once we had to make mythical creatures and I chose a unicorn for my assignment. Ms. P. got angry with me because I painted one leg pink and one leg purple—she told me they were supposed to be one color. She made me feel that I had misunderstood directions and that my “unicorn” was not truly a unicorn. (Gabriella, Regression, 2014)

Of course, there is no such thing as a unicorn, much less a “true” one. This passage is especially moving because the teacher used a fleeting moment to criticize imagination, a moment the teacher has certainly forgotten. But, in a subsequent section of her *Currere*, Gabriella shared that she has never liked creating art since that moment, a moment she has never forgotten.

A moment can also be considered more broadly as a school year as part of one's teaching career. Whitney takes the long view:

Every year will mark new lessons learned, new ideas sparked, new mistakes made, new relationships formed, but hopefully an ever-constant determination to

give all my students my best efforts and maybe even evoke the same from them. (Whitney, Synthesis, 2014)

These moments in the temporal and philosophical sense create the transitional spaces from one time to the next and one level of understanding to the next. It was in this space that more questions arose: What moments arise for an intern teacher and what meaning can be discovered in what comes forth? What can be found in the moments that surface through *Currere*? How is pedagogy altered from the recognition of moments as the source of lived experience where growth can occur and wholeness can develop?

### **The Space In-between**

A dry trench dug into the ground is no more a river than is undirected water. What happens in-between is what makes the river come into presence. Humans dwell in-between one moment and the next. Aoki (2005) describes a Zone of Between in which teachers dwell between curriculum-as-plan (policy and accountability) and curriculum-as-lived with their specific students. This became a foundational idea as I researched the lived curriculum of the teaching internship.

I conceive of the in-between as that space and time that is recognized to be one of transition, whether it be physical or even the space between a first impression and a lasting one, as Stephen notes:

When I was in social studies classes, many of my teachers only seemed to be trying to cover the information, instead of explaining why it is important, or really getting into how interesting studying the social sciences can be. When I did finally have a teacher in 11th grade who actually introduced us to what studying history really was behind memorizing names and dates, I found my love for the subject. (Stephen, Analysis, 2011)

Over time, I have discovered that while the in-between can often be an uncomfortable space, it need not be feared. I have learned to lean into the challenges and

receive the wisdom to which they lead. Since I perceive my experience through language and develop my perceptions through writing, phenomenology frees me to delve into the language of human experience, including those lived in the in-between spaces. I have learned that language is the ultimate in-between space as a conduit for sharing meaning.

It is through the language of *Currere* that I asked each of my graduate MAT intern teachers to explore the in-between spaces of experiences with school and schooling, the development of the desire to become an educator, and ideas about the future self as a teacher. Framing the in-between as an opportunity rather than a barrier allowed me to guide my intern teachers better as they navigated their own personal challenges on their very individual journeys to become teachers. Whitney experiences another insight:

With all of this information put down in front of me and thoughtfully analyzed, I hope that I can make more conscious decisions as an educator. I think this project will provide me with the tools I need to recognize when my ambitions are simply too much and to prevent my students from feeling overwhelmed by the world around them, especially the classroom I will have created for them. I hope that a better understanding of my past experiences with education will make it much easier for me to understand where I am going in the world of education and who I want to be when I get there. (Whitney, Analysis & Synthesis, 2014)

The awareness of moments and the transitions in-between them develop the perception of lived experience over time. One can recognize moments of challenge as transient learning opportunities, and moments of smooth sailing as a gift, and dwell deeply and fearlessly within them. New questions occurred to me: What can intern teachers gain from recognizing the in-between nature of the transitions from one lived experience to the next? Does *Currere* provide intern teachers a stronger foundation from which to make meaning of the constantly changing lived experience throughout the internship? I began to appreciate the complexity in my seemingly simple research



questions: What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?

### **Flow: The Phenomenon of Curriculum-as-Lived-Experience**

As the classroom internship alternated with campus coursework experiences for the intern teachers, I became more mindful of the flow of lived curriculum as I guided them, but I also wondered how to make this flow explicit for them. My synthesis of all I had come to understand about curriculum is that once it is set in motion, it *creates itself*. Human beings inhabiting a classroom space together generate experiences that provide the frame for interpretation of meaning. No identical curriculum can possibly exist. Curriculum is always an individual creation, and the results for each teacher and student will always be unique. However, there can be a shared experience of *flow* through lived curriculum that Csikszentmihalyi (1990) characterizes as complete immersion in the details of life. Julie imagines her future in a way that captures the feeling of *flow*:

I want to make students' learning experiences meaningful so that one day, a future teacher might be writing about me in her *Currere* paper. This desire for meaningful engagement goes along with my constant need to be prepared. In order for students to have this type of engagement, I need to be prepared in my teaching so they have the opportunities to make connections. On the other hand, I also need to let some things just happen so that students can make their own meaning out of the class. In order to do so, I need to practice finding the proper amount of scaffolding to support both individual discovery and facilitate engagement. (Julie, Synthesis, 2013)

*Flow* can be created, but it can also arise spontaneously. In either case, the feeling of *flow* arises in the classroom most often when teachers are passionate about their teaching as a contribution to the successful lives of their well-prepared students. When *flow* is recognized as the opportunity for engagement that comes from relevance and leads to re-membering, the classroom can become a place where potential is consistently

and abundantly recognized and nurtured. As my thoughts on my research question expanded, I developed wonder about how *Currere* might bring forth an intern teacher's awareness of times of *flow*. I became curious about the impact on her developing pedagogy and relationships with students.

### **The Abundance of Curriculum-as-Lived-Experience**

One of the most inspiring ideas I have discovered about curriculum in all of its possibilities are found in Jardine, Friesen, and Clifford's *Curriculum in Abundance* (1997). In his Preface, Jardine asserts that "in a classroom where curriculum is understood and practiced in abundance, even "ordinary" is better than it was, because at least all the students get to live in the presence of work being done that is beyond the scarce pale of schooling" (p. xxv). Discussing and exploring curriculum in all these aspects and layers shows interns that they are active participants in the creation of curriculum rather than passive receivers of curriculum from a binder or a computer screen. Curriculum, known and dwelled within from this perspective, offers an opportunity to move from curriculum-as-gatekeeper and curriculum-as-cage to a way of being in a classroom that renounces the miserly tidbit delivery method of learning. Rather, an abundant curriculum opens the world up to students and teachers alike as a grand and satisfying adventure. In *Curriculum of Abundance*, the authors note:

Students (and teachers) must gradually learn how to experience the abundance of things. Experiencing the abundance of things must be cultivated, and this process is often long and hard and full of its own dangers. Abundance, we suggest, is a practice that not only takes abundant time, but takes living and working in a classroom context that exemplifies and embodies such abundance. (Jardine, Friesen, & Clifford, 1997, p. 10)

My turning to this phenomenon of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum continued to generate an abundance of questions, including: What does

*Currere* bring forth that opens the intern teacher to the notion of an abundant curriculum?

Can *Currere* fundamentally change the quality and practice of lived experience in the classroom?

Abundance in children's academic lives begins with a teacher who values curiosity over regimentation, and enthusiasm over control, as Mike describes:

One of my crowning achievements was instituting a new strategy I had begun developing in my master's program. Primary source documents became a staple in my classroom and the textbooks were left under the desk as long as possible. I managed to focus my educational practices on primary sources and critical analysis of the information. Students learned to look at information, understand bias, and formulate their own opinions on historical time periods with minimal guidance from a text book.

The primary source-driven education led to more [integration] among the subjects. English, math, science, and foreign languages saw the benefits of primary sources and utilized them in their classrooms. The disciplines were also able to work together and helped further learning about both subjects through the use of primary sources. (Mike, Progression, 2012)

An abundant classroom can occur even when the teacher does not name it as such.

Sabryna observes:

For me it is helpful to have a mission that forms my focus. It's not set in stone, because it will develop as I learn and understand more. However, the basic tiers won't change: Genuine Relationships, Personal Investment, Determination, and Creativity. These tiers will, ideally, develop and strengthen the others throughout the year for each class. Every year will mark new lessons learned, new ideas sparked, new mistakes made, new relationships formed, but hopefully an ever-constant determination to give all my students my best efforts and maybe even evoke the same from them. (Sabryna, Synthesis, 2015)

Sabryna's words made me acutely aware of this question, the answer to which may never be known for certain: How close do some teachers come to achieving an abundant classroom but lack the understanding of curriculum to get there? I thought about the potential of *Currere* to contribute insights to teachers' understanding of curriculum and

its potential — might *Currere* reveal meaning to intern teachers that connects teaching practice to a lived curriculum of abundance?

### **The Role of Resilience**

Resilience and confidence can be gained from facing and overcoming challenges. Being ill-equipped to navigate challenges reduces resilience and confidence; I believe this loss is a major contributor to a teacher's departure from the profession. In my experience, resilience is more likely to develop when one has a model support system for developing an internal locus of control and a sense of self-efficacy. This is true for students and teachers alike. When teachers become explicitly aware of the importance of modeling resilience, it can benefit them as much as it does their students.

Resilient people ultimately thrive after experiencing debilitating circumstances and tragic events, but resilience also lives in those smaller moments that, upon reflection, do not seem so small sometimes. My former intern teachers are among the bravest people I have ever known. They faced down their insecurities and their anxieties in order to learn the craft of teaching. I am brought back to a memory from my first year as Director of Student Teaching when one of my interns, Samantha, scheduled a meeting with me to discuss a personal concern.

Samantha was a diminutive young woman in her early twenties. She wanted to talk to me before going into her first teaching internship which was coming up in just a few days. Samantha explained that when she became nervous, her neck developed bright red splotches and she felt that this would destroy her credibility with her new students before she even opened her mouth. She told me she was also afraid because she knew she would be so much smaller physically than most of her high school students. Her friends

and parents had given her advice on how to control her nerves: breathing, meditating, visualizing confidence, but none of these sounded “real,” so she wanted to know what ideas I might have.

As a professional who had faced and conquered difficult situations many times before, I knew that time would also take care of Samantha’s nerves. So, I simply suggested that she wear scarves, at least for the first days or weeks. I explained that this professional accessory would cover any redness but would also make her look older and more professional. Samantha’s sudden smile of relief made her look young indeed, but there was a new light of confidence in her eyes. Julie also understood shyness as her major challenge as she entered the MAT program:

My shyness has not limited me from wanting to become a teacher, but it could have an effect on the classroom that I run. I want to make a conscious effort to develop structure in my classroom that will help me become more confident in my abilities to run a classroom. I feel that my biggest fear of being a teacher is that I will not be prepared. Sometimes that fear alone can cause me to stumble. Thus, I need to plan, prepare, and trust that I have a firm base to teach from at any given time. I need to sometimes just trust my abilities. (Julie, Synthesis, 2013)

More questions surface as I ponder the intern teachers’ challenges: How many intern teachers become discouraged by any one of a myriad of difficulties they face and give up? Can *Currere* lead to a greater sense of resilience? Does *Currere* engender a stronger sense of mission and determination?

Gabriella remembers an early opportunity for developing resilience in high school:

Pre-calculus with Mr. Harris in high school was bearable because Mr. Harris knew my older brother and liked him, so he decided on the first day of class to like me. I liked that he made jokes while going slowly through class material. The worst activity was when he put us onto teams and we raced to show our work on the chalk board at the front of the room.

I remember going up against a male student, which was common as the class was predominately male. The guys on Jack's team kept asking me, "What's your boyfriend's name again, Gabby?" to distract me while I was trying to concentrate. I had to be a good sport, and act in-sensitive. Mr. Harris didn't tolerate sensitivity as it was confused with poor sportsmanship. One false move could have made me the target of a lot of humor, especially if Mr. Harris teased me in front of the class. (Gabriella, 2014, Regression)

This powerful memory, brought forth from Gabriella's subconscious into her present by the *Currere* Regression, shaped Gabriella's *Currere* experience. Through *Currere*, Gabriella developed meaning and context for an understanding of lived curriculum. The remaining stages of her *Currere* process led to her insights that resilience and sensitivity are not unrelated. Mia's *Currere* process helped her look ahead and visualize her need to develop her resilience through maintaining her personal commitment to teaching and also reaching out to collaborate with other teachers:

The first few years of teaching are incredibly difficult. I do not have a foundation of lesson plans to fall back on, and the fear of failure is always there. I have a room full of students, who I am responsible for; I don't want to let them down. I am struggling a lot with the fear of failure, but I know hard work and dedication will get me through it. I am thankful that the other teachers in my school are supportive and willing to collaborate with me on lesson plans and ideas. (Mia, Progression, 2014)

My experiences with intern teachers' *Currere* process projects revealed to me that anxiety and fears are assumed aspects of the teaching internship and first years of teaching. I wonder if *Currere* has a role in leading intern teachers to greater resilience and confidence.

Another aspect of resilience was revealed when Whitney made this direct connection between her past difficulties and her development of empathy with her students:

I hope that the few negative experiences I have had as a student will also serve as a constant reminder to me to be gentle and thoughtful around my students. (Whitney, Synthesis, 2014)

I was called by these experiences to ask: In what ways can *Currere* lead intern teachers to become aware that, just as they have developed resilience from difficulty, so too, must their students have challenges in order to grow and develop? Can *Currere* provide a guide for intern teachers to develop fair practices and high levels of expectation as classroom leaders? How does resilience play a role in intern teachers' understanding and development of lived curriculum?

Over the years of my teaching practice, I learned that wisdom and strength can develop as a result of difficult times if one refuses to be defeated. My pedagogy has developed more depth and has become more refined from all I have learned from challenges. Although I do not pretend to understand the struggles of others fully, I have a clear understanding of the struggle itself, and I use the understanding I have developed in the service of my students. Stephen sums this up:

I also hope to influence the other teachers to keep things fresh, and always be focused on the student, and what works for them, not the lesson and what has worked in the past. (2011, Progression)

I have never learned much from a place of comfort; I have grown from the painful experiences in my life-travels that have challenged my existing beliefs and behaviors and have shaped me on this journey of becoming. At the same time, opportunities and moments of joy have also flowed almost effortlessly toward me. I have learned to catch these currents, let go, and allow them to transport me around the next bend in the stream. In my work preparing teachers, I want to preserve the beneficial struggle that develops courage and confidence, but I also want to provide the kind of support that will help them

avoid burnout and remain in the profession. Toward that end, I turn my attention to the things themselves by asking: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?**

### **The Turn to Phenomenology and to the Things Themselves**

I am deeply drawn toward understanding the complexity inherent in the lived curriculum of teaching, especially for intern teachers. Hermeneutic phenomenology offers a means by which I can engage with intern teachers' understanding of lived curriculum in a way that honors pedagogy as a uniquely human endeavor. The majority of cognitive science research treats humans as information processors that are simply responding to stimuli, but phenomenology focuses on human presence in relation to the phenomenon—what Heidegger refers to as “being-in-the-world” (1962, p. 65).

Phenomenology seeks to understand human experience in a profound and authentic way beyond rationalism (reality as based on logic) and empiricism (reality as statistical representation) “because they fail to account for the world as experienced by the human being. More specifically, both rationalism and empiricism fail to depict thought as it occurs in lived or “inner” time (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 405).

I realized early on that, as a phenomenologist, my relationship to the phenomenon and the participants in my study would be one of attentive care. Just as lived curriculum will always be a unique individual creation, phenomenology aims to remove all presuppositions and pre-constructed parameters in order to allow the phenomenon to emerge as it is lived and as it reveals itself through writing and conversation. Through hermeneutic phenomenology and the act of deeply interpreting a phenomenon to render the meaning of an experience, I turned my focus and quiet attention to the phenomenon



and allowed it the space and time to come into being as it is.

### ***Currere's Connection with Phenomenology***

My personal experiences with the *Currere* process and witnessing its profound impact on my intern teachers year after year prompted me to marry the *Currere* process with the *methodless method* of phenomenology (Gadamer, 1975). The *Currere* process became an integral aspect of the phenomenon of study because the structure of the process is as open-ended and welcoming of lived experience as the lifeworld existentials of phenomenology; *Currere* actually enhances the phenomenological perspective. The *Currere* process extends beyond traditional curriculum understanding and expands into a fuller and richer understanding of lived curriculum. Phenomenology pairs well with its emphasis on lived experience and van Manen's six phenomenological research activities as elements of the hermeneutic phenomenological process:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
  2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
  3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
  4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
  5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
  6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.
- (1997, pp. 30-31)

### **Opening to Curriculum as Lived Experience**

After I began my study of phenomenology, but before I began using *Currere* with my intern teachers at the beginning of the MAT program, I completed an assignment in which I conversed individually with Connie and Catherine, two graduates from the MAT program, over several weeks, about the connections between their preparation as intern teachers and the realities of their first years as teachers. What I learned from these two young women, combined with the insights I gained from my own *Currere* process, led

me to the idea of launching the MAT program using the *Currere* process to provide a foundation for interns as they began the MAT program.

In addition to the ongoing influence these conversations have had on my practice in the MAT program, the experiences each shared with me serve as authentic examples of van Manen's phenomenological constructs of the lifeworld existentials: lived space, lived time, lived body, and lived other (1997). These former interns' experiences as brand-new teachers after completing their MAT also provide a baseline for comparing intern perceptions of the internship experience before and after the *Currere* process was introduced as part of the MAT program.

After graduation, Connie was originally hired as a paraprofessional in a special education inclusion classroom. This position served as Connie's entrée into the school system, and she became a "mid-year" hire for a second-grade teaching position in a small, rural elementary school. Connie considered herself fortunate; however, she bore the added stress of being the replacement for a much-loved teacher.

Catherine (Cat) was 21-years-old when she began her first year in the fall of 2011 teaching eleventh grade English in a large suburban high school. During Cat's prior MAT internship experiences, I served as her college supervisor and helped nurture this reserved young woman's self-confidence and classroom presence.

I spoke with Connie and Cat on separate occasions and listened carefully to their responses. Van Manen reminds us to recognize and honor silence. He speaks of the *epistemological silence* that occurs when thoughts cannot initially find the words (p. 113). From these conversations, and the silences in-between the words, themes emerged that, although represented differently in each experience, revealed shared bonds among

their lived experiences as first year teachers. I found that each has felt the constant tug of examining her very competence throughout that first year based on feedback from within and from without. I also learned that Connie and Cat share a constant focus on their evolving and ongoing relationships with students, partly as a reaction after the surprise of seeing themselves through the eyes of others in a way they had never before experienced.

My curiosity about the preparation provided by our MAT program and my presence with the words of Connie and Cat inspired me to begin using *Currere* with intern teachers. Connie and Cat's candid insights have been pivotal companions in my turning to the phenomenon: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?**

### **The Lifeworld Existentials**

As I travelled forward in my exploration of using *Currere* to make meaning from lived curriculum, I referred again and again to the critical phenomenological elements that allowed me to dwell in, and render, my phenomenon of study. I offer anecdotes from Connie and Cat below to open up the ways in which the lifeworld existentials (van Manen, 1997) can be examined in turn, yet also flow together and become manifest in rounded, authentic experiences.

**Lived space.** Lived space (spatiality) is not always physical space. It can also be perceived space, such as how one experiences "home" or the "classroom" (1997). Connie's school is in a small, rural community and has an "open door" policy. Connie has been accosted in her classroom teaching space by both a parent volunteer and even another teacher in the school who has a grandchild in Connie's class. They entered

uninvited to question Connie's teaching methods as compared to the departed teacher's ways of doing things. Connie recalls:

And then [the parent volunteer] said, "I don't think that you understand what they are capable of. We're doing a three-digit subtraction at home and teaching her how to carry and borrow." She doesn't think that I realize what they are capable of. And all because I'm not teaching the standard algorithm in 2nd grade. In 2nd grade you don't teach the standard algorithm, you introduce it at the very end of the year but you don't teach the standard algorithm in 2nd grade and she wanted to know why aren't you doing  $354$  minus  $267$ ? And I said, "We are, but we're drawing a model. We're using manipulatives. The language isn't that you carry and borrow— mathematicians don't carry and borrow anything; we regroup. I asked her, if she's going to teach the standard algorithm at home, that she please use the correct language of regrouping. And that didn't go over so well. [Connie laughs.] She just kept saying over and over again, "I don't think you know what they are capable of. I don't think that you're challenging them."

Connie felt exposed in her school and experienced trepidation each time she ventured down the hall during her planning period. Although she did not want to dwell on it, Connie felt that there was likely some discussion of her teaching behind her back in a space where she was initially made to feel unwelcome. My experience talking with Connie led me to ask: Does dwelling in a space as a perceived intruder affect the lived classroom curriculum? Can *Currere* instill a greater sense of confidence and resilience to support those in non-traditional teaching situations?

Cat was petite, attractive, and had a reserved demeanor. She was also brilliant, passionate and funny, but she explained that these qualities appeared more vividly once she became comfortable in her surroundings. I saw her simply blossom as an intern teacher once she developed her confidence and relationship with her mentor, but I knew she would be on her own once again when she was hired. Cat remembers her first impression of her new teaching space:

I remember when I heard that I would have my own classroom. I was excited, and then I saw it – and they kind of took me down into the basement and I later on

found out that it used to be a bomb shelter. It's a little bit dank in the basement—it's a little bit darker than some of the other rooms and it's usually really humid and moist down there. And so, I come into this room, and I'm thinking of myself, okay, how I'm going to make this my own? How am I going to work with this?

The space in which curriculum develops has an important role: not just the physical walls, chairs and décor, but also in the sense of the space as safe or threatening, comfortable, or tense. As I wrote my way in to interpret intern teachers' use of *Currere* to understand the lived experience of the internship, the inhabited space of the classroom surfaced again and again. As descriptions of lived space have made their way to the page, I have “unlocked a door to daydreaming” (Bachelard, 1994, p. 14) through which the reader connects to his own past memories of space and being in or out of place in it. Bachelard's words inspired wonder in me regarding whether an understanding of lived curriculum could transform the lived space of the classroom from feeling as if it is “anywhere in space” to an experience of “being somewhere in place...to be dwelling places where building and cultivating combine” (Casey, 2009, p. 178).

**Lived time.** Time runs out; time marches on; time and tide wait for no one. These concepts of time as a relentless countdown are prevalent, but the phenomenological lifeworld existential *lived time* is explored from the subjective perspective rather than as chronology (van Manen, 1997). Connie and Cat counted down weeks of courses and internship assignments during their MAT teacher preparation program. There were deadlines and calendars in abundance. Once in their first years of teaching, Connie and Cat both expressed time as an endless series of stressful challenges. They literally could not imagine an end to it. According to Connie:

I think they [other first year teachers] are frustrated and they feel, you know, first-year teachers, feel sometimes like, just thrown to the wolves. It's baptism by fire. You have to find your way. And it is kind of like this rite of passage where, you

know, we have all these amazing resources and the Internet. So a seasoned teacher might say, “Well that's just first-year teaching. That's just how it is. Everybody makes mistakes, everybody puts a kid on the wrong bus, everybody cries, everybody totally bombs the lesson, everybody yells at the kid when they shouldn't have. That's just how it is.”

The temporal aspects of past, present, and future form the flow of life and one's perception of it. The past etches the individual with memories and behaviors that may not even be consciously performed but are rather influenced by forgotten experiences (van Manen, 1997). The past becomes redefined as life flows onward; what was once a stressful MAT program in the past can quickly become reimagined as “the good old days” as the first year of teaching erodes physical and emotional resources. Teachers who were as distressed as Connie and Cat during their first year of teaching begin to conceive of that time as a rite of passage and recount the stresses as necessary to earn that survival badge of honor.

**Lived body.** Lived body (corporeality) is that aspect of human experience, which recognizes that each human being has a physical presence in the world that shapes his or her perceptions. Further, the gaze (notice) of others, as well as the nature of the interactions that occur, can alter an individual's corporeal experience (van Manen, 1997).

Connie took over at the mid-year point from a beloved teacher, Ms. G., who left her class and teaching position due to family concerns. Connie was thrilled to have the job. Her years of professional experience gave her the confidence to tackle the challenge. She saw herself as a mature adult with a master's degree and experience as a paraprofessional who looked the part of an accomplished teacher. She remembers feeling proud to be seen this way during her interview. Connie explains that her comparison to the departed teacher was integral to her selection for the position:

It was a lot of pressure. In the hiring process there was the principal, an IRT [instructional resource teacher], the other second-grade teacher with whom I would potentially work—she was there—the actual teacher was there, several other teachers were there, and I think that they all decided on me—to choose me—partly because Ms. G. and I are very similar in tone and pedagogy. I mean, we actually kind of look alike too. [Laughter]. We are about the same height, we have dark hair, dark eyes, you know, short hair, we have a similar sense of humor. We are very similar people. And I think that was part of it.

After this explanation, Connie paused and looked at me. A quizzical look crossed her face. Did she suddenly realize that she had been chosen to “be” Ms. G., even down to physical appearance; that those who hired her had found a close replica of the teacher they lost? Connie experienced the sudden realization that she had just agreed to play the role of someone else, which forced her to view her practice in terms of living up to an impossible standard while still crafting her own vision of herself.

Catherine was under the lens as well. At 21, she knew she was young. Indeed, she was only four or five years older than the students she was teaching. She did not wear makeup. Her hair was worn as a simple ponytail and she usually wore a simple dress with a sweater and ballet flats. She was keenly aware that she looked even younger than most of the students did. Cat remembered how she was viewed on her first day by administration:

When they first showed me the classroom my VP gave me the key and everything and it was kind of one of those okay we trust you to be professional that's what they said—we trust you to be professional. We understand that you went to school and you're ready. I'm sure for an experienced teacher it would be awesome to have that kind of, like, independent experience, but for me, I'm like, I don't know anyone here, I don't know anyone's first names, I'm still learning where my room is and where the main rooms are—that type of thing. Now I'm at the point where I know that the administration will back me up which before I was always freaking out, like, I would get so sweaty when my administrators would walk through [my classroom]. And now I realize they're not always there to watch me – sometimes they're there to see the kids or just for a walk through the building. So part of it was learning that my superiors aren't there to criticize me.

Merleau-Ponty observes, “To say that my body is always near to me or always there for me is to say that it is never truly in front of me, that I cannot spread it out under my gaze, that it remains on the margins of all my perceptions, and that it is with me” (2014, p. 93). I remember the feeling of being almost disembodied as I tried in vain to see myself through the eyes of my fourth-grade internship students. No movements felt natural for a long time, and a passing teacher or administrator made me want to curl into a ball of insecurity. What did they see? What were they thinking about me? Peggy Ann Howard (in van Manen, 2005), an experienced classroom teacher, elaborates by describing her objectification due to measurement under the scrutiny of a teacher supervisor. She notes that when she can relax in her body, flow is effortless, but when her body becomes the object of a gaze meant to judge and measure performance, the perception in the body is of one splitting to become its own other. If that is the bodily experience of a seasoned teacher, the experience must be even more intense for an intern teacher operating in a professional role, under daily scrutiny from a mentor teacher, while dealing with the insecurity that accompanies inexperience. The role of the body as vehicle and object must be a critical factor in the creation of lived curriculum.

**Lived other.** Through the lived experience with others (relationality) individuals gradually transcend corporeality to develop a new meaning for each relationship. This can take many forms, such as a sense of connection, antipathy, or shared purpose. In their iconic guide for new teachers, *The First Days of School*, Harry and Rosemary Wong begin with this direct statement:

The first days of school can make or break you. Based on what a teacher does or does not do, a teacher will either have or not have an effective classroom for the rest of the year. What happens on the first days of school will be an accurate indicator of your success for the rest of the school year. (1998, p. 3)



This is very different from the “frightening conclusion” of which Ginott speaks and is a very daunting thought indeed. This very idea itself, so widely circulated and firmly implanted in new teachers’ minds can create a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Connie verifies the Wongs’ claim:

I felt like I was going to put them on the wrong bus; I wasn't going to know where to go during a fire drill. I wasn't sure. I had all these questions: Am I teaching effectively? Am I explaining things in a way that they understand? Am I correcting behavior when it's appropriate? Am I being too easy on them? Am I being too hard on them? Am I calling on everybody fairly? Am I being fair? So, I think that those are all concerns you know not just am I teaching them but everything else. Am I remembering to do the weekly audit report for the attendance? Am I remembering to send everything home that I'm supposed to? Am I grading everything fairly? You know what I mean?

Connie noted that she was constantly analyzing her professional behavior, trying to see herself as others saw her and trying to be the teacher she envisioned based on her expectations for herself.

Cat vividly remembers overhearing a student conversation toward the beginning of her first year that defined her lived relationship with her students at that time:

A lot of them [students] said that in the beginning of the year I was too nice. And I was too much of a pushover. [Students said] “She’s just too nice she needs to grow a backbone.” And that's when I was just like flipped. I took that Friday off because I couldn't—I was so upset—that I couldn't come back the next day. It was immediately after school standing outside my classroom. I don't remember what I shouted—it was one of those flashes of rage kind of things—and I said I have a backbone or something to that effect.

My nose started bleeding, too, which was great. And my department chair gave me a tissue and took me to my room saying, “We will get you cleaned up. I don't want to see you hyperventilate.” I was getting really red. I was crying—I was upset—it's almost funny to think of it now because of how ridiculous I must've looked, but at the time I was really upset and you know you could see there was like blood dripping on the ground like a crime scene. I was so pitiful.

Connie finally felt the pressure of “being” Ms. G. boil over one day in the computer lab as she worked with her class to take a computer-based county assessment.

Unknown to Connie at the time, her account information had not yet been loaded into the county database, so the students could not log on:

And somebody said—one of the students said, “I wish Ms. G. were here—she would know what to do—she always knew what to do.” And I said, “Everybody close out your computers, we’re going back to the classroom.”

I was so annoyed that someone would say that—that's so rude and so disrespectful. Also, they're always talking about her. I mean, it feels like a punch in the stomach because you're giving your all and someone says I just wish Ms. G. were here—she would know what to do. And that's very disheartening. It just makes me feel—I have a lot of self-esteem—but it makes me feel like I'm doing something wrong on some level. I know that they're seven-years-old and, if I left, they would say, “I miss Ms. Cardwell, I wish that she was here.” I know that. I know that they love me. But I also really look forward to next year when it will just be my classroom.

When Connie and Cat were intern teachers, their relationships with students were strong, but not as personal and deep as when each became the teacher of record. These conversations with Connie and Cat were part of what influenced me to consider what the *Currere* process might offer to intern teachers in terms of navigating the increased intensity of relationships that often accompany increased responsibility after the MAT program has run its course.

### **Must “New Teacher” Exist in the Context of Mere Survival?**

The prevailing winds in education culture place an emphasis on providing mentoring and support for novice teachers. However, an enduring part of the culture of American education has been the assumption that new teachers must inevitably struggle through their first years essentially on their own (Reynard, 2003). *Struggle* most likely derives from the German *straucheln* “to stumble” (Harper, 2017). Do experienced teachers somehow feel that this trial by fire is necessary? According to Renard:

The seasoned veterans of the classroom will tell you horror stories about how overwhelming and awful their first years were. They will tell you about getting the worst teaching assignments, the worst students, and the worst classrooms and

supplies. They will tell you about teaching from a cart with no classrooms of their own; being given the unwanted duties; and being expected to cheerfully put up with the situation because they were the lowest on the totem pole. (2003, p. 63)

Schools generally have a very specific teacher hierarchy, though teacher educators may not want to acknowledge it out of fear of discouraging or frightening interns. Seasoned teachers may believe that surviving initial difficulties made them stronger; they often feel that it is necessary that new teachers face the same experience. “They [veteran teachers] may view surviving the first few years of teaching as a badge of honor” (p. 64). Even after field experiences and a lengthy internship through a teacher preparation program, brand-new teachers have no experience leading a classroom completely on their own, have very little ongoing support, and have no job security until they are tenured. If teacher preparation programs are to be most effective at, as the saying goes, “making all other professions possible,” it is important to empower intern teachers by giving them opportunities to discover and better understand the lived curriculum of the internship experience.

*Currere* allows one to gather an abundance of lived experiences together and also project into an imagined future in a stream-of-consciousness manner without filtering for positives or negatives or concern with chronology. *Currere*, then, offers the opportunity for a thematic reduction of this remembered and imagined lived curriculum and a way to use the information to lead to a more positive outcome as one moves through the transition from intern to teacher. I am actively seeking insight into how the *Currere* process and the resulting writings and conversations can make meaning of experiences and bring forth insights to support intern teachers’ understanding of lived curriculum throughout the internship experience.

### Writing and Rewriting: Twin Oars

The act of writing has always been an act of letting language speak through my perceptions and responses. I admit I consistently struggle to begin writing. It is not because I do not want to write. It is not entirely that I am a procrastinator either. It is because I know I am not ultimately in control. The words land on the page and say “yes” or “no” as to whether I have properly captured their intended meaning. Most of the time, the immediate answer is “no.” I try again and again, changing a word here, deleting extraneous words there until the ideas are as alive as I can make them.

I come to my keyboard with an idea of what I want to say, and then I realize that the words that have made it to the page are only partially mine. As the letters, words, and sentences unfurl in rivulets from left to right, what takes shape is usually only remotely what I had imagined at the start. The act of committing to write is like taking a boat down an unknown river for the first time. I have listened to those who have navigated this river before me, and I can see a short distance ahead as I travel, but I do not truly know the destination until the keystrokes take me there. I know I have written something meaningful when I sit back, read the words over which I have labored, and find myself lost in wonder at where exactly they have come from. It is through writing and rewriting that I discover my source and my current. The stops, false starts, and moments of frustration ultimately lead to the words that get as close as I can to an authentic expression of meaning.

Language has been the medium as I explored the phenomenological question:

**What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** Gadamer expresses my task this way: “Experience of itself seeks and finds

words that express it. We seek the right word—i.e., the word that really belongs to the thing—so that in it the thing comes into language” (1975, p. 417).

Heidegger takes a different approach and suggests that language will come to us if we leave the speaking to it. He writes, “Language is language—how is that supposed to get us anywhere? But we do not want to get anywhere. We would like only, for once, to get to just where we are already” (Heidegger, 2013, p. 188). As I set embarked on my journey on this phenomenological river that has no beginning or end, I attended to these words from Gadamer and Heidegger. But I knew that even the words of the great philosophers could not fully express my desire to write and rewrite my way in to the phenomenon so that the language that revealed it would become apparent.

I watched the river flow as it carried me along, and I was struck by wonder. I knew this river had brought me to a place and time from a past that shaped its width, depth, and the meandering course it took. I imagined the future of this flowing water and visualized it wending its way through green hills, and rapidly dancing over rocks. Here I was, a witness to the river’s existence in-between its past and future. My experience of this place, and the language of my thoughts in those moments made it so.

### **The Paradox of Language**

I attempted to use language as I wrote these pages to convey the essences of meaning as I perceived it. As I struggled to select the right words, phrases, and images, I was also aware that I was attempting to control the very thing that controls me. Language as vessel keeps me out of direct contact with the essential ideas that I attempt to reveal, yet it also allows me to move along the river of thought, ideas, and keeps the hope for potential of shared meaning alive and afloat. In “The Way to Language” from *Basic*

*Writings* (Heidegger, 1993d), Heidegger describes the paradox that is given through language:

We human beings, in order to be who we are, remain within the essence of language to which we have been granted entry. We can therefore never step outside it in order to look it over circumspectly from some alternative position. Because of this, we catch a glimpse of the essence of language only to the extent that we ourselves are envisaged by it, remanded to it. (p. 423)

Heidegger speaks of *dwelling* as being at or brought to peace and also of *dwelling* as the way each of us is manifest on Earth in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” also from *Basic Writings* (1993b). He explains that language is that which tells of the essence of a thing as long as we acknowledge that language has its own essence. Heidegger observes, “Man acts as though *he* were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man. Perhaps it is before all else man’s subversion of this relation of dominance that drives his essential being into alienation” (p. 348).

### **Maintaining a Pedagogical Relation to the Phenomenon**

My conversational purpose in this phenomenological research was not to impose my perceptions on the intern teachers with whom I conversed, yet it was my experience that turned me toward the phenomenon of intern teachers interpreting the internship using *Currere* as a method for meaning-making in understanding curriculum. I heeded the advice of van Manen (1997) as I explored my pre-understandings and explicitly identified my biases and assumptions. I remained mindful of these as I also kept a firm hand on the phenomenon as rudder to steer toward un-concealment of what it is like for intern teachers to use *Currere* to understand lived curriculum.

I continue to hold a pedagogical relation toward the phenomenon in that I care for it and want to bring it into language in a way that comes close to possible new truths. I

agree with van Manen (1997) that pedagogy is ineffable because care flows forth in many forms, but that the current of care is what carries the phenomenon with a steadfast and consistent pull. To this orientation toward care as the ineffable essence of pedagogy, I added *phronesis* as an essential element. Gadamer discusses the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* as *moral knowledge* and, as such, closer to human science and hermeneutics than epistemological and theoretical works (1975). Grundy (1987) characterizes *phronesis* as *judgment in practice* that contributes to *the good* and *right action* that she identifies as dispositions that form the basis for hermeneutics. A particularly articulate MAT intern captures this idea:

Role models tie in to Aristotle's theory of morality and virtue. To Aristotle, virtue was determined by the individual's ability to be the best possible example of what they are, be they rulers, peasants, bakers, or any other profession or position. This requires teachers to approach the goals and natures of their students with an attitude of universal positive regard, for it would be equally immoral to make a student a paragon of something they are not as it would be to leave them to wither from lack of encouragement. (Maggie, Analysis, 2014)

My understanding of hermeneutical phenomenology has led me to believe that its successful practice is dependent on a pedagogical orientation. Heidegger describes the basic concept of phenomenology as "to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself" and paraphrases that statement as "To the things themselves!" (1993a, p. 81). For the phenomenon to come into the fullest realization of itself, the phenomenologist must approach it with great care and tact: as a true pedagogue. In this context, *tact* means more than social skill; an individual with *pedagogical tact* as van Manen (1991) characterizes it is able to sense and interpret others' behavior and respond quickly, gracefully, and with a sense of doing good.

As I flowed toward dis-covering what it is like for intern teachers to use *Currere* to understand lived curriculum, I used pedagogical care in the conversations and care in my hermeneutic rendering. I watched the horizon to be sure that I learned about interns' experiences-as-lived while maintaining a steady orientation toward contributing to the good; this was the North Star that held me true to my course.

### **Pedagogical Contributions of the Study**

Preparing teachers is a challenging endeavor, because the skills needed are not one-size-fits-all. A teacher's pedagogical choices depend on the personalities, needs, circumstances, and backgrounds of students as well as the culture of the school and the nature of the community. A teacher can have an experience in one year and feel fully prepared for the next, only to find herself feeling as if she were back at square one when a new class, with an entirely different set of circumstances, occupies the classroom. Teachers need to be prepared for these shifting tides of reality in the classroom. My phenomenological research question: *What is the lived experience of intern teachers using Currere to understand curriculum?* was developed as an opportunity to gain valuable insight into better ways to prepare resilient teachers possessing the self-assurance that comes with a strong foundation of understanding lived curriculum as a critical part of pedagogy.

My former use of *Currere* solely as a beginning assignment made a difference in my interns' conceptualization of themselves as professionals and as pedagogues:

I must take the time to get to know my students and their environment. I have to build the empathy that is so easily lost in the large class sizes and whirling tempos of modern education. I don't doubt that finding the time will be difficult, but it's a task that needs to be completed as much as grading papers and writing lesson plans. Empathy is a classroom necessity. I am only part of the equation in my class. I need my students to choose to be part of the class as well. They need to



know that I respect them as future citizens. I want to give them the class that they deserve, and every student deserves the best I can give them. Every student deserves the inspiration of a role model, the training they need to be a citizen, and the security of a safe place to learn. (Maggie, Synthesis, 2014)

For this dissertation, my study of intern teachers using *Currere* went deeper. I identified five intern teachers with whom I conversed about their lived experiences using the *Currere* process during their internship placement. Each selected intern teacher had completed the original *Currere* process assignment as an introduction to the MAT program before beginning their internship placements. I asked the five selected intern teachers to write and rewrite their experiences as they pertained to their lived experiences during their placements with mentor teachers. I conversed one-on-one with each of them, and we also shared conversations as a group. I used what I gathered from the conversations, as well as the interns' written *Currere* experiences, to render the essentials of their experiences. My expectation from the beginning was to learn how to better prepare intern teachers to dwell more comfortably within their internship experiences. Another goal was to learn how to use the *Currere* process most effectively to nurture the concept of lived curriculum during the internship so that the new understandings will translate into pedagogical practice as the intern teachers graduate take the helms of their own classrooms as teachers of record.

### **Exploring Lived Curriculum: Challenges and Rewards**

I would love to live  
Like a river flows,  
Carried by the surprise  
Of its own unfolding.  
(O'Donohue, 2004, p. 23)

It is both daunting and exhilarating to become part of the river of lived curriculum. I cannot hope to tame or control it fully, nor do I want to, but I can learn to

navigate these waters and dwell in the river that sometimes tumbles furiously and sometimes babbles happily. The river is always changing, always different, yet it also carries a profound sense of permanence. My journey has taken many surprising turns, and around one of these I welcomed the life of a teacher. As I have allowed the wind to fill my sails from many directions—and sometimes toss me about—I have come to know my role as teacher as one who helps to prepare each student’s craft so it is well-supplied and sturdy enough to provide a vehicle and a shelter as each chooses how to experience the journey. This is pedagogy. It is not my role to mandate a destination, insist on a trajectory, or “fix” a child who was never broken. It is my personal charge to nurture and help prepare my students, for whom I care deeply, so they can relish the scenery, but also navigate rough waters on their own.

The moments of struggle between the times of joy are part of what shapes this river. The true pedagogue helps her students to see these moments of challenge in-between times of comfort as opportunities to develop skill, insight, compassion, and resilience. As a teacher of teachers, I worked to prepare my interns to find their flow, work past fears that keep too many on the shore, and embrace challenges as opportunities because challenges will come as certainly as rivers continue to etch the Earth in search of the source. In this study, I have delved more deeply beneath the surface and rendered the intern teacher experience of using *Currere* to understand the lived curriculum of the internship experience. I have gained a great deal of insight to apply in order to help shape teacher preparation program experiences that provide a foundation for teachers to bring resilience, pedagogy, and a strong sense of identity and mission to the teaching profession.

### Mapping Out the Journey

After exploring my turning to the question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** I wanted to expand my understanding of the phenomenon from the perspectives of many voices. In Chapter Two, I write of the philosophers, poets, and student voices that guided me as I witnessed the phenomenon “open up” and show itself. The phenomenon emerged in terms of time, place, and circumstance.

In Chapter Three, I built upon this expansive view of *Currere* knowing that its potential is broader still. Before I moved further into my research, I took a brief respite to revisit my philosophical foundation through “conversations” with Heidegger, Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty. Based on the wisdom gained conversing with the philosophers, I also delineated my research plan.

Chapter Four comes alive through the impassioned voices of five intern teachers selected as participants for my study. I listened (and gently guided or questioned when appropriate) to bring forth their concrete experiences of using *Currere* to understand curriculum in all its facets. I unified their experiences through hermeneutic writing and rewriting, and I dis-covered the themes that came forth and revealed themselves.

In Chapter Five, I worked to make meaning of all I learned through my hermeneutic phenomenological research into the question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** I am hopeful that the insights that have emerged from this study can positively shape teacher preparation. Further, I hope that this study can offer a way forward for the use of *Currere* to help

intern teachers develop a deeper understanding of curriculum that encourages a renewed emphasis on teachers as pedagogues.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### ***CURRERE: RUNNING THE COURSE OF LIVED CURRICULUM***

And we have just begun,  
watching the river run  
Listening and learning and yearning  
to run, river, run. (Loggins & Messina, 1973)

An educational methods professor stands in an empty classroom waiting for her new graduate student intern teachers to arrive on the first day of the first semester of the MAT. This professor has taught methods courses for many years, and she also has over a decade of experience teaching in public schools from elementary to high school. But even given all that background and preparation, she feels an odd mixture of apprehension and anticipation. These are all adults who will soon arrive; there will be no behavioral challenges and little, if any, late work. So why are these intern teachers' methods class butterflies so much more intense?

The professor's intention is clear: prepare the intern teachers for their classroom internship placements and beyond. The professor knows her intern teachers will need to study the state and district curriculum. They will have to learn to plan instruction and write lesson plans with the understanding that each lesson must lead students toward achievement of academic objectives that build understanding. Because this is a methods course, the professor will provide plenty of practice in how to structure activities and experiences designed to motivate students and thereby maximize their learning. There will be a focus on classroom management procedures throughout the course. The professor visualizes her new students arriving full of expectations and curiosity, their faces shining with eagerness to participate. The professor smiles to herself at allowing this indulgence in a final moment of fantasy.

As the intern teachers' bodies arrive, their personalities, attitudes, and behaviors arrive with them. To achieve her *intension*, from Latin *intentionem* for "a stretching out, straining, exertion, effort" (Harper, 2017), the professor must give her attention to these new beings both as individuals and as a group. *Attention* comes from the Latin *attendere* "mental heeding," and is used with a remarkable diversity of verbs such as *pay*, *gather*, *attract*, *draw*, and *call* (Harper, 2017).

The reason for the intensified butterflies the professor feels is clear: she is not just teaching a course; she is the very first embodiment of the ways of being a teacher these intern teachers will encounter now that they have made the decision to become teachers themselves. The professor must not only explain the course content, but she must demonstrate the awareness, the creativity, the judgment, and the joy of being a teacher. She is a teacher of teachers, and she accepts the responsibility to show teaching as well as tell about it. The professor wants to be the teacher for these graduate students who will lead by example to inspire them to develop a pedagogical orientation to the art and science of sharing a learning space with children. But this professor knows that each intern teacher's past teachers from Kindergarten on up have also come along with them.

Did these past teachers focus enough attention on themselves and their students as human beings dwelling together? Were the teachers too focused on domination and power by requiring, commanding, and cajoling students to "pay attention" rather than attending to the developing relationships in the shared space? There is always tension (from Latin *tensionem* "a stretching" [in Medieval Latin "a struggle, contest"]) between in-tension and attention (Harper, 2017). A teacher can respond to the tension in classroom curriculum and expand her awareness and influence, or she can react to the

tension as an adversary thereby creating an unproductive, and unnecessary, battleground.

Regardless of the teacher's awareness of the dynamics and interplay of intention and attention, teachers and their students live together in an *in-tensional* space. Aoki describes how students arrive and immediately respond to the presence and perceived intention of the teacher. "They become 'suitable,' 'teachable,' 'harmful,' 'difficult,' 'hopeful,' 'damaging.'" The [classroom] environment ceases to be environment, and in its place comes into being a pedagogical situation, a lived situation pregnantly alive in the presence of people" (Aoki, 2005, p. 159). Is there an in-tensional way to bring attention to the potential and possibility of this tension in the classroom? The *Currere* process may suggest a course. The Latin word, *Currere*, literally means running a course. *Running* is the essence of the meaning of *Currere*. I envision this running as a coursing river, but Kincheloe (1998) uses the image of a runner participating in a race:

Mainstream understandings in the field of curriculum have traditionally reduced the word to its noun form, the track. In this context...mainstream educators forget that curriculum is an active process; it is not simply the lesson plan, the district guidebook, the standardized test, the goals and milestones, or the textbook. The curriculum...is a holistic life experience, the journey of becoming a self-aware subject capable of shaping his or her life path. (pp. 129-130)

What kinds of realizations and insights do intern teachers have as a result of working through the *Currere* process? What kinds of themes emerge from connections between the past and the imagined future? To begin the search for an answer to these questions, I look to the role of the earliest and most enduring source of what it means to be a teacher that, whether they are aware of it or not, all intern teachers bring with them to their teacher preparation program.

### ***Currere and the Accidental Apprenticeship***

I hope to establish an environment where students feel safe to both be themselves and improve themselves with the recognition of their inner-truths. (Erica, Intern Teacher, 2012)

When I think back on my K-12 schooling, most of my memories involve a teacher. I remember Mrs. Little who changed her voice for each of the characters in *Charlotte's Web*. I think of Miss Goff who forced me to read *The Hobbit*, and I recall thanking her afterward. I shudder at the memory of Mrs. Sturgill who humiliated me in front of the entire math class because I had a question after the opportunity for questions had passed. How much do we know, or think we know, about teaching simply based on the teachers we have encountered? For those planning a career in teaching, which memories are most influential and why? Are experiences that lie dormant in developing teachers' subconscious minds influencing their pedagogy and their perceptions of what it means to be a teacher?

The "accidental apprenticeship" is a term Ritchie and Wilson (2000) use to describe the set of experiences garnered through a child's school years that shape his or her understanding of and attitudes toward teachers and teaching. *Apprentice* comes from Old French for "someone learning" (Harper, 2017). Usually, an apprentice is cognizant of his role as learner of a skill or craft. The accidental teaching apprentice experiences the skill and craft of teaching over many years as a student who encounters many teachers. Once the student becomes an adult teaching intern, it is likely that she is unaware of the influence of the accidental apprenticeship both in making her decision to teach and in defining herself in that role. What is it like for intern teachers to discover the influence of



the accidental internship through the *Currere* process? Do these discoveries lead to a stronger pedagogical foundation, and, if so, in what ways?

### **To Know Where You're Going, You Ought to Know Where You've Been**

The title above opens Laurel Chehayl's *Currere in the Margins of my Dreams* (2006). Chehayl writes about her initial enthusiasm and ultimate disillusionment as a first-year teacher in an urban public school. Chehayl's difficult experience is not student-centered; it arises from the defeatist culture of the school: stifling school structures, administrators' expectations that teachers "control" the students, and fellow faculty members' exceedingly low expectations for student achievement. Chehayl writes about using *Currere* principles in her search for an authentic view of herself as an educator, and her guiding theme is exploring the past as a foundation for forming the future.

I remember my own first encounter with *Currere*. I did not discover *Currere* on my own. It was assigned as part of an early doctoral program course, but never framed as an "assignment." Rather, *Currere* was presented as an opportunity for a deeper kind of reflection that would ground my understandings of all I had learned and indicate a way to integrate all I was about to learn. I gained so many specific insights, but beyond those revelations, I learned to conceive of my past, present, and future as a fluid circle of influence like the waves that eternally roll in and out as they shape the landscape.

Shortly after my maiden voyage with *Currere*, I read Marilyn Doerr's *Currere and the Environmental Biography* (2004). Doerr, a high school environmental science teacher who earned her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction, led her students through the *Currere* process during her course in order to provide context and relevance for the material they were learning. This planted a seed in my mind and grew into my decision to

integrate the process into the MAT program with incoming MAT intern teachers. In 2011, I began my practice of meeting with admitted MAT interns prior to the beginning of the program to get to know them, to provide a personal introduction to the program, and to give them an opportunity to ask questions. During these meetings, I also introduced the *Currere* assignment. I explained that the process would help them anchor their MAT experience in awareness of the influences that brought them to teaching and provide a compass to help each of them develop intentional futures as educators. The assignment was due on the first day the new MAT cohort arrives on campus in late June. Their *Currere* projects became the foundation upon which interns constructed their understandings of themselves as an integral part of making the classroom a positive and productive space.

Each year, *Currere* gave beginning intern teachers a way forward as they navigated their internship experiences. My intention was to help teachers-in-preparation gain a grounding in their own self-reflection to see themselves as more than managers of students—rather as professionals taking the helm of a classroom culture of learning and an emancipatory curriculum of abundance (Jardin, Friesan, & Clifford, 1997). After many years of positive intern teacher feedback, I became interested in studying further possibilities for *Currere* in teacher preparation by asking the phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** I examined where I had been, and I became ready to move forward as an explorer who was prepared to be surprised.

### **Chris, Erica, and Maggie: *Currere* Companions for the Journey**

As I embarked on this new adventure studying the experience of intern teachers

using *Currere* as they unpacked and constructed the meanings of curriculum, I re-called the voices of intern teachers from 2011-2015. I used these voices to help me open the phenomenon prior to my engagement with the participants in my dissertation study. They reminded me about the insights generated by their personal *Currere* experiences through which they journeyed at the beginning of their MAT programs. Three former intern teachers' voices were particularly insistent as I pondered what they, and I, discovered about the potential for *Currere* as they journeyed through the process at the beginning of their MAT programs. Chris, now an accomplished teacher leader, was among those in the first group to undertake *Currere* in 2011. Erica, a middle school English teacher in Jersey City, New Jersey experienced *Currere* the following year in 2012. She was a strong voice as a participant in our presentation about our implementation of *Currere* at the 2013 Maryland State PDS conference. Finally, Maggie, who worked through *Currere* in 2014, learned to harness her experiences as a theater major rather than run from them in her work as a teacher, became a unique and expressive elementary educator. These three: Chris, Erica, and Maggie, continue to whisper in my ear as I write, both to keep me focused on what is important and also to show the nuanced insights and influences of the *Currere* process in the compelling manner that only their authentic voices can capture.

Doerr notes that a major advantage of using *Currere* is that the process helps her high school students make connections with each other and see reasons for retaining and applying what they learn. She observes, "*Currere* focuses on the educational experience of the individual as reported by the individual; it seeks to describe what the individual himself/herself makes of behaviors" (2004, p. 7). My former intern and current fellow traveler, Chris, confirms the truth of Doerr's observation:

When I looked at my future I was kind of surprised at myself when I talked about teaching to resist mediocrity. The majority of my middle and high school and into college was filled with settling for just getting by. I think that I resent how much I slacked off, and I don't want my students to make the same mistakes that I did. I think that when I talked about my career in leadership roles within the school system, it suggested that I have bigger goals for improving math education, but I'm still struggling with my wanting to be in the classroom to help students directly.

Is it possible that nurturing children to see the personal connections and relevance in what they learn comes more naturally to teachers if they have the opportunity to do the same?

In what ways does the *Currere* process offer this opportunity? It starts with a specific process and method.

### **The Method of *Currere***

Why am I a teacher? Why have I enrolled in this teacher training course? What can it mean to be a teacher? These are questions whose answers are to be found in one's past, one's present, one's images of the future. They are questions, used as surgical instruments, to cut through the accretions that are the culturally-conditioned and hence super-imposed answers. They are instruments not to be given up, for their selective, intermittent use keeps acute the teacher's focus, the teacher's skill, the teacher's presence. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. xv)

Curriculum, in a technical sense, is what occurs in a classroom financed by school boards, housed in school buildings, analyzed by policy makers, and put into practice by teachers. Aoki (2005) names these as factors in the "curriculum-as-plan." However, there also exists a "curriculum-as-lived" (p. 161) that names the shared experiences of teacher and students. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (1995) characterize the field of curriculum as "text, and most simply but profoundly, as words and ideas" (p. 7), and state that "text implies that all reality is human reality, and as human reality, it is fundamentally discursive, a matter of language" (p. 49). Interpretation of meaning is key. The authors assert that "The point of contemporary curriculum research is to stimulate self-reflection, self-understanding, and social change" (p. 56).

In my previous work as an instructor with intern teachers, *Currere* provided a structured, textual process that captured the writer's words and ideas in order to understand curriculum better through a reconstruction and a deeper understanding of past and present experiences with curriculum. The method of *Currere* was designed so that individuals can re-call, dis-cover, and re-cover influential educational experiences, thus allowing a clearer understanding of curriculum and greater possibilities of enhanced agency in choosing a path forward (Pinar & Grumet, 2015). Grumet describes the *Currere* method in more detail:

Imagine a research method which will embrace both poles of the dialectic, and not relinquish subjectivity to objectivity or vice versa. William Pinar's approach is to scale the inquiry down to the experiential field of the individual. *Currere*, the root of curriculum, is Pinar's term for educational experience; it describes the race not only in terms of the course, the readiness of the runner, but seeks to know the experience of the running of one particular runner, on one particular track, on one particular day, in one particular wind. (p. 47)

In this phenomenological study of *Currere* and its impact on intern teachers' understanding of curriculum, the focus is on experiences brought forth from the written word and spoken conversations. This text represents the potential to uncover larger truths that are more relevant and useful when learning about and shaping a uniquely human endeavor such as education.

### **Is Timing Everything?**

The journey that led me to *Currere* was not a direct one. I think now about how experiencing *Currere* after twelve years as a classroom teacher rejuvenated and refined my sense of purpose as a teacher. I wonder what might have been different and better if I had known about and practiced *Currere* from the beginning of my career as a teacher educator. I wonder what discoveries from *Currere* are clearest and most powerful for

each intern teacher as he or she learns the craft and takes on the role of teacher? As if offering an answer, Erica's voice comes through loud and clear:

As I was writing I became keenly aware that being a teacher who recognizes her students for both their strengths and their weaknesses is an important take-away message from this project. I know that some students will struggle with reading, will have difficulty connecting to literature, might have trouble visualizing what the author is really saying, and hopefully this knowledge of my own issues will help me remain sensitive to these things.

Erica's insight reveals the ways in which the *Currere* method led her to make connections between her past and future that expanded to include awareness of, and care for, her students' individual experiences. How does using the *Currere* method help intern teachers develop their understandings of curriculum? What is it like for intern teachers to discover the *Currere*/curriculum connection? Grumet asserts:

Curriculum development and innovation do not require a revamping and reorganization of the schools, of instructional methodologies, or of the academic disciplines, but a transfer of our attention from these forms themselves to the ways in which a student uses them and moves through them. (in Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 86)

*Currere* is not intended to break complex experience down into separate aspects and then analyze each in turn as if it were isolated from the others. As an intern teacher moves through the four stages of the *Currere* process, the total self is never lost. Instead, connections are made and synthesized into a whole. The individual retains her identity, but with greater awareness, self-knowledge, and greater possibilities for more purposeful intention as an educator (Pinar & Grumet, 2015). The recursive *Currere* method "begins" in the past with the Regression stage. My long-time acquaintance with the *Currere* method has taught me that to begin is not necessarily to start over.

### **Regression: Memories – Why This? Why Now?**

The first step of the method is the regressive. One returns to the past, to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 71)

I am reminded over and over by the students how their initial reluctance has totally dissolved. They are writing their [*Currere* regressions] instead of doing other homework. They go home at night, eager to write down something they have thought about on the ride to or from school. (Doerr, 2004, p. 24)

In Chapter One, I recalled memories and pieces from my written *Currere* process. In addition to the written memories and insights I gathered from *Currere*, my actual lived experience of going through the *Currere* process has become its own memory that is always active in my life as a metaphorical compass. I noted specifics from my *Currere* process itself in Chapter One. In Chapter Two, I recalled the *Currere* experience as lived, and I described what it was like to move through each stage.

I was curious and slightly skeptical as I embarked upon the Regression stage of the *Currere* process. The task was simply to capture memories as they arose. It seemed simple enough, yet I felt a sense of reluctance. What might appear? Where should I start? After a few minutes staring at, but not seeing, a blank computer screen, the first memory presented itself and I dutifully captured it as text. Moments later, the second arrived. The memories began to reintroduce themselves more and more rapidly, until I was facing a torrent of memories flooding forth. At one point I could not type fast enough; the recollections were tumbling over one another as they rushed past. I felt surprise mixed with relief as I re-cognized several long-forgotten barriers as they were swept away. I became aware of the continued power of my early experiences in my daily life, some of which I had not consciously thought about in years. Casey (2000) observes, “In its free action, memory gathers much else besides thought: it also gathers emotions, perceptions, bits of

discourse—ultimately all the parts of our life history” (p. 292). Through *Currere*, I experienced my life history as a quick gasp of surprise, a sharp tingle of regret, and sudden giggles as I re-dis-covered memories I did not even realize I carried.

After the initial surge, the flow of memory finally slowed and became more languid as it settled into its new identity as a river of my old, yet new, lived experiences. My fingers rested on the keyboard, and I sat transfixed. I was lost in time, aware of my body as an ageless amalgam of floating sensations from the resurrected memories. Casey (2000) explains this response:

It would be more accurate in many instances to say merely that “remembering is going on” rather than that “I choose to remember.” The going on is the primary phenomenon, not the willed actions of the rememberer; and the ongoing remembering is happening, always, in the thick of things. (p. 305)

In this way, the often-surprising flow of ideas, sensations, and emotions that remembering evoked as well as the mystery of how and why they lead from one to another during the Regression stage became its own experience and memory. Chris had all but forgotten one of his earliest experiences with a teacher:

In kindergarten my teacher told me that she had something mechanical in her arm, and I thought that she was a robot.

But the truly surprising aspect of the experience was the memory that directly followed from this early childhood misunderstanding. Chris recalls:

In seventh grade my Home Economics teachers did not like me very much. In the cooking class after the first couple of weeks I was placed in a seat near the door, totally secluded from the rest of the class. And in the sewing class, the teacher called my house about my misbehavior. I deleted the message from the machine before my parents could hear it. That teacher was not happy with me.

What is it that generates the particular memories that arise at a given place, in a given



time, and in a particular given circumstance such as entry into a teacher preparation program? How do these memories then generate ideas about the future?

### **Progression: Imagination – What Might the Future Hold?**

We have found that the future is present in the same sense that the past is present. It influences, in complicated ways, the present; it forms the present. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 75)

The difficulty that comes with Stage Two is that it requires a very different mindset on the part of the writer. This will prove to be the hardest of the four stages to write for all of the students because, I think, they have little experience in thinking about the future. (Doerr, 2004, p. 25)

As I approached the Progression stage of my *Currere* process I felt stuck, as if I had run aground. How could I separate wishes and dreams from imagining future events that were actually plausible? I finally settled upon my on-again-off-again love affair with writing, and topics of possible books and articles began to surface: something about empowering parents and students; something about reinstating the good reputation of a pedagogy of care when addressing education policy; something about reviving pedagogy as elemental in the process of schooling; and maybe something about the *Currere* method as integral in educational professional development. As I wrote, ideas I did not even know were simmering came forward and crystalized. I felt the very real possibility of these ideas taking shape on the page.

Erica returned to the conversation, excited to re-member and re-tell her experience. She began her teaching career in an affluent county in Maryland. Three years later, in 2015, her life course altered. Erica's words from her 2012 *Currere* Progression are amazingly prophetic:

After surviving my first three years as a new teacher, I decided to teach in a Title I school for economically disadvantaged youth. Although the job was stressful at times, I was energized each and every morning by the thought of inspiring

children to love literature beyond the curriculum. I began the year by asking my students, “What is important in your life?” and designing unit plans around their answers.

How influential are the ideas that come into presence during the Progression stage? Does codifying one’s vision of the future strengthen the possibility of that future coming to pass? How do intern teachers experience conceptions of the future during *Currere* and particularly the Progression? These questions beg for analysis.

### **Analysis: Themes – Any Surprises?**

Juxtapose the...past, present, future. What are their complex, multidimensional interrelations? How is the future present in the past, the past in the future, and the present in both? (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 78)

Try to link the present with the past, the past with the future, the present with the future. What areas are you drawn to? What areas repel you? You now need to detach yourself from the experience and try to answer the question, why are these experiences as they are? You interpret. (Doerr, 2004, p. 28)

I was not expecting the ease with which the common themes of my past and present rose to the surface during the third stage of my *Currere* process. Diving into the Analysis stage gave me the feeling I imagine explorers felt when they first realized that the world was not flat. I could finally see clearly how I had been influenced, where I was going, and what was shaping my path. I had never realized how strongly my former teachers still influenced me, and I felt the sense of peace that comes with clarifying one’s driving motivations. Maggie speaks of how common themes also rose easily to the surface during her *Currere* Analysis stage:

There are three elements that dominate the characteristics of my childhood and ideal classroom: role models, civic involvement, and sanctuary. To me, they represent the philosophical core, purpose, and emotional content of the classroom I want to create, and what I have most valued in the classrooms of my past.

Do these kinds of themes persist throughout the internship experience, or do they spring from inexperience and naiveté? What new themes and meanings arise once the intern teacher is an integral part of a classroom curriculum? The answers will likely be found during the Synthesis stage.

### **Synthesis: Decisions – So What Now?**

In your own voice, what is the meaning of the present?  
(Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 78)

This final stage is integration. You are achieving an understanding of yourself and your relationship with space that is both intellectual and emotional. This understanding gives the freedom to act. You begin to think about yourself in a different way. Record these changes in yourself; record the changes this whole process has brought about in your thinking about yourself. What have you discovered about yourself that surprises you? How does this process make you think about the way you want to live your life, both your personal life and your public life? (Doerr, 2004, p. 30)

As I completed the fourth, and final, stage of the *Currere* process, I felt energized by the possibilities with which the project presented me. The new clarity of the connections between then and now, and the surprising transitions from *Why?* to *Eureka!* were exhilarating. I felt released from fears I had been carrying unawares. The wind was at my back, and I felt that I was finally sailing on the right course. I did not mind that I was not certain of the destination – it felt like freedom. Maggie synthesized her *Currere* stages one, two, and three to dis-cover a plan of action that demonstrates her vision of a classroom curriculum:

Empathy is a classroom necessity. I am only part of the equation in my class, I need my students to choose to be part of the class as well. They need to know that I respect them as future citizens. I want to give them the class that they deserve, and every student deserves the best I can give them.

How different might Maggie's synthesis be if it had been completed during the internship rather than before it? Can *Currere*, experienced during classroom teaching, help intern

teachers make deeper meaning regarding their understanding of curriculum and its creation? How can *Currere* be integrated as part of a phenomenological study that asks:

***What is the lived experience of intern teachers using Currere to understand curriculum?***

### ***Currere Questioned – and Answered***

Earlier in my doctoral odyssey, I had an opportunity for conversation with a leader in the phenomenology field. To my surprise, when I shared my research ideas he vehemently spoke in opposition to “diluting” phenomenology with the *Currere* process. However, I have also heard other phenomenologists’ voices, including Aoki’s, who has praised *Currere* as a legitimate phenomenological method (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 420).

Pinar himself addresses this concern:

*Currere* as autobiographical self-report communicates the individual’s lived experience as it is socially located, politically positioned, and discursively formed, while working to succumb to none of these structurings. It is, in an essential way, phenomenological in character. (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 416)

As I have grown in my understanding of both phenomenology and *Currere*, I have seen many connections and commonalities that I have addressed in the following section. As a researcher in the field of human science, my mind and heart as a phenomenologist always stay open to possibilities.

### **Opening Up the Connection Between *Currere* and Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

Phenomenological writing takes the reader on a journey through lived experience to *show* rather than *tell*, and it creates a space in which imagination, memory, and possibility find a home. The phenomenologist literally invites the reader to enter into a new place, space, and mode of dwelling. The reader is welcomed as a trusted confidant and ushered into the phenomenologist’s inner sanctum. This place is at once unique, yet

strangely familiar. The reader is invited to sit down and stay awhile, get comfortable, and enter into the conversation. This “conversation” leads the reader to a brand-new living space that the writer may never experience.

The method of hermeneutical phenomenology is well suited for studies in the realm of human science. Hermeneutics is a method of deep interpretation that draws meaning from phenomena as lived. Hermeneutic is from the Greek meaning “interpretation” (Harper, 2017). Hermeneutics is a focus on deep, careful, and sensitive interpretation, so in a sense, one can describe *Currere* as a hermeneutic method used by the self. I describe how I used hermeneutic phenomenology, through the lens of *Currere*, to study and discover intern teachers’ developing understandings of curriculum by interpreting their writing and conversations. Indeed, Pinar names curriculum as “an ongoing, if complicated, conversation” (Pinar, 2004, p. 188). Pinar opens up the meaning of the process:

*Currere* [is] a method and theory of curriculum which escapes the epistemological traps of mainstream social science and educational research. *Currere* focuses on the educational experience of the individual, as reported by the individual. Rather than working to quantify behaviors to describe their surface interaction or to establish causality, *Currere* seeks to describe what the individual subject makes of these behaviors. (Grumet, in Pinar et al., 1995, p. 414)

*Currere* adds a deeper dimension to authentic phenomenological conversation in that it allows conversants to bring concrete memories, future aspirations, emerging themes, and ideas about the meaning of “curriculum” into discussions. I thought of Erica once again and remembered her initial reluctance to add the experience of repeating first grade to her *Currere* project. But as she moved through the process, she found her voice:

As I was considering what significant moments shaped my desire to teach, Mrs. McNeil’s lovely face continued to reflect upon the blank page I was staring at,

and I realized that it would be much harder to complete this assignment with any true reflection about myself without it. I couldn't leave it out.

The *Currere* process allowed Erica to interpret the degree to which that experience continues to influence her identity as a teacher. The process offered her the choice to move beyond her hesitance and open up about the difficulty of that time in her very young life. My experience with *Currere*, and my experiences reading over one hundred intern teachers' *Currere* processes has taught me that *Currere* is a dynamic, moving vessel that offers a view of this river of complex conversation and a journey of discovery in which hermeneutic phenomenology can enter and dwell. I began to feel more energized than ever to learn about intern teachers' lived experiences using *Currere* during the internship to understand curriculum.

### **The Lifeworld Existentials**

Writing one's way through the *Currere* process reveals more than what is on the page. Whether consciously or unconsciously, *Currere* also shapes one's extant perceptions of time, space, the body, and relationships with others. From my pedagogical point of view as instructor and my phenomenological point of view as researcher, *Currere* is the process that allows me to glimpse the myriad ways intern teachers experience the world of curriculum and teaching (van Manen, 1997). In addition to the four stages of *Currere*, the lifeworld existentials anchored my research study as I sought answers to my phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?**

#### **The temporality of *Currere*.**

*Currere* is a conceptual and temporal approach to autobiography that requires one to engage with and become critically distant from one's lived life in order to trace

the dialogic relations among one's past, present, and future.  
(Britzman, 2003, p. 67)

Time is the master of a teacher's day: time for math, time for lunch, time for a fire drill. I know that keeping time and being on time is integral in the current structures of public education. "Finding time" is the subject of much discussion among teachers who never have enough time for grading papers, making parent calls, and attending meetings. I wonder how these pervasive concepts of time as both master and enemy shape and influence intern teachers' understandings of curriculum in all its possibilities. Can *Currere* lead intern teachers to perceive deeper meanings regarding time lived in a classroom with children? Heidegger (1972) opens up the perception of time and expands the concept beyond linear clock time to connect time and Being, Heidegger's term for human existence:

If we are to characterize time in terms of the present, we understand the present as the now as distinct from the no longer now of the past and the not-yet-now of the future. But the present speaks at the same time of presence. However, we are not accustomed to defining the peculiar character of time with regard to the present in the sense of presence. Rather, we represent time—the unity of present, past and future—in terms of the now. (p. 11)

Heidegger (1972) speaks of presence in time in a way that acknowledges the "now." This way of sensing and experiencing time vanquishes time as master and enemy, at least for a short time. How do intern teachers experience time in the internship? Can the *Currere* process become an opportunity for reflection on time that becomes part of the interns' understanding of curriculum? Chris speaks once again. This time, he discusses his future plans and the general timing for those plans to come to fruition:

After 10 years of teaching I wanted to move to be department head for the math department at my school. I wanted to have a more profound impact on the way in which students at my school were being taught. The first few years of this took getting used to, but I think that I spread my attitudes about positive teaching with

my colleagues effectively. I was able to provide meaningful input about how math was taught during my tenure and this career change helped me transition into my future as I pursued my doctorate. For another ten years I worked with my fellow faculty members to make our math department a model for instruction in the county and the state. This is one of my proudest achievements because not only was I able to serve my students, I was able to reach the entire school through my leadership in the math department.

As I read Chris' detailed description of all he plans to accomplish throughout his career, I developed the strong sense that as he writes, he is present in all of those future circumstances. Further, Chris is fully present in the "now" of writing about the future. *Currere* has a way of slowing and reorganizing time to allow for presence in the present. Are there ways to use *Currere* to help intern teachers recognize time not only as the enemy, but as a friend? Can *Currere* become a path for intern teachers to understand curriculum in the day-to-day life of a teacher?

### **The space of *Currere*.**

When I talk to the students about place, I am talking about "space plus memory." Contemporary life alienates us from thinking about our dependence on place. If we truly understand place, we begin to create community, grounding ourselves in a web of social, political, and historical relations. (Doerr, 2004, p. 22)

Bachelard offers the terms "inner immensity" and "intimate immensity" to describe the space in which bodily understandings of limitless possibility and activity transcend the location and dimension of the literal space (1994, pp. 185-186). A classroom is such a space. The walls and furniture are transcended by each inhabitant's understanding of what that space means in terms of comfort, care, curiosity, and challenge. Maggie gets at this very idea:

My classroom will be colorful, even if it's stuck in a windowless storage closet. I will have maps on the walls, so my students know they can go anywhere, and that they are always global citizens. I will find visual or tactile examples of what we're learning about whenever I can. If I have room, I will build a "tree house" like the one in the magic treehouse series and fill it with history books so my



students can travel back in time and have adventures. I will arrange the desks like the senate because we are all citizens of the classroom. When I have to take down my decorations, I will take pictures of the room first and give them to any student who wants one to show we are never really gone.

How might *Currere*, used during the internship experience, help intern teachers make meaning of the classroom space? Might they also develop a broadened sense of space as it relates to curriculum? Van Manen notes that the space of every home, every classroom, and every school has an “atmosphere.” The same space can be perceived as uncomfortable and unpleasant by one child and as exciting and invigorating by another (van Manen, 2015, p. 126). Chris recalls being ostracized in his classroom space:

I also acted up in my math class. That teacher frequently sent me to the back of the class for calling out answers (correct answers) and misbehaving after I had finished my work early.

The atmosphere, or mood, of classrooms is a very complicated phenomenon. The perception of space often depends on the mood or disposition one brings into it (van Manen, 2015). Space is also experienced by external factors from physical sensations to the manner of treatment experienced. Can intern teachers make more intentional decisions about the nature of the classroom space and its effect on students by using *Currere* to understand this important aspect of curriculum? Can *Currere* reveal the “intimate immensity” (Bachelard, 1994, p. 186) of the classroom?

### ***Currere* and lived bodily experience.**

It, all of it—intellections, emotions, behavior—occurs in and through the physical body. As the body is a concrete whole, so what occurs within and through the body can become a discernable whole, integrated in its meaningfulness. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 79)

The body’s experience of past, present, and future can be marginalized or even ignored by intern teachers in the process of reflecting on teaching practice. An

embarrassing experience, long past, can make one's cheeks burn at the memory. A pleasant idea about the future can cause a surge of energy and delight. When the body is not considered, a powerful opportunity is lost for developing one's pedagogy as one learns to understand curriculum. Although *pedagogy* has an ineffable quality, van Manen (2015) offers this clear and simple description:

It is pedagogy that makes the crucial difference in a child's life. Pedagogy involves us distinguishing actively and/or reflectively what is good or right and what is life enhancing, just, and supportive from what is not good, wrong, unjust, or damaging in the ways we act, live, and deal with children. (2015, pp. 19-20)

Pedagogy represents the ways in which teachers create bodily responses from their students as they "touch" their students with eye contact, reassurance, encouragement. Students can feel a sense of recognition that causes them to stand straighter, a sense of peace that calms and slows the breath, or an electric buzz of courage. A lack of pedagogical understanding of curriculum lived as responses in students' bodies can result in their experiencing the sick-to-the-stomach feeling of being behind, the nervous jump at shouted orders, or the cold fear of humiliation. Maggie's re-collected stress and fear return as she speaks of a very early, but still vivid, classroom experience:

[My first-grade teacher] liked to tell us the requirements for our projects on the day they were due, so parents couldn't "help." We had to build a miniature house for a character in a book we read, then, on the due day, she dropped textbooks on them without warning to test their durability. I remember trying to hide under a desk from the noise of mine smashing.

Chris adds his voice to acknowledge his struggle as a child to keep his body still during class. His experience becomes his platform upon which to build a classroom curriculum that includes empathy and apply it to his practice:

I will remember how [positive teachers] responded to me when students tend to act out in my classes. They aren't always misbehaving for the sake of being disruptive (although that does happen), they could be like me and just be bored or trying to be active.

What meanings can be dis-covered from bodily experiences as intern teachers progress through *Currere* during their internships? Can *Currere* become a portal for a conscious and active orientation to the body as an integral part of the lived curriculum in the classroom?

I also want to explore experience of the lived body in an additional aspect: the rhythms of shared experience in which participants find themselves “keeping time” with the other members of the classroom community. In *The Wave in the Mind*, Ursula Le Guin (2004) describes how things oscillating or vibrating at more or less the same interval will tend to align and pulse together; physicists describe this phenomenon as “entrainment.” Le Guin elaborates on the vibrations of living organisms:

We huge many-celled creatures have to coordinate millions of different oscillation frequencies, and interactions among frequencies, in our bodies and in our environment. Most of the coordination is effected by synchronizing the pulses, by getting the beats into a master rhythm, by entrainment. (p. 195)

Is it possible that attaining entrainment, this bodily vibration in which the rhythm of curriculum can develop, is influenced by the teaching internship? Are teaching interns experiencing lived body not only in terms of the individual experience but also in its perceptual and rhythmic aspects in a way that better prepares them for teaching? Can the *Currere* process provide hints about the nature of entrainment in the teaching internship?

### ***Currere* and lived relationships.**

What is crucial about the event of “coming into presence” is that this is not something that can be done in isolation. To come into presence is always to come into the presence of *others*. (Biesta, 2013, p. 143)

Educational experience can be approached in a phenomenological examination of the relationship of one person to his world. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 45)

Relationships take time to develop. They also need a comfortable space in which to grow. While it is appropriate to approach students (intern teachers as well as the students in their classrooms) in terms of their having Being and identity, Biesta (2013) suggests the notion of allowing others to come into presence as they are. He explains this idea as “an event rather than an essence or identity, and one that expresses an interest in who comes into presence rather than that it tries to define what is to come, ought to come, or is allowed to come into presence” (p. 143). Heidegger also addresses this notion and extends it to note that Being and presence are absolutely interconnected in relationship with one another— “being means presencing” (1972, p. 5). In a healthy classroom environment, children come into presence in a classroom with many others and begin to form relationships. These relationships are the result of the intersection of time, space, and the body. Over the years, I have read many, many of my students’ *Currere* entries about the power of a relationship with a teacher. Many even credit a particular teacher for inspiring them to choose the profession. Maggie speaks of a very moving experience:

I made the mistake of looking at my 5th and 8th grade yearbooks and confronting the reality of how much I just didn’t like myself when I was a child and teen. It made me realize how my self-confidence was carefully built by teachers and professors until I became the person I am today, and how much effort by so many people was put into the construction of just one. I have been blessed with teachers who loved me when I couldn’t love myself.

What differences can epiphanies, such as Maggie’s above, make in the development of a teacher’s understanding of curriculum? Chris synthesizes his *Currere* Regression, Progression, and Analysis stages with this Synthesis:

Bringing everything together, my past experiences have taught me to respond positively to my students. I know that when I alienate them I might as well stop

teaching them altogether. I need to keep them engaged in the class, so that they can continue to be involved in their education. I want to reach my students and help them pursue their goals whole heartedly. For students who don't believe in themselves, I want to mirror my good teachers. My goal will be to convince them that they are able to succeed no matter what obstacles are in their way.

A classroom curriculum that allows Being and presence-ing to emerge depends on respectful language and caring interactions between and among teacher and students. Can the *Currere* process help intern teachers understand curriculum in terms of navigating the intensity and complexity of classroom relationships that shift with time and change based on circumstances? These are among the ideas I explored in Chapters Four and Five as I researched the phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?**

### **Living-Through the Language of *Currere***

It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing, provided that we respect language's own nature. In the meantime, to be sure, there rages round the earth an unbridled yet clever talking, writing, and broadcasting of spoken words. Man acts as though *he* were the master and shaper of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man. (Heidegger, 1993b, p. 348)

The language of *Currere* is focused initially on the past and the future that, taken together, provide the basis upon which to discover the themes that run through one's life and then make meaning from those discoveries. Language is both a vehicle and a cage in the process. Language is the means by which one expresses his or her perceived meaning of Being, but certain thoughts and feelings simply transcend the power of language to capture their essences. Gadamer sums up the difference, "Being that can be understood is language" (1975, p. 470).

**The opportunity of *Currere*.** The process of *Currere* structures many opportunities for recursive exploration of and reflection upon the language one chooses to

capture memories and frame thoughts. This recursive nature of studying the language to discover and develop deeper understandings is comparable to the language of hermeneutic phenomenology. Pinar's *Currere* method intends to help individuals re-discover and maintain their authentic selves as they turn from the false façade teachers can develop in schools as they are educated and as they educate others (Pinar et al., 1995).

Can the language of *Currere*, both structured and selected, give intern teachers tools to navigate a teaching career once a mentor is no longer present? What is the nature of the language intern teachers use in their *Currere* process, and in what ways is this significant? Does *Currere* develop an understanding of curriculum during the internship that is strong enough to support new teachers when they encounter the language of the profession?

**Negative stereotypes of the intern teacher's experience.** In day-to-day classroom life, intern teachers encounter certain other words. These are words that are consistently used to label novice teachers or define their circumstances. A common word is *stress*, which translates as *to subject (someone) to force or compulsion* and is associated with *hardship, adversity, force, pressure, and oppression*. *Isolated* is also a common descriptor of the first-year teacher's situation that comes from the Latin *insulatus* meaning *made into an island*. I noticed that the island formation was not presented as voluntary, but rather as "made." Finally, the term *novice* also has its origin in the concept of slavery as in *newly imported; inexperienced* (Harper, 2017).

**The language of being in control.** Too much of the language used to prepare intern teachers speaks the story of a profession grounded not in dwelling, but rather in the

concept of control. The word “control” comes from the Anglo-French *controller* “to exert authority” and carries the connotation of domination. Prior to the 1300s, the word *teacher* was used in the context of “index finger.” One can easily visualize the traditional teacher stereotype brandishing that index finger in a wayward student’s face, determined to maintain control. *Teach* has original meanings varying from *to show or point out*, *to warn*, and even to *accuse*. The word *pedagogue* is from the Latin *paedagogus*, which originally meant “slave who escorted children to school and generally supervised them” and generally had a negative, even hostile, connotation (Harper, 2017). Today, *teach*, *teacher*, and *pedagogue* carry predominantly positive meanings. Is the history of the usage of these words still alive in the language in a way that influences intern teachers’ views of themselves and their profession? Can *Currere* bring these negatives to the surface for objective, reflective analysis and synthesis?

The language used to speak to and about intern teachers carries the mixed message that they are expected to be in control from the start, but that, as inexperienced teachers, they are unlikely to achieve this expectation. Based on our conscious shared understandings, and the subtle roots of these ubiquitous words, the odds can be stacked against the intern teacher from the beginning. Is this necessary? Must intern teachers endure the “rite of passage” and “trial by fire” mentality once they become first year teachers? Can *Currere* strengthen an intern teacher’s ability to practice healthy detachment in the face of these kinds of challenges?

### **The language of the researcher.**

Discourse which expresses itself is communication. Its tendency of Being is aimed at bringing the hearer to participate in disclosed Being towards what is talked about in the discourse. (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 211-212)

As I moved forward into my work with interns, I promised myself to hold fast to the commitment, as Biesta (2013) suggests, to allow my chosen intern teacher researchers to “come into presence as they are” (p. 143). I knew I would build upon my pedagogical orientation toward teaching to develop an understanding and welcomed relationship between and among my interns and me. I vowed to remain alert not only to what was said, but also to how it was said, and also to what was not said. From these principles, more questions surfaced: What locations are best suited for these conversations? I wanted the environment to be as neutral as possible and yet have a sense of place. Which questions would be most effective at drawing the intern teachers into a conversation about *Currere’s* influence on their understanding of curriculum? My course ahead became firmly set on balancing these responsibilities while also remaining true to the phenomenological form.

### **The critical importance of listening.**

We sometimes begin an encounter absolutely certain of our knowledge and itself... We can hear only what we want to hear, or what we already know and believe; we hear nothing different, nothing new. There are some things we can hear only with great difficulty, only with great pain. There are some things we need to hear, but probably never will. There are things we would like to hear, but we are also too afraid to listen. (Levin, 1989, p. 19)

The word listen is a verb of Germanic origin that comes from the Old English *hlysnan* meaning to “pay attention” (Harper, 2017). Listening, especially as part of a phenomenological conversation, requires effort and self-discipline to be actively open to another. Van Manen (1997) explains the necessity of listening skill as a phenomenological researcher:

The phenomenological method consists of the ability, or rather the art of being sensitive—sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, to the way language speaks when it allows the things themselves to speak. This means that an



authentic speaker must be a true listener, able to attune to the deep tonalities of language that normally fall out of our accustomed range of hearing, able to listen to the way the things of the world speak to us. (p. 111)

As a fellow phenomenological researcher, it is my role and responsibility to listen, to “pay attention to,” the voices that speak to me to help answer my question:

**What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand**

**curriculum?** Erica’s *Currere* highlighted one of her most memorable teachers who paid attention to his students’ experiences with language:

When I asked him why he decided to become a middle school literature teacher, Mr. Loring stated most simply that, “I felt that this is the age students can either come to love and appreciate literature and what it can do for their lives or they can stagnate and lose interest. Middle school children need enthusiastic teachers. I think I might be able to save a few on the brink of disinterest at this age. I think I need to.”

Erica listened to Mr. Loring’s words that inspired her to become a teacher who pays attention, too:

Needless to say, Mr. Loring is the reason I am here today. I, too, hope that students might look past the educational aspect of the English language, look beyond reading as a mere function of the grade book, and see how literature can transform, deepen, and alter perspectives on all things that make up the human condition in this world.

I knew that I would need to listen carefully to conversation and allow language to come into presence. I became keenly aware that listening also includes attending to the silences and the moments of hesitation. I developed a pedagogical stance as researcher in order to allow the phenomenon to show itself as authentically as is humanly possible.

### **Dwelling in the Phenomenology of *Currere***

Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.  
(Heidegger, 1993b, p. 361)

What does it mean to dwell? Heidegger explains his term, *Dasein*, as an “entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 27). *Dasein*, that which asks, dwells in Being. *Dwelling* speaks of being in place, as in a place of residence. But it was not always so. *Dwell* originates in *dwellan*; Old English for “to mislead, deceive, make a fool of, lead astray.” It is related to the Old English *gedweola*, which represents “error, heresy and madness.” The meaning evolved in Middle English through the Old High German for “hinder, delay” and came to mean, “linger.” This meaning is retained in our contemporary language when one speaks of “dwelling upon” something. By the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century, *dwell* had come to mean, “make a home” (Harper, 2017). We currently use *dwell* to speak of living in a particular place. We can also *dwell on*, that is, linger over or ponder an idea in thought, speech or writing. We also *dwell* in our existence – in our condition or state of being in the world. The *Currere* process is a personal dwelling space to which one can return again and again that holds potential for surprises, insights, and, yes, even tears.

This idea of *dwelling* is not necessarily one of comfort. *To dwell* can be a tricky proposition in that one can choose to “dwell in the house of the Lord forever” or be sharply rebuked as in, “Stop dwelling on the past!” *Dwelling* is a word whose meaning shifts in-between rest and restlessness. This word that seems to be homeless also points the way home. I think of *dwelling*, this wandering word and concept, as representing the full spectrum of the ways intern teachers willingly experience their internships. Chris dwells for some time in his future and brings back to the present moment a vision and understanding of the legacy he wishes to leave:

After a career in education I look back to reflect on the last 40 years. Starting with my first year teaching I felt comfortable in my first year. This is not to say that I

was not nervous or unsure of myself, but in spite of my shortcomings I felt confident that I had been prepared by the previous year. I spent the beginning of my career teaching a variety of age groups and subjects in the high school where I worked. It was a struggle to convince them that what I was teaching was worth learning, especially when math wasn't their strong suit, but after looking back, whether I succeeded in reaching them or not, I can say that I did my best to deliver enthusiasm. I constantly strived to stay positive, and to always be patient while keeping structure in my classroom.

Chris's *Currere* experience allows him to begin purposefully to build a career based on self-knowledge. Can *Currere* be similarly inspirational when used during the time the intern teachers are dwelling in their internship? Can this building be a kind of in-tensional dwelling place where interns make meaning of their experiences?

Heidegger (1993b) posits: "Building is not merely a means and a way toward dwelling—to build is in itself already to dwell" (p. 348). Heidegger goes on to dwell in the meaning of *to dwell* and its origin:

The way in which you are, and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is Buan, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word bauen, which says that man is insofar as he dwells, this word bauen however also means at the same time to cherish and to protect, to preserve and care for. (p. 349)

*Currere* is always grounded and built in the context of lived experience. In other words, everyone's interactions with the lifeworld existentials, and the language used in the service of making meaning of them, are shaped and perceived against the backdrop of the experiences in which one dwells (Pinar & Grumet, 2015). Grumet's words regarding the potential of *Currere* are particularly resonant:

*Currere* is not content to be a process that merely produces reflexive representations of self. It conceives of these representations as a field for the activity of self-as-agent who operates upon them and in that operation discovers the intentionality and energy that it extends into the world through the actions of self-as-place. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 92)

Does *Currere* provide intern teachers a dwelling place for developing insight during their internships? Can *Currere*, specifically practiced during the internship, awaken them to the possibilities for making the tensions they encounter more in-tensional?

### **Elemental Autobiography**

*Currere* is an autobiographical process of reflection and analysis in which one recalls his educational experience and analyzes it. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 142)

*Currere* is a conceptual and temporal approach to autobiography that requires one to engage with and become critically distant from one's lived life in order to trace the dialogic relations among one's past, present, and future. (Britzman, 2003, p. 67)

Using *Currere* to interpret seemingly simple autobiographical experiences reveals the complexity of obvious versus subtle meanings, the overt versus subconscious content of language, and also the inherent political ramifications of the reflective and interpretive processes (Pinar et al., 1995). The four stages of the *Currere* process: regressive, progressive, analytic, and synthetic constitute a method by which adult intern teachers explore and identify current academic and professional interests in the context of their own life histories. *Currere* offers an opportunity for intern teachers to expand their intrapersonal understandings in order to broaden and strengthen their intellectual and professional lives. The method of *Currere* can reveal the complex relationships among student, teacher, and curriculum, where curriculum is reframed from a course of study to *Currere*, a running of the course. Through *Currere*, intern teachers can re-experience the past from the perspective of a teacher-in-training; imagine their future lives as teachers; analyze both past and future to locate their shared influence on the present; and finally, develop new understandings and perspectives from which to move forward (1995).

Maggie recognizes the role of autobiographical story in shaping educational

practice while also becoming aware that she is adding chapters to her own autobiography daily:

I will write books about the realities of education, because our stories need to be told, whether as works of fiction, articles to inform the public, or plays that show the emotional and literal implications of the world on the classroom. It is not enough to just teach activism and hope that activism happens. I want to provide an example of what my students can be through my own actions.

In what ways does *Currere* support intern teachers in drawing meaning from their personal stories to enhance their understanding of curriculum? Can *Currere* be used to bring forth the power of stories in shaping classroom curriculum in a manner that also includes students?

### **Opening Up the Being of an Intern Teacher**

There is a quite different reason why the understanding of being is possible at all, namely that there is a “there,” a clearing in being—i.e. a distinction between being and beings. (Gadamer, 1975, p. 248)

*Currere* aims at enlarging the student’s ability to make use of the curriculum in the service of his development. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 156)

The training of a teacher for...the curriculum of intensity, spontaneity, authenticity, and discipline must be training to study oneself. (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 591)

An intern teacher can be startled to find that her sense of competence and precision as a college student has been replaced by deep feelings of insecurity and anxiety as she embarks on the journey of dis-covering her Being as a teacher. Being a teacher means being authentic in the context of a carefully crafted teacher-presence. The Being of a teacher is constantly monitoring her own actions and responses while simultaneously being in tune with her students.

***Currere, identity, and being.*** The teaching internship is designed to help intern teachers explore and develop their Being, or professional identity, as teachers. Aristotle

frames the question of identity as the “search for the parts or elements in the thing which do play that very fundamental role, which are what it is to be that thing” (Nussbaum, in Magee, 1987, p. 40). This search for identity has as its ultimate goal an understanding of what it is to be. The search is, of necessity, grounded in language. Language is capable of understanding and describing identity but can never completely capture the ineffable essence of Being itself. Therefore, the term *identity* will suffice, but always with the understanding that it is a metaphor for the greater realization that the nature of Being is beyond words. Once *identity* is explored, Being, and its meaning, is experienced in the silences—felt in the body and known by the spirit. As researcher, my understanding of identity in terms of its metaphorical representation of Being was key in allowing an authentic interpretation of the intern teachers’ experiences using *Currere* to understand curriculum. In my experience, phenomenological work is always concerned with identity in some form or fashion. We dwell in identity as we strive to delve within and reach beyond to find our home in Being.

Chris’s language in the following excerpt from his *Currere* Progression shows the tension between identity and his essential Being:

As a result of my success as department head, I made another shift into being the county supervisor for mathematics curriculum and instruction. I always thought of holding this position early in my career, and now that I was here I found that I was missing the classroom. Even though I was able to effectively shift how math was being taught for thousands of students, I still felt like I belonged back in the classroom. So, I went back. I felt right at home teaching high school again. I moved back into my role as teacher and department head. I wanted to get back to where I started. Back to connecting with students, back to making a difference in their lives, back to making my class a positive and engaging one, and back to making math a meaningful and interesting subject for them to learn. And that is where I stayed. I would still continue to offer my opinion regarding educational policy in hopes of enacting far reaching constructive change to public schools.

Erica finds her identity in acknowledging and embracing the Being of each student:

In order to create an environment of respect for the entire being that makes up the “student,” I will have to ensure that I establish firm expectations regarding how my students treat each other in the classroom. As I mentioned in the other sections, I will have them actively consider what they wish to see in the world and apply it as “ground rules” in the classroom. Does my student wish to feel validated by peers, family, and friends? Well, fine, what are ways that people could express this validation? By showing interest in what others have to say? Okay, well, this is now a rule. Politely listen to your peers and provide relevant feedback, for instance.

Heidegger acknowledges the impossibility of language to capture authentic Being and turns to thinking in terms of *Dasein* or *being-in-the-world*. In *Dasein*, I see a relationship to *identity*. Each of us is known to others, and ourselves, in terms of our worldly orientation. This fact is inescapable, yet one senses something more beyond the elements that compose identity. Maggie captures the simple truth of existence beyond identity:

Students remember kindness. Students remember safety and acceptance. If I can grant that to a student, then I will make at least some small return on the gifts I have been given.

Does completing the *Currere* process during the internship allow intern teachers the space to understand curriculum in its myriad facets? How does the individual make meaning of curriculum based on the connections made through the *Currere* process?

***Currere, memory, Dasein, and pedagogy.***

Memory is comprised of conscious and unconscious elements that are deeply ingrained in *Dasein*'s existence. (Casey, 2000, p. 305)

*Currere* maintains that to describe one's own developmental process is to generate it as well. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 143)

*Currere* shows the intern teacher that he or she is an individual with a pedagogical identity that is distinct from the school's curriculum. The *Currere* process can strengthen intern teachers' resilience against being overwhelmed by their experiences of the

internship school. While the environment and expectations of the school are a large part of the lived experiences of intern teachers, they do not define the intern teachers themselves (Pinar et al., 1995). As previously noted, *Currere*'s literal meaning "to run" represents the living flow of curriculum. The flow, the running of lived curriculum, occurs whether one recognizes this fact or not. However, awareness of the running of lived curriculum developed using *Currere* can make classroom curriculum more intentional and more purposeful (Biesta, 2013). "The question for teachers, especially new ones, is: Am I guiding a curriculum that is running in the right direction?" (p. 85).

After many different stories and observations, all three of my *Currere* companions, Chris, Erica, and Maggie, wanted to voice the result of their opening to an awareness of the running of lived curriculum in the classroom. Maggie's voice was the most insistent:

During my placements at a middle school I was routinely told that my students were bad kids by both their teachers and administrators, but I never saw behavior that indicated that assessment. I think that if I declare my students to be "bad" then I am not helping anyone, I am hurting the attitude of my classroom. If I think of my students as "bad," then I am the one with bad students. It won't help my teaching and it won't help what my students can achieve. I could have so many other things in my classroom than "bad" students. I could have students who need extra reinforcement, or students who could use additional inspirations, but to quantify them as just "bad" makes the challenge I am given a hopeless one, rather than one that requires creativity. To call them "bad" isolates them from the common humanity that makes teaching possible; it makes them harder to love. The love of teaching and care for students is the driving force for me to go above and beyond the mere motions of education.

Chris discovered his administrative ambitions through his *Currere* process experience. All the same, he was drawn to the classroom because he developed his understanding of the legacy that can be built based on his awareness of lived curriculum:

Learning about all of the problems that policy makers have caused really makes me want to help schools reach their potential. It will be difficult for me to



reconcile my wanting to teach in the class with my desire to promote effective policy to improve education in general, but if I find the classroom pulling me back I can't imagine leaving a better legacy.

Erica's awareness of the flow of lived curriculum (though still unnamed) also arose from her *Currere* experience:

With this knowledge of wanting to establish empathy in my students, allowing them to be a part of the curriculum seems to be a great way to ensure that. By having them choose novels that they find interesting, perhaps they will be able to make deep connections to various themes presented often in Young Adult literature, many of which regard empathy itself. Along with this, by contributing actively to the course content, struggling students may work harder than they would have in a classroom where they are passive spectators.

*Currere* allowed Erica the opportunity to real-ize the benefits of explicitly drawing her students into the creation of the lived curriculum in the classroom. She recognized this as a way to develop empathy among her students which, in turn, can lead to a living classroom space that supports curiosity and learning. Does *Currere* lead naturally to an awareness of lived curriculum? Can using the *Currere* process during the internship experience result in a clearer and more resonant understanding of curriculum?

***Currere* and control in the teaching culture.** I return briefly to add context to the concept of control. Where does the concept of control discussed previously originate? In 1837, Horace Mann's Common School movement promised a basic education for all children funded by the government (Levin, 2000). Since then, American public schools have been viewed by too many as the cause of, and paradoxically the solution to, America's political, social, and economic ills. In a broad sense, schools are at the heart of the struggle for the soul of education. The purpose of education from two different perspectives can be contrasted as: to equalize society and create the basis for social

harmony, or to turn out workers in order to maintain America's control as a world power.

Biesta suggests a reason for the latter:

We live in impatient times in which we constantly get the message that instant gratification of our desires is possible and that it is good. The call to make education strong, secure, predictable, and risk-free is an expression of this impatience. (Biesta, 2013, p. 3)

If these forces of a control orientation are undercurrents in educational discourse, it is easy to translate them into power struggles between and among teachers, students, administrators, and parents. The nervous but bright-eyed intern teacher walks into the school building and into the middle of a tug-of-war for control that is confusing at best and disillusioning at worst. Intern teachers have little, if any, control over the extant culture of the internship school. Even so, while the existing culture has importance and influence, there are always opportunities to reframe and reinterpret it (Heidegger, 1962).

Maggie remembers teachers who helped her reframe the culture of the school she attended as a child:

It is not the intellectual content of my education, however, that I remember most. I am extremely indebted to the teachers that allowed me the safety and freedom to be myself in their classes. I didn't feel like I belonged in my home town, and I didn't have many friends until High School. I did feel safe in the classroom. My elementary and middle school teachers found ways to value and improve my skills. They taught me that if being normal didn't make me happy, then I shouldn't bother to be normal.

Can *Currere* serve a basis for new teachers to move beyond the focus on control to a reframed experience of thriving?

### ***Currere's Role in Phenomenological Research***

The term "phenomenology" expresses a maxim that can be formulated: "To the things themselves!" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 50)

To return to the things in themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every

scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learnt beforehand what a forest, a prairie, or a river is. (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. xxii)

One aspect of the extraordinary potential of phenomenological writing is that its language can take the reader to the edge of what can be known through words and into the space beyond, to an understanding that is recognized, yet is impossible to articulate accurately. This is the gift of phenomenology – it can open doors to the authentic dwelling places of Being. Erica shows that *Currere* goes hand-in-hand with phenomenological study:

This project was much more enlightening than I originally supposed it would be. Honestly, going back to my struggle with authenticity as a human and, later, perhaps as a teacher, I must admit that I considered omitting some things from this exploration that I thought might cause the reader—you—to judge me. Namely, although it was obviously a pivotal moment in my educational experience, being held back is not something the general “good student” likes to advertise about themselves.

Erica’s conclusion above became evidence that my practice of phenomenology would have to broaden to include intern teachers’ observations and insights in addition to their relayed concrete experiences. *Currere* allowed me to reveal the concrete lived experiences I gathered as a phenomenologist in this preliminary work with intern teachers’ regression and progression stages. Beyond the concrete, I also gained access to each intern teacher’s analysis and synthesis stages which were designed as opportunities for personal interpretation of lived experiences.

Erica introduces Mr. Loring again as she interprets an experience from her middle school years:

In Mr. Loring’s class, we read John Steinbeck’s *The Red Pony*. Mr. Loring, an avid Steinbeck reader and longtime fan, discussed his personal experiences with the novel before the lesson and throughout the time we read the book. He regarded the district’s treatment of the book as more-or-less a bildungsroman, or

coming-of-age story, as a gross simplification of the message it was trying to send. He told us that although we are reading the story now, he wished that we might return to it in our adult lives. He said that the novel might perhaps take on deeper meaning once we've undergone loss. I internalized this, and years later I grew into the deeper meaning of life and loss. Mr. Loring planted a seed that not only grew into a mature understanding of literature, but also into a mature understanding of the power of teachers.

My role as phenomenological teacher made it necessary to adapt and allow space for my interpretation of writings and conversations that included individual intern teachers' interpretations. The meaning and recursive nature of deep interpretation as an essential element of human science research expanded to include this new element of the lived experience of meaning-making:

From the investigation itself we shall see that the methodological meaning of phenomenological description is *interpretation*. The logos of the phenomenology of *Dasein* has the character of hermeneuein through which the proper meaning of Being and the basic structures of the very Being of *Dasein* are *made known* to the understanding of Being that belongs to *Dasein* itself. (Heidegger, 1962, pp. 37-38)

As I undertook a hermeneutic interpretation of lived experience in this preliminary project with intern teachers, I was guided by my respect for *Dasein*, my awareness of the nature of Being, and the joy I take in pedagogy. Does *Currere* open doors to authentic lived experiences that can add value to the process and pedagogy of the teaching internship? As I engaged with the phenomenon of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum, I was prepared for insights and surprises along the way. I stayed open to the phenomenon coming into presence and then making meaning as authentically as possible.

### ***Currere* as “Letting Learn”**

What teaching calls for is this: to let learn.  
(Heidegger, 1993e, p. 380)

I kept Heidegger's charge above at the forefront of my work with intern teachers.

It was my role to let the intern teachers learn the path of "letting learn" in their interactions with students in a curriculum understood as a living, growing thing.

Heidegger adds:

Indeed, the proper teacher lets nothing else be learned than—learning...If the relation between the teachers and the learners is genuine, therefore, there is never a place in it for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official. (p. 380)

Chris discovered his mission as an educator in his *Currere* synthesis long before his internship began:

I want to work in the schools, and I want to make a direct impact in students' lives. At the same time, though, I want to have an impact on how math is taught in schools. I want to be an expert, and I want to use that expertise to enact change in the lives of children.

*Currere* is a process that intern teachers can use to understand curriculum better, but there is also much to dis-cover about one's mission regarding teaching and study (Pinar & Grumet, 2015). What is it like for intern teachers to develop an ongoing attentiveness to lived experience as a result of using *Currere* during the internship? In what ways will intern teachers connect attentiveness and lived experience to curriculum and pedagogy as a result of *Currere*?

### **Getting Grounded to Go with the Flow**

Part of the obligation of the investigator of *Currere*, however, is to speak from where he lives, making clear this biographic basis. (Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 70)

I arrived at last at the place where I had to say goodbye to Erica, Chris, and Maggie. They delighted me throughout this opening-up of *Currere*, but it was time to turn to new voices. Five current MAT intern teachers who had already completed the traditional *Currere* process assignment at the beginning of the program became my

newest travel companions. I was filled with anticipation about expanding my understanding of the potential for the *Currere* process in teacher preparation by listening to and conversing with these five who used the *Currere* process to understand curriculum during the full-time teaching weeks of their classroom internships. These five were destined to become my *anam cara*, which O'Donohue (1997) describes as those with whom one can talk openly and share a sense of recognition and connection. As part of the conversation and interpretation, I committed to bringing only my authentic self to the research.

Before I dove whole-heartedly into the exploration of my phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand Curriculum?** I needed some one-on-one time with Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty to refresh my philosophical grounding that anchored me in my research. From this wellspring, I also describe the methodology through which I gather my *anam cara* (1997) and make meaning from these intern teachers' experiences with *Currere*.

### CHAPTER THREE:

#### PHILOSOPHICAL CURRENTS THAT GUIDE THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF CURRICULUM AS *CURRERE*

Highest good is like water. Because water excels in benefitting the myriad creatures without contending with them and settles where none would like to be, it comes close to the way. (Lao Tzu, 551-479 B.C.E./1975, p. 64)

No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man. (Heraclitus, 535-475 B.C.E./2013, p. 1)

The ebb and flow of life is like a river that shapes one's experience. This river is often placid, even lazy, but sometimes the current's tug and force are volatile. Unless one chooses to cling to the stability of the shore, the journey is bound to be an adventure.

What I love most about rivers is:  
You can't step in the same river twice  
The water's always changing, always flowing...  
But people, I guess, can't live like that  
We all must pay a price  
To be safe, we lose our chance of ever knowing  
What's around the river bend  
Waiting just around the river bend

I look once more  
Just around the river bend  
Beyond the shore  
Where the gulls fly free  
Don't know what for  
What I dream the day might send  
Just around the river bend  
For me  
Coming for me. (Menken, 1995)

A human being can allow external forces to overtake perceptions of her life's meaning, or she can try (in vain) to alter the flow by attempting to control entirely those forces that give her life its direction. I find comfort and purpose lie somewhere in-between, and both are captured by the philosophical symbolism of the river. I choose to allow the river to reveal itself to me in all its grandeur as I float along in my small, yet

sturdy craft, but I become alert and active with my paddle when the river's force threatens to dash me against the rocks (Aoki, 2005). There are many unknowns in my journey as a phenomenologist as I navigate this river, but phenomenology has transformed my fear of that unknown into curiosity and wonder. I can trust this river, as long as I keep my wits about me. I no longer live with any illusions that I must paddle upstream, against nature, to discover my purpose. I have learned how futile, and unwise, it is to fight the current. I know that finding the place where my river returns to the sea is the destination, but becoming part of the river itself, with its ever-changing scenery and unpredictable moods, is home. "For life and death are one, even as the river and the sea are one" (Gibran, 1923, p. 80).

### **How Does One Know a River?**

Day begins in youth,  
 Where it commences growing,  
 Another is already there  
 To further enhance the beauty, and chafes  
 At the bit like foals. And if he is happy  
 Distant breezes hear the commotion;  
 But the rock needs engraving  
 And the earth needs its furrows;  
 If not, an endless desolation;  
 But what a river will do,  
 Nobody knows.  
 (Hölderlin, 2012, p. 37)

The river I invoke as metaphor is not simply the water. Nor is it merely the path that guides the flow. The essence of the river itself is the unification of the dynamic interaction in-between the ground and the water. The paradox of unity is found in the interactions in-between. The energy and the life of the river depend on the riverbed as a steady conduit that is also yielding, and the water as a determined force that can also be guided. So it is with education: The river is curriculum—that which guides and adapts. So



it is with becoming a teacher: The river is the path of preparation – simultaneously embracing what is unknown along with what is eternal. I grow as a physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual being as I wander, and wonder, down this river of time, space, and lived experiences with others.

After describing my turning to the phenomenon of interns making personal meaning of curriculum as lived experience in Chapter One, and after exploring curriculum as a pedagogical dwelling place in Chapter Two, I was eager to dive into conversations with my intern participants around the question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?**

I have grounded my thinking in the ideas of the philosophers with whom I resonate most in terms of their contributions to my understanding of the foundations of phenomenology and pedagogy: Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Through the power of my imagination, combined with their powerful writings, I have enjoyed many opportunities for “conversation” with each. These philosophers and I are well-acquainted by now, and each understands my eight-year position as a director of a graduate teacher preparation program as well as my commitment to the work of transformative education. Below, I offer a composite description of my intellectual sojourn toward being and becoming as I spent invaluable one-on-one time with each of my philosophers for an afternoon of conversation in real-time.

### **Tributaries – The Philosophers Speak**

I made arrangements for my philosophical conversations with Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty some time ago by reserving an afternoon rental on a two-

person pedal boat on a calm river inlet. While one person can guide a rowboat or canoe alone, a pedal boat takes the combined strength of two to move forward and steer with intention. Taking a shared pedal boat ride is also a quick way to get in synch with another: finding a shared rhythm and speed for pedaling together; choosing the direction collaboratively; and discovering the joy of working in unison. My thought was that being out on the river enjoying nature and working toward a common purpose as we pedaled together would make each conversation more relaxed and informal. The day was bright and warm, and I was anticipating an adventure as I prepared to “hear” the philosophers’ thinking come to life as informal conversation.

The texts from which the philosophers’ ideas have been paraphrased and upon which these dialogs are drawn are: Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* (1962), *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (Krell, Ed.,1993), and *Poetry, Language, and Thought* (2013); Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (1975), *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (1976), and *Gadamer in Conversation* (Palmer, ed., 2001); and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (2014) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968).

### ***Being and Letting Learn with Heidegger***

I began my intellectual journey on a bright, warm day. The first tributary I traveled belongs to Martin Heidegger. He was right on time at our designated meeting place. As I pedaled to the dock, I could not help thinking of his troubling association with the Nazi Party, so I wondered if he would be guarded during our conversation. I greeted him enthusiastically nevertheless; for many years I have been a great admirer of his phenomenology. He was very dignified as he climbed aboard, and we developed a good

rhythm of co-pedaling. Dr. Heidegger revealed himself to be an intense, but warm personality. He was more plain-spoken in person, so we talked easily from the beginning:

Leslie: I am very happy to be here with you today, Dr. Heidegger. I admire your focus on *Dasein* rather than consciousness as the origin of philosophy and your identification of phenomenology as the method of ontology. I appreciate deeply this opportunity to talk with you about my phenomenon of study. My phenomenological question is: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** Can you give me some thoughts on connections between your philosophy of *Being* and the idea of curriculum?

Heidegger: That's an interesting relationship to ponder. First, I must clarify *Being* if I am to discuss the connection to curriculum. Being is the most universal and transcendent of concepts. Aristotle gave the ontological question of *Being* a new basis as a transcendent category but left it as a dark and unexplored concept. You see, philosophy has not traditionally concerned itself with *Being*; the concept has been considered trivial and its study unnecessary. I consider *Being* the most basic universal concept – the thread that runs through all that exists. And because the term is ambiguous and lacks clarity of meaning, I consider the concept a very important one to explore. The way to do it is by examining the evidence of *Being* – the things themselves. I call that which is the part of each of us that knows of its Being and ponders its purpose *Dasein*. You can also think of *Dasein* as humans' *Being-in-the-world* as disclosed through moods.

Leslie: I see. The connections to curriculum are already becoming clearer. *Curriculum* is a term that is also clouded with ambiguity. It is often understood erroneously as the words of experts residing in a three-ring binder for teachers to *make*

*happen*. I fear that *curriculum* has become merely a technical term. Its meaning has narrowed, and its study is trivialized as unnecessary. Can *Curriculum* be a cousin of *Dasein* to represent *Being-in-the-classroom*?

Heidegger: Yes, I think that is one very important connection, but I want to expand your thinking on this. *Dasein* is Being-in-the-world, disclosed through moods, in particular, through *anxiety*. The anxiety of which I speak comes from the human perception of being “thrown” into the world and pondering the possibility of non-existence – the *nothing* associated with death. There is a great amount of tension inherent in *Dasein*, and I think that this tension is in the classroom space as well. The *nothing* to a child may not be the concept of death, but learning has to be a frightening thing when the alternative is not knowing, which to some represents inferior Being.

Leslie: I agree. There is a lot at stake in a classroom, and your philosophy is very important to me as I approach this study. Since you’ve mentioned the classroom space, I would like your thoughts on the classroom as a dwelling space.

Heidegger: Leslie, make sure you do not confuse the building with the dwelling. An empty classroom, walls stripped bare, is not a dwelling space. One has to start with building to attain dwelling, but remember that *dwelling* is the way the humans in the classroom express their *Being*.

Leslie: This resonates deeply with me. My conception of curriculum has much more to do with its practical and emancipatory aspects. Your words guide me to consider curriculum as dwelling. I now imagine the concept or theory of curriculum using your term *wesen* (essence) and the lived classroom curriculum as *an-wesen* (presencing).

Heidegger: What an appropriate appropriation of those terms—as a professor who enjoys inspiring his students, it just makes sense that my philosophy would relate so well to education. Now, I also want you to remember that the technical aspect of curriculum should not be ignored. The *telos*, your purpose or goal, encompasses both the matter and the aspect of the classroom dwelling space.

Leslie: So, like Vermeer’s “The Milkmaid,” the *matter* is the pottery and the shape—the space and containment potential comprise its *aspect*. Do you think I can make the connection between *Being* and *curriculum* in that both hold infinite potential for *Becoming*? As I read your essay “The Question Concerning Technology,” I appreciate your metaphor of the silver chalice as representing the four *causa* of creation: *materialis*, or what matter forms the object; *formalis*, or the shaping of the object; *finalis*, or the human purpose the object will serve; and *efficiens*, or the creative force that brings the object into being. I do not see the four *causa* as linear or even separate; they are unified, and the meaning develops from the interactions between and among them. I interpret the four causes as having applicability beyond the technical aspect of making a *thing* and also representing human development through the pedagogy—the artistry—the revealing of truth—that develops through an exploration of lived curriculum. However, I suggest replacing the chalice with the image of the crucible to represent the classroom and the internship experience as the dwelling space of lived curriculum for intern teachers. The crucible is an object associated with transformation, yet it also represents the human condition of being tested and shaped through difficulty. It merges with my philosophical construct of the in-between as the space in which the art of becoming is created from the exploration of one’s human potential.

Heidegger: Yes, I think you can very well tie *Being* and *curriculum*. And yes, the four causes do not exist without the others – I see where you are going with your thinking on the in-between. And as for your work with intern teachers, the crucible is indeed an appropriate adaptation for your study.

Leslie: That brings me to my question regarding phenomenology. I want to talk to you about my question in terms of its phenomenological orientation. I am using William Pinar's *Currere* process and studying the lived experience of intern teachers piecing together, or constructing, curriculum as a dwelling place for their pedagogy. I have an orientation toward curriculum that discloses itself over time in the often-overlooked quotidian experiences in a classroom as the vessel of lived experience.

Heidegger: Hermeneutics is an important part of phenomenology. Dis-covering the surface of things and interpreting the emergent themes is a way to reveal the essence of a phenomenon and connect it to the universal *Being*. A phenomenon can be hidden, covered up, or in disguise, and I suspect that your orientation of curriculum as lived experience may fall into the category of a *forgotten* phenomenon. But be careful to separate your interest in revealing the broader truth of curriculum from your study of your interns' lived experiences of discovering curriculum. During your hermeneutic rendering of themes, trust that the phenomenon of *curriculum* will disclose itself.

Leslie: That is good advice. You have inspired me to consider carefully my role in the conversations with my interns. I am reminded of your profound words about teaching. Would you be so kind as to reiterate your thoughts on this with me, so I can take that with me as I move forward?

Heidegger: Certainly. Teaching is actually a greater challenge than learning because teaching involves creating situations and dwelling spaces conducive to letting students learn. Indeed, the teacher pedagogue does not focus simply on the delivery of information but rather on students' grasping and owning it themselves. In this way, the teacher has a deep ethical and moral obligation to students. He or she has to *learn how to let them learn*.

Leslie: I feel that we have established a very nice give and take. Since you have brought forth the ideas of ethics and morals, I want to ask you a question, and I realize fully that you may choose not to answer. But after all this time, you may be ready to address it. What were the reasons you did not apologize for your affiliation with the German Nazi party?

Heidegger: Well, I am glad you did not ask me to explain the affiliation, because I do indeed choose to remain silent on that topic. That said, I will give you some food for thought about the lack of apology. Perhaps I did not apologize because my work was focused on being-in-the-world. I wrote from my being but did not always make decisions from that source. An apology for human action would have put an irrelevant stain on the work itself. If I had apologized, I would have attached those actions to my words in a way far worse than the current situation. As it stands now, people must wrestle with the idea of the works and acts originating from *Dasein* and those from the socialized human. Remember, I am a teacher, too. The lectures I delivered were wildly popular for a reason. My lectures have never really ended; they continue to be the beginnings of conversations that inspire newer and broader thought. I am masterful at "letting learn." Can you open to the possibility that this choice is my Mona Lisa? My lack of apology

keeps questioning alive. More important, an apology would be a negation of my philosophy. Does *Being* only disclose the positive? Is not the ungraspable truth much broader than that?

Leslie: I understand your point. Thank you for such a meaningful conversation. I will start my *Currere*-based conversations with my interns by quoting you: “Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn” (1993e, p. 380). I am certain that I will call upon your wisdom again and again.

Heidegger: Feel free. I am happy that the ideas I cherish are still actively shaping phenomenology.

I returned Martin Heidegger to the dock, waved goodbye, and set out for the next tributary of my river where Hans-Georg Gadamer had promised to be waiting. I was lost in thought about the exchange with Martin Heidegger as I pedaled, realizing how important the work I am doing can be for society as well as for education. I grew more excited to learn more from the next conversation.

### **Conversing about Conversation with Gadamer**

Sure enough, Hans-Georg Gadamer was waiting at the waterside as I pedaled up. He appeared to be anticipating the day as he gave me a genial smile and a friendly wave. I remember thinking that surely this gentleman would expand my horizon even further. Gadamer carefully climbed aboard and situated himself. He and I greeted one another and began pedaling together in a waiting silence that did not last for long.

Leslie: I just had a most invigorating conversation with a colleague and mentor of yours, Martin Heidegger, about my phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?**



Gadamer: Oh, I have been a great admirer of Martin Heidegger since my days as his student. His philosophy is so influential, even now, whether people associate his name with it or not. I believe that a major reason he has become such a powerful figure is because of his passion for teaching. He uses language so vividly, and his spoken words hold such verve and are so inspiring. He was what you would today call a rock star in the world of philosophy.

Leslie: Yes, I can see that. His language is indeed passionate. I wonder if you and I can talk further about language in terms of shaping my upcoming conversations with my interns.

Gadamer: Absolutely. It is important to respect language, but to also keep it in perspective as a human means of sense-making. I am concerned that some are not ready to hear the things themselves speak in their own language of *Being*. Persons tend to use language to dominate meaning and distill phenomenological work into concrete science. In this technologically obsessed world, respect for the language of things is becoming more and more rare—only the poets still remain true to revealing the truth of things. So, in your phenomenological study, be sure to stay in close company with poets and artists. They will keep you on track and help you focus on truths rather than control.

Leslie: Thank you for that. I won't forget those words. They seem closely related to your ideas about hermeneutics.

Gadamer: That's true. I think the goal of hermeneutics is to tap into our consciousness and see what is worth questioning. If science is joined with our full experience of life, we achieve what I consider to be the linguistic constitution of the world. This is affected by history and is therefore expressed through language. And don't

forget that language is emergent in nature to articulate the world accurately. It changes for reasons that are not arbitrary. Language contains an inner infinity during a conversation. Hermeneutics focuses on revealing words and ideas through which one reaches and shares meaning with another. The goal is to render a particular expression into a universal truth. It's about finding the substantive essence in subjectivity.

Leslie: That really gets to the heart of why the researcher is also a participant in the conversations during phenomenological studies. It is the intersubjectivity that reveals the essentials that form from the flow of dialog in-between.

Gadamer: Exactly right. If the conversation partner who is to do the interpretation does not participate, common language and meaning, called texts, cannot be developed. Texts become enduring expressions of life and only occur in the space of a shared hermeneutical conversation during which common language develops and shared meaning is created. This gives the interpreter that which he or she must have to render the conversation down to its universals.

Leslie: I envision my participation in conversation as the way to stay conscious of, and present within, the experience as it finds the right words to express itself.

Gadamer: Yes. Words belong to the phenomenon—we don't assign words to force the phenomenon to show itself. We listen as the words emerge and the universals of the things themselves come into our language.

Leslie: This makes me think of one of my favorite poems:

Introduction to Poetry

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide  
or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means. (Collins, 2001, p. 16)

It is better to let the phenomenon flow out of itself toward us in hopes that the moment will come when ideas will finally begin flowing in rivulets of words, eddying around phrases, becoming dammed up by language that is at once liberator and obstacle, then breaking forth in a whitewater rapid rush and returning to calmer streams.

Gadamer: Agreed. And as you converse, stay mindful of the way in which I frame the term *prejudice*. I do not mean the word with its negative connotation of unfair bias. I mean it in the more literal sense of pre-judgment. Do your very best to be as free as possible of pre-judgments in your conversations. See the phenomenon with both your eyes and mind open to the becoming and revealing of the phenomenon as it is, not as you wish, want, or expect it to be. You will come much closer to the truth if you can maintain detachment from prejudice. Work to develop a broad and deep linguistic horizon so you will not automatically accept the easiest and nearest interpretation of your conversations as text. You want to be able to look and see beyond the immediate to get closer to truth. That is critically important to the hermeneutical phenomenologist.

Leslie: I will remember all we have discussed, and I appreciate your time with me. I now feel as if I am standing on solid ground even though I am currently afloat. I am grateful for all you have added to my understanding as I move forward with my work.

I returned Hans-Georg Gadamer to the water's edge. I bade him farewell and pedaled up the last tributary in my quest. My mind was full, and my legs were tired, but I was certain I had enough steam for one more river adventure to continue my quest to learn from the phenomenological philosophers.

### **Fleshing out the Mind-body Connection with Merleau-Ponty**

To my chagrin, Dr. Merleau-Ponty had been kept waiting, and I apologized for my delay as I described the two conversations I had already had. He was gracious about having to wait, and he took his seat beside me in the boat. We began to pedal, and I felt an easy connection develop rapidly between us.

Merleau-Ponty: Well, I imagine you want to flesh out your philosophical basis with some of my thoughts on the body-subject. On what project are you working?

Leslie: My phenomenological question is: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** I work predominately with intern teachers who are in their early twenties, and my conversation participants are most likely to be in that age range. Part of my influence on the interns' development as teachers involves encouraging reflective thinking about their physical presentations of themselves to their students as well as the mind-body connections that are always present during teaching. I want to make sure my study of curriculum honors and includes this important aspect.

Merleau-Ponty: I agree. I think the mind-body connection is a key element for you to pursue in your conversations with your interns around the topic of curriculum. In my view, the body is not a vehicle or a machine that serves the mind. The body is that which responds to situations rather than reacts to stimuli. The body is perceived as unified, and it exists in time and space. Human consciousness dwells in-between the body and the mind. They are inextricably connected to one another.

Leslie: I have done extensive thinking to articulate and expand on my conception of the in-between, but I had not thought of the body as part of the in-between. I had conceived of in-between in the realms of emotion and intellect, but I can now see that to overlook the body as part of an in-between experience is to miss a critically important facet.

Merleau-Ponty: And please remember, Leslie, that we do not perceive the world, the world is what we perceive. This may seem like a trivial statement, but I want you to think about it for a moment and see if you can tell me what it means to you in the context of your upcoming conversations.

Leslie: I think your statement means that we cannot prove that a world exists separate and apart from our bodily perceptions of it. So, because bodies and the minds within them, are all different, I will be bringing my world into contact with four other unique worlds. It is better that I not assume commonality, but that I stay aware of the need to first find commonality and build a shared understanding of meaning in order to unify our worlds and find the universals to share. Is that close?

Merleau-Ponty: Yes, I think you see that the order of the words changes the

meaning profoundly. Remember that idea during your conversations and stay true to it as you interpret your texts.

Leslie: I certainly will. Your philosophy builds quite nicely on Gadamer's advice to find common language in order to discover truth. What kinds of questions can I use to guide the conversations to focus on the lived experience of the body as part of curriculum?

Merleau-Ponty: I suggest you ask: What movements do you find habitual as you work with students in your classroom? What are these movements or actions, and what is it like for you as you move through them? You could also ask: What emotions and feelings are prevalent as you teach? How are these experienced in your body?

Leslie: I plan to focus on the interns' perceived differences in the body as past students and future teachers in the classroom space. I imagine these as extraordinary, powerful conversations.

Merleau-Ponty: I think it would also be wise to converse with your interns about their experiences of perception of the classroom space from their unique vantage points in their relation to the objects and routines in the classroom space. Guide them to see that each body must perceive in its own way – each student will bring his or her perceptions to the classroom and each of these perceptions will shape the lived curriculum. I also want to encourage you to see each important term or concept with new eyes. It will become itself more authentically through your interpretation if you interrogate it: break it apart, open it up, find the opposites. But if you do so in a way that is creative rather than destructive, enlightened truth is more likely to be the outcome.

Leslie: These are profound ideas that I will not forget as I move forward.

Merleau-Ponty: Where are you off to now?

Leslie: It's time for me to take what I have learned from traveling these tributaries and let them feed into the river of my own philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology.

What a wonderful day this has been!

Merleau-Ponty: I wish you and your intern teachers a rewarding experience.

I returned Maurice Merleau-Ponty to our original meeting place. I watched him walk away and disappear down the path he chose. I turned my little pedal-boat toward the mouth of the river that was my true destination.

### **My Philosophy of In-between Spaces**

I am grateful to the philosophers who have come before me for their ideas, inspiration, and commitment to thinking deeply about things some consider meaningless. In my world as a pedagogue and teacher educator, the most intriguing space—the space where growth occurs—is that of the in-between (Aoki, 2005). I take all I have learned from my dialog with the philosophers and combine it with my experiences as a pedagogically-oriented educator at the elementary, middle, high school, and graduate levels, and I craft my own expression of the philosophy of in-between. Every life is lived in between birth and death, so the case can certainly be made that all anyone ever experiences is the in-between state. Some conceive of the in-between as emptiness, literally neither here nor there. I disagree. Instead, I posit that the lived experience of in-between is not empty at all. In fact, it is quite full of bodily, spatial, temporal, as well as intellectual, emotional, and spiritual energy. It can lead to dark and frightening places, yet it is also the very pregnant space of possibility and growth. The in-between is where fear and faith wrestle and where balance and unity wait patiently to emerge.

St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) is a small liberal arts college situated in the rural setting of Southern Maryland and located adjacent to Historic St. Mary's City. It is distinguished as Maryland's Public Honors College. The Master of Arts in Teaching program currently offers the only graduate degree available at SMCM.

As I grew into my position as Director of Student Teaching for the SMCM MAT program, I became more and more aware of the ways in which the program unconsciously, yet deliberately, places intern teachers into challenging in-between spaces. I began forming questions around the idea of the in-between: What is it like for them to identify simultaneously as student and professional? How do they experience their individual professional identity development between their own conceptions of what it means to be a teacher and those of their mentor teachers? What is it like for intern teachers to make meaning of their internship experience between the technical curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived? More and more, this concept of in-between space piqued my curiosity. I became fascinated by the opportunity to explore the interns' lived experiences of in-between spaces, and I developed great interest in exploring ways to mitigate discomfort and maximize intern teachers' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth.

I propose that, once the construct of in-between is explicitly identified and examined, it can be perceived and pursued as an opportunity rather than as a trap, some type of punishment, or even purgatory. Physical discomfort and emotional dissonance can be understood as a pathway to emancipation from negative patterns rather than a downward spiral into apathy or even deeper into depression. Further, the intellectual and



spiritual feeling of disconnection can be viewed as an opportunity to learn and develop new ways of seeing and being.

A first departure is becoming aware of the true nature of the in-between and embracing the perceived negatives (as well as the discomfort of feeling like a fish out of water) as opportunities for developing wisdom and resilience. My main goal in working with intern teachers was to make the nature of the in-between space more intentional so that lived experiences of in-between spaces (especially those in education) could become more positive, lead to greater growth for individual teachers and students, and extend to the classroom and beyond. My second, ongoing, and more specific goal in examining in-between space was, and is, to improve teacher preparation and make schools more equitable, engaging, and relevant for students.

My philosophy regarding in-between space is highly compatible with the human science of phenomenology. Phenomenology examines lived experience and involves hermeneutical interpretation to get at what Husserl termed the “things themselves” or the essential nature of consciousness and being (Moran, 2000). I conceive of phenomenology as what happens in-between a phenomenon and the understanding of its essential meaning. Casey expresses the universality of in-between space:

On every kind of journey, one moves between heterogeneous places. A beginning-place and an end-place may stand out as the most conspicuous parts of a journey—they delimit the diurnal aspect, the daily duration, the *diēs*, of the journey—but the in-between places are just as interesting, and sometimes more so. (2009, p. 275)

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger recognizes the temporal nature of the in-between and observes that this is perceived as a span of time that is assigned between “now” and “then” (1962). Heidegger observes that the notion of in-between can lead to living in a

“concernful manner” so that *Dasein* (Heidegger’s term for *Being*) “never understands itself as running along in a continuously enduring sequence of pure ‘nows’” (p. 462).

I imagine a connection between the metaphysical idea of living in the moment and the lived experience of in-between space. The moments lived in-between are the spaces where identity is questioned, modified, altered and developed. I define “identity” simply as the construct by which humans recognize themselves as well as one another. Recognize comes from the Latin *recognocere*, *re* (again) and *cognocere* (know) and means “to perceive something or someone already known” (Harper, 2017). As human beings, we are all in a constant state of re-cognizing each other and ourselves—getting to know all over again that which is already familiar, but still demands recognition. In *Identity and Difference*, Martin Heidegger asserts that identity is integral to his concept of *Being* and links thinking and Being as belonging together through what he calls *appropriation* (1962). Heidegger goes further to claim that the essential nature of identity is part of the appropriation act:

The event of appropriation is that realm, vibrating within itself, through which man and Being reach each other in their nature, achieve their active nature by losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them.

To think of appropriating as the event of appropriation means to contribute to this self-vibrating realm. Thinking receives the tools for this self-suspended structure from language. For language is the most delicate and thus the most susceptible vibration holding everything within the suspended structure of the appropriation. We dwell in the appropriation inasmuch as our active nature is given over to language. (pp. 37-38)

Hans Georg Gadamer takes up this line of Heidegger’s emphasis on language as foundational to understanding the identity concept. Gadamer (1975) writes that

“experience of itself seeks and finds words that express it. We seek the right word—i.e.,

the word that really belongs to the thing—so that in it the thing comes into language” (p. 417).

Heidegger’s “realm” of appropriation is clearly an in-between space where persons and *Being* work to integrate and form identity. Gadamer’s assertion that language names the thing shows that language is a critical part of the experience of in-between *space*. From this perspective, language itself, conceived as a medium that spans in-between space can be understood as an integral key to meaning-making rather than as a constraint. If we perceive our identities and our experience through language, we are free to play and choose the language of all our human experiences, including those lived in the in-between spaces. Herein lies a connection to the use of *Currere* to understand curriculum not only in-between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived, but also dis-covered as common themes found between the past and the future that, after analysis and synthesis, guide the actions of “now.”

### **Naturally Occurring In-between Spaces**

I conceive of the in-between as inseparable from our experience as natural beings in the natural world. It is as simple as the transitions from day to night and back to day again. It is as complex as the revelation that the scale of human beings is located approximately midway in-between the most minute sub-atomic particles and the most massive galactic structures (Silleck, 1996). These natural occurrences exist apart from human perception, but our experiences as Beings-in-the-world are also most profound. Finding the profound in-between the quotidian elements of life is captured elegantly in David Abram’s description of a transformative natural experience in the opening of *The Spell of the Sensuous*:

Late one evening I stepped out of my little hut in the rice paddies of eastern Bali and found myself falling through space. Over my head the black sky was rippling with stars, densely clustered in some regions, almost blocking out the darkness between them, and more loosely scattered in other areas, pulsing and beckoning to each other. Behind them all streamed the great river of light with its several tributaries. Yet the Milky Way churned beneath me as well, for my hut was set in the middle of a large patchwork of rice paddies, separated from each other by narrow two-foot-high dikes, and these paddies were all filled with water. The surface of these pools, by day, reflected perfectly the blue sky, a reflection broken only by the thin, bright green tips of new rice. But by night the stars themselves glimmered from the surface of the paddies, and the river of light whirled through the darkness underfoot as well as above; there seemed no ground in front of my feet, only the abyss of star-studded space falling away forever. (1996, pp. 3-4)

This magical and transformative experience of perceiving oneself as existing literally in-between the heavens and the Earth could have been perceived simply as stars, water, and insects playing tricks on the eyes. Abram could have focused on the discomfort of the experience—he uses the word “vertigo” in his description, which is usually associated with unpleasant disorientation. He acknowledges the vertigo aspect yet makes the choice to interpret his finding himself in-between natural space as a magical moment in his life.

The natural world of in-between that includes humanity, as well as that which humanity can only witness, can be a place of peace, possibility, and infinite connectedness once one recognizes the in-between as a space for the evolution of mind and spirit. But the natural world does not have exclusive influence over the human lived experience. Examining this in-between space where identity is formed and shaped is a critically important undertaking on an individual basis in order to discover one’s authentic self. Identity as a pedagogue with an understanding of lived curriculum emerges more powerfully and positively when examined from an awareness of this philosophical, yet very real, in-between space.

### **Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Interns' In-between Spaces**

The MAT teaching internship is modeled on the teaching hospital concept, so ideally intern teachers are placed in internship schools as groups of at least five. The intent is to eliminate the historically isolated practice of mentor teacher and intern teacher and instead use the intern teacher group as the focal point for whole-school professional development. The intern teachers earn their master's degree over an extremely intense year of study and classroom preparation. Most MAT intern teachers are recent graduates of St. Mary's College. They have liberal arts degrees in specific content areas and come to the program with preparation from their Education Studies minor courses and some undergraduate field experiences in the St. Mary's County Public Schools.

When the graduate students return to campus after their recent graduation to begin the MAT as intern teachers, their first challenge is navigating the in-between spaces of the undergraduate and graduate worlds. They are accustomed to the life of a full time undergraduate wearing shorts, T-shirts, and flip-flops; they enjoy leisurely meals in an all-you-can-eat dining hall; and the only questions about parties on the weekends are "where?" and "in what order?" As graduate students, they find themselves in the same collegiate space with a radically transformed set of expectations: the shorts, T-shirts, and flip-flops become skirts and khakis; blouses and button-downs; and low-heeled pumps and loafers in order to enter the internship as professional educators who are role models for children. On the first day, MAT program leadership explains that school communities hold teachers to a higher standard in their personal as well as professional lives. Facebook profiles that formerly displayed perfectly acceptable pictures of parties and beach trips, suddenly must be edited carefully to remove anything that does not conform

to role-model status. Intern teachers are also expected to “lock down” their social media privacy settings that dictate who can see their profiles; most interns also alter their names by using their first and middle names rather than the surname for extra security. Teacher preparation programs essentially expect intern teachers to walk willingly into a space in-between student and professional where they have not yet had the opportunity to establish an identity that can frame and support their efforts.

The MAT program schedules interns to alternate in-between blocks of time on campus for coursework and out in the internship placement school sites. The interns have one way of living and being during the weeks they are acting as students on campus and another entirely different way of living and being during the weeks during which they are in their school placements. The schedule changes several times during the year, and interns are expected to navigate the in-between space of different sleep schedules, eating patterns, and ways of dressing, speaking, and behaving. They must navigate two completely different lives with two completely different sets of rules, norms, and expectations. Teaching interns are traditionally placed at two different school sites, so they must also contend with the in-between space of adjusting quickly to a new school placement after becoming acclimated, and attached, to the first one.

Once the interns are settled into their internship placements, they must live in a completely new, and often very challenging in-between space. They must learn to communicate almost immediately with their mentor teachers and are expected to establish an equitable share in classroom decision-making, all the while navigating the huge power differential as well as the reality that sharing an established teacher’s classroom from day one is virtually impossible. Further, intern teachers must

immediately present themselves as classroom leaders to their students in the very space where they came to learn to do so. Intern teachers arrive as students but are expected to perform as the teacher from day one. They are required to participate as members of the school team and faculty, but they know that they actually operate in the school with the status of welcome (in most cases) visitors.

This in-between space is often uncomfortable and can be agonizing. Many interns suffer from stress and battle anxiety. I have seen the power of challenging internship situations to shape individuals positively but have also witnessed how too much stress results in negative and unproductive internship experiences. A predominately and consistently negative internship experience is likely to have an impact on a teacher's entire career by establishing behavioral and emotional patterns of stress and negativity before the teacher is even hired as a professional educator.

### **Growth Through Explicit Examination of, and Reflection On, In-between Spaces**

I have a deep interest in studying the ways in which a thoughtful examination of the in-between space can mitigate stress and reduce discomfort. I maintain my curiosity as to whether becoming aware of the function, the possibilities, and the opportunities in all kinds of in-between spaces can make life more balanced and joyful. Too many human beings live and die in certain circumstances and conditions simply because of "stories" made up long ago that keep flowing through the generations without being confronted, questioned, and evaluated for rationality. This condition is prevalent in our educational structures. When intern teachers are empowered to make meaning from the tension developed in in-between spaces of teacher preparation, the experience becomes profoundly *in-tensional*. I have learned that educational spaces have extraordinary

potential for supporting intern teachers' growth and learning, and that the classroom can become a space where pedagogy thrives, and curriculum becomes more vibrant and alive. Clearly, the emptiness some perceive in the in-between space is inaccurate. The in-between space is actually a dynamic construct that is, at its essence, pure possibility.

### **Deep Diving: Van Manen's Phenomenological Process and Methodology**

As I developed my philosophical orientation to the phenomenon of intern teachers discovering, understanding, and internalizing curriculum and pedagogy, I realized more and more that making meaning regarding curriculum could support intern teachers' development in-between novice and experienced teacher. I came to understand that much more is possible during the mentored classroom space of the internship experience than simply gaining practice with lesson planning, procedures for activities, and student discipline. I always placed emphasis beyond the "doing" to include the "being" of my Classroom Management course using what my students affectionately called the "meta" method, wherein I stopped to explicate the humanity behind and beneath the doing. My philosophy as a hermeneutic phenomenologist deeply committed to pedagogy has always incorporated deep interpretation. As part of this, I made it my focus to also attend to developing intern teachers' "view from above" and their explicit awareness of being and acting as a classroom teacher. Using the Curren process with intern teachers was one of my best practices as a teacher educator in order to help interns go within, in-between, and beyond their visions of themselves as teachers to construct and evolve their own personal pedagogies of practice.

I was inspired by Max van Manen's most recent book, *Phenomenology of Practice* (2014), in which he builds on *Researching Lived Experience* (1997) to offer an



expanded view of phenomenology from many perspectives. Van Manen bases the book's title on the fact that his inspiration lies in the work of phenomenologists who were practitioners as well as academics. Van Manen characterizes the work of phenomenology of practice as, "*for practice and of practice*" (2014, p. 15). Most resonant with me is the idea of phenomenology as a means for reflecting on and during practice that can also have a role in preparation for pedagogical practice.

As I studied the phenomenon captured by the question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** my intent was to open up my participants' understandings of the concept of curriculum and practice of pedagogy. I intend-ed to explore reflective "seeing" of what connects the teacher to the students in a shared lived curriculum. Phenomenology is a practice and a method that suits these purposes well. In addition to the basic tenets of van Manen's phenomenology that I describe and explore in the next section, I remain dedicated to these concepts from *Phenomenology of Practice*:

Phenomenological research begins with wonder at what gives itself and how something gives itself. It can only be pursued while surrendering to a state of wonder.

A phenomenological question explores what is given in moments of prereflective, prepredicative experience [prior to evaluating or assigning attributes]—experiences as we live through them.

Phenomenology aims to grasp the exclusively singular aspects (identity/essence/otherness) of a phenomenon or an event.

The epoché (bracketing) and the reduction proper are the two most critical components of the various forms of the reduction—though the reduction itself is understood quite differently, at times incommensurably, and sometimes contested by various leading philosophers and phenomenologists.

Phenomenological reflection and analysis occur primarily in the attitude of the epoché, the reduction, and the vocative—variously understood. (2014, p. 27)

Prereflective and prepredicative *given-ness* focuses on the experience itself as it is lived and exists prior to any evaluation or assigning of attributes. This can be a challenge

for an educator, one whose professional efficacy depends on reflective and reflexive capabilities to respond rather than react to the myriad circumstances presented in a classroom space. This is where I focused on the meaning of the term *epoché*, Greek for *abstention*. I stayed aware of the importance of recognizing and bracketing the intern teachers' own preexisting assumptions to capture the concrete lived experiences they encountered more clearly. I remained true to phenomenology as I rendered the intern teachers' lived experiences, returned to the things themselves, and discovered new insights.

### **Navigating the Methodological Currents of Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

To do hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explications of meaning can reveal. (van Manen, 1997, p. 18)

I turn now to a discussion of van Manen's phenomenological guide, the "Methodical Structure of Human Science Research" from his 1997 work, *Researching Lived Experience*. In it, van Manen offers the following guidelines for a phenomenological study that I followed as I studied my phenomenological question.

Although listed in Chapter One, the guidelines bear repeating here:

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

### **Turning to My Phenomenon Which Seriously Interests Me and Commits Me to the World**

I am deeply committed to my work in teacher preparation. I can think of no better

way to spend my professional energy than by working to develop pedagogically-oriented teachers with a strong commitment to nurturing living curriculum in the classroom. My phenomenological question is an important one: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** Van Manen (1997) states the goal of phenomenology as a means by which to translate lived experience into a written expression of its essential nature. My intent is to inspire in the reader an immediate recognition of a familiar experience along with a new way of seeing its meaning. Simply stated, I am dedicated to work that will resonate with educators and capture the ineffable, non-quantifiable truths about the human contract between teachers and students as learners together reveling in discoveries both academic and aesthetic.

I oriented myself toward my phenomenological study, knowing it was critical that I balance the concrete, ontic aspects of lived experience along with the essential, or ontological, elements. I steered my thinking by bracketing my prior assumptions and biases in order to see clearly what was given in the lived experience descriptions I gathered from my intern teachers. This work is my life's legacy; as I study curriculum and pedagogy, I hold fast to my own pedagogy of care (1997). These are the stars by which I guide my work.

### **Investigating Experience as Lived Rather than Conceptualized**

I am passionate about authentic preparation for teaching, and I have had numerous experiences over the last 16 years that have brought me to this state of devotion. I know all the parts of my craft intimately—the mast consists of the expectations I set, the mainsail is the design of my instruction, the wind is the lived curriculum, and I have learned that the weather that tosses me about at times will, in time,

most certainly yield to calmer seas. Through it all, I continue striving to become and *be* the “decisive element” in the classroom (Ginott, 1972). I gathered all of this experience—the things I was so sure that I *knew*—and steered a course through which I set it all aside to see a new world through my intern teachers’ eyes. This simple act of faith allowed me to experience unexpected insights and epiphanies, and I gained a deeper, richer, sweeter understanding of that which I have already encountered.

One of the most powerful ideas I take from van Manen (1997) is that, “Nothing about the notion of pedagogy (parenting or teaching) should be considered “given” or “granted”; only that the meaning of pedagogy needs to be *found* in the experience of pedagogy, because the lived experience of pedagogy is all that remains if presuppositions are suspended” (p. 53). This became my mantra as a researcher. The phenomenological task set before me was to take all the vivid happenings and ideas that have delivered me to this port of Now and set them aside so as to remain fully open to what was disclosed, the *alethia*, by the new lived experiences I encountered (van Manen, 2014).

Because I depended on oral and written language as the compass and sextant to guide me through the waters of my study, I knew I must remember to experience the words and phrases as they were given. The etymology of words and the origin of idiomatic phrases point toward essences and nuances that have been covered over time. I heeded van Manen’s (1997) assertion that being attentive to origins of words and idioms would better connect me to the lived experiences that brought them into use. That orientation was of great value as I used language to draw forth what was given as authentically as possible. An example van Manen uses to show the importance of noticing and attending to language is in the phrase “care for”:

In caring for a child, I want to relieve the child of “care” in the sense of untimely or inappropriate worries, troubles, anxieties. But as parent or teacher I must be conscious as well that in such caring the child may come to be more dependent and dominated by the adult than is pedagogically desirable in the process of childrearing and teaching. Thus, the task of the adult is to tactfully “care for” the child in such a way that the adult does not take the place of the child but rather that he or she prepares such place wherein and whereby the child is empowered to be and become. (van Manen, 1997, pp. 58-59)

The passage above served as a reminder to examine carefully the language used to share understandings in conversations and in writing. This careful, hermeneutic attention to language happened *after* conversation. As my intern teachers and I faced each other to engage in conversation, I kept Gadamer’s (1975) words close as my beacon and guide:

A genuine conversation is one that we never wanted to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it. The way one word follows another, with the conversation taking its own twists and reaching its own conclusion, may well be conducted in some way, but the partners conversing are far less the leaders of it than the led. (p. 385)

These phenomenological conversations with my five intern teachers did indeed take on lives of their own and yielded language that un-covered themes that resonated with truth and meaning (1975).

### **Reflecting on the Essential Themes Which Characterize the Phenomenon**

Gaston Bachelard (1994) captures the phenomenon of dwelling in all manner of spaces. His rendering of the essential nature of shells was most resonant as I approached my research with intern teachers. As a river is home to a multitude of shell-dwelling creatures, likewise, our MAT program supports its intern teachers as they encounter “shells” in many forms: the classroom, the internship, and even their own bodies as they take on the movements and behaviors of a teacher. We worked with intern teachers to first form these shells, and then we worked to coax the intern teachers out of them.

I dwelled in my research work with an awareness of both the fragility and the durability of the intern teachers' shells. I promised to honor these shells and the humanity that depends upon them for shelter and safety. My task was to return willingly again and again to an unformed state and let my dwelling in the lived experiences of my intern teachers shape me in ways that helped me recognize and dis-cover common themes. I appropriated Bachelard's shell imagery to capture and represent the attitude with which I committed to allowing themes from the research to emerge and speak.

Van Manen (1997) characterizes themes as the *structures of experience* rather than conceptual abstractions (p. 79). He guides the researcher's rendering of lived experiences to the point where themes emerge by noting that themes originate from a desire to make sense of a phenomenon: the actual meaning-making process; being open to what is given; and interpreting lived experience to discover and disclose meaning. The craft in my particular study of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum is captured in van Manen's discussion of "The Pedagogy of Theme." As my intern teachers described their lived experiences, their self-reflection became the pedagogical practice by which they will serve students. I am one step removed, but the concept is the same regarding my relationship with my intern teachers. I committed to focused hermeneutical reflection during my study as I allowed authentic themes to emerge and disclose themselves.

Van Manen names three approaches to uncovering themes inherent in a phenomenon: holistic, selective, and line-by-line. I used a combination of these in my research plan described in this chapter. Further, I acknowledged the update to the Lifeworld Existentials van Manen adds in his *Phenomenology of Practice* (2014). In

addition to corporeality (lived body), temporality (lived time), spatiality (lived space), and relationality (lived Self-Other), van Manen has added materiality (lived things/technologies). I consider materiality an important and meaningful addition as I recognize the multitude of “things” and technologies with which teachers must contend daily. These five lifeworld existentials offered the starting point for my exploration of curriculum and pedagogy. To ensure I remained true to the elements and processes of phenomenology as I engaged in conversations with intern teachers, I turned again and again to the phenomenological philosophies of Heidegger, Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, and others to inform, support, and shape my work.

### **Describing the Phenomenon Through the Art of Writing and Rewriting**

Through this dissertation, I seek to capture the ineffable with language—to lead the reader to his or her own intensity of recognition and realization. I see phenomenological language as that which takes the reader to the edge of understanding—and then pushes the reader into the realm of meaning beyond words. Phenomenological writing and *Currere* combine perfectly to show lived curriculum as it reveals itself in the classroom. Many anecdotes from my *Currere* project are examples of the ways in which lived curriculum un-conceals itself through phenomenological expression. I remember my fifth grader who had recently lost his mother to cancer unexpectedly, returning to school on the day the class was reading about Christa McAuliffe and the Challenger disaster. He did not want me to change the plan, and the whole class behaved more gently and respectfully than I had ever seen before. And I will never forget the first snowfall of the winter of 1999. Students in the other two classrooms in my half-wall pod area were taking tests. My students and I were excited, so we made a pact to crawl outside without

a sound, so the other classes would not be disturbed and distracted. After that, I learned just how powerful that kind of shared adventure could be in strengthening the bonds of classroom community.

It was with a sense of wonder and privilege that I gathered intern teachers' lived experiences of understanding curriculum through *Currere*, and then wrote within and in-between the words and the silences of meaning to make a space for themes to show themselves as they were – and are.

I wrote to find what lay in-between reflection and actively making meaning of it. I wrote to be thoughtful as I navigated the paradoxical tension between distancing myself from what is known and becoming closer to knowing, and I lived in-between abstraction and concretization of experience. I wrote to exercise my ability to see while showing. I rewrote again and again to learn and grow rather than to simply polish. I wrote my way through language itself and into the phenomenon to bring it into the light as an offering for individual meaning-making.

### **Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Pedagogical Relation to the Phenomenon**

The relationships and connections among hermeneutic phenomenology, curriculum, and pedagogy contributed to my care in reflection and in bringing forth the phenomenon with a sense of wonder. Van Manen sets forth six non-linear aspects of wonder-inducing writing. They are not cyclic as is the overarching hermeneutical approach; they circulate as they become relevant:

Heuristic writing: what question? (instilling wonder)

Experiential writing: what experience? (pushing off theory)

Thematic writing: what aspects of meaning? (phenomenological thematizing)



Insight cultivating writing: what scholarly thoughts and texts? (insighting)

Vocative writing: what vocative words, phrases, examples? (voking)

Interpretive writing: what inceptual meanings? (deeper sensibilities)

(2014, p. 376)

*Curriculum* and *pedagogy* describe the act of teaching, what is taught, and the manner of learning. These words have many more facets and greater depth than many imagine; their meanings have an intangible, ineffable quality. For me, this is the beauty of *curriculum* and *pedagogy*; each individual is free to develop and personalize his/her own understanding. Van Manen (1997) speaks of a pedagogical orientation toward text that is strong, rich, and deep. I commit to the practice of phenomenological writing as a philosophy of action that is personal, situated, and especially suited for pedagogical and curriculum-oriented work aimed at building pedagogical competence.

### **Dropping Anchor and Considering the Research Context Parts and Whole**

I remained aware of my responsibility to maintain a focus on ethics and human benefit as I implemented my research plan. I reflected holistically, yet I also considered each element of the study as it was and as it contributed to the big picture. Van Manen suggests several ways to approach working with phenomenological text: thematically (organizing based on emergent themes); analytically (selecting only text that brings forth a theme); exemplificatively (presenting the essentials of the phenomenon and then providing examples); exegetically (in dialog with the extant work of phenomenologists); and existentially (focusing in turn on each of the lifeworld existentials) (1997). I used a combination of these, with a special interest in the existential as my intern teachers

completed the *Currere* process to explore their experiences with curriculum and pedagogy.

### **Going with the Flow: Charting the Course of Study**

My philosophical grounding in Chapter Three transported me from enlightening adventures with Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to an explanation of the philosophical in-between as it applies to intern teachers. I also explored the major tenets and concepts of phenomenology as captured in the many works of Max van Manen. Further, I listened attentively to the voice of William Pinar as he called me to *Currere* as a way to make meaning of curriculum. I moved forward into researching my phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** with a strong philosophical foundation to support my research.

Through my years as a director in a teacher preparation program, I observed a growing focus on the technical aspects of curriculum by education policy makers and program evaluation entities while curriculum theory plays an ever-diminished role. I embrace fully the need for concrete preparation for teaching, but theory provides an opportunity to attune to the relevance of, and purpose for, our Beings as teachers. My research interest is focused on unifying practice with theory, the concrete with the abstract, and the technical with the emancipatory, using *Currere* to understand curriculum in-between these elements to show that they need not exist in opposition. In *Theory as Liberatory Practice (1991)*, bell hooks (sic) writes of moving from the “margin to the center” (p. 3)— a clear connection among theorizing, practice, and the in-between space. She states, “I find writing—theoretical talk—to be most meaningful when it

invites readers to engage in critical reflection” (p. 8). My research plan was structured around my orientation to two forms of communication: first, that conversation is itself a lived experience shared and shaped by two or more participants; and, second, writing is a reflective form of conversation between the self and one’s Being.

### ***Currere* as a New Current**

In our busy world of education, we are surrounded by layers of voices, some loud and some shrill, that claim to know what teaching is. Awed, perhaps, by the cacophony of voices, certain voices become silent and, hesitating to reveal themselves, conceal themselves. Let us beckon these voices to speak to us, particularly the silent ones, so that we may awaken to the truer sense of teaching that likely stirs within each of us. (Aoki, 2005, p. 188)

All MAT intern teachers know the *Currere* process from their introduction to it at the beginning of the MAT program. At that time, the purpose is to allow interns to access their “accidental apprenticeship” (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000) and begin to visualize the journey ahead, identify common themes, and make sense of their position in-between graduate student and intern teacher. When I began my research study toward the end of the 2016-2017 MAT program, my interest was to explore how *Currere* might help post-internship, pre-service teachers to anchor themselves in their internship experience before seeking a professional position.

I had the luxury of selecting from among twenty-seven MAT interns to assemble my research “crew.” I focused on creating as diverse a group as possible that also reflected the make-up of the predominately Caucasian MAT cohort. I chose four female interns and one male; four interns in their early twenties and one in her late fifties; four interns that are SMCM graduates and one from another school; and two elementary and two secondary certification seekers, and one pursuing certification in theater. I approached the interns individually and asked them if they would consider working with

me as participants in this research. To my delight, all five responded with an enthusiastic “yes.”

I began my research once the internship portion of the program was complete, but while there were still a few remaining assignments for the intern teachers to polish and present before MAT graduation and certification to teach. Once back on campus, with classroom experience under their belts, the intern teachers seemed to come up for air for the first time in a long while. Despite this respite, they found themselves in a new, narrower in-between space: in-between the beginnings of understanding what it means to be a teacher developed as an intern and the meaning they will continue to discover and shape as teachers of record in their own classrooms and school communities.

It was at this pivotal time that I reintroduced the *Currere* process to my intern teacher research participants as having a different purpose, this time focused not on the transition from accidental apprenticeship to intern teacher, but rather on the transition from intern to full-fledged teacher.

### **Researching the Phenomenon**

My research plan was developed to conduct a series of two individual conversations and a third group conversation with my five intern teachers from the 2017 SMCM MAT cohort. The intern teachers were, at that time, nearing graduation. They had completed their internship experiences and were spending time on campus finalizing their research projects. Three of these five intern teachers are women in their early twenties who have recently earned their bachelor’s degrees from SMCM. One is a woman who is a career-changer in her late 50’s, and one is a man, also a recent SMCM graduate, who is certifying in Theater. Two of the women, one of whom is the career-changer, are

Elementary certifiers. One is interning in a Title I school and the other in a school that, although not a qualifier for Title I funds, still serves many students facing poverty and other challenges. I also worked with a secondary Biology candidate and a secondary Social Studies candidate. (See the Invitation to Participate in Appendix A, and the Consent Form in Appendix B.) Further descriptions of the intern teacher participants appear in Chapter Four.

The components of the study as it was conducted included: A brief, foundational reading that introduced a wider conception of curriculum; a *Currere* process project focused on the understanding of curriculum that spanned the time from the past internship experience through the future first year as a teacher; two individual conversations with each of the five participants; one whole-group shared conversation; and a group-created *Currere* project about the *Currere* process in relation to lived experiences that connected in some way to the individual conversations shared and discussed during the final group conversation.

Because these intern teachers were part of the MAT program I administered, I chose to conduct my study from my home to offer a comfortable and informal setting. In this way, I hoped to mitigate any potential impact based on our roles and relationships on campus and in the schools. Conversations lasted approximately one hour each and were recorded then transcribed by someone hired to do so. As soon as possible after each first individual conversation, but before the second, I provided the appropriate transcript to the participant for review prior to the next conversation. I also identified some possible follow-up questions from the transcript for the next round of conversation. I followed the

identical procedure after the second conversation with transcripts provided before the final group conversation.

**Time to read.** The foundational reading I selected is from *Curriculum in a New Key: The Collected Works of Ted T. Aoki*. Aoki's Chapter Six: "Teaching as Indwelling Between Two Curriculum Worlds" offers a brief, straightforward description of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived (Aoki, 2005). I selected this reading to help ground the intern teachers in the topic of curriculum, to provide a scaffold upon which to build meaningful written descriptions of their lived experiences, and to develop a foundation of shared language before engaging with *Currere-as-Conversation* (see Appendix C).

I encouraged the intern teachers to note Aoki's bifurcation of the word curriculum to show the word's technical aspect as the plan for teaching and also its essential nature as discovered in classroom lived experience. I asked them also to pay particular attention to Aoki's description of the teacher's situation as living in the *tensionality* that arises from dwelling in-between *curriculum-as-plan* and *curriculum-as-lived-experience*—in-between state mandates and the realities of classroom life. A look at the development of tension reveals its Latin beginnings as "to stretch." This meaning was expanded in Medieval Latin to mean "a struggle, contest." By the mid-1700s, tension's meaning stretched even further as it began to be associated with a sense of "nervous strain." *Tensionality* as Aoki uses it demonstrates the intern teacher's state of dwelling in-between a sense of purposeful stretching and a sense of nervous strain as she navigates in-between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. Aoki also explains the hegemonic understanding of curriculum as developed by planners to describe their intent

and interest in the form of learning objectives supported by recommended activities, suggested resources, and plans for evaluation. The teacher's role becomes merely that of an instrumental means to an end; a purveyor of the planners' goals; an implementer of others' ideas about what is needed for children they have never met (2005). As interns read, they came upon this passage:

Teachers are “trained,” and in becoming trained, they become effective in trained ways of “doing.” At times, at such workshops, ignored are the teachers' own skills that emerge from reflection on their experiences of teaching, and, more seriously, there is forgetfulness that what matters deeply in the situated world of the classroom is how the teachers' “doings” flow from who they are, their beings. That is, there is a forgetfulness that teaching is fundamentally a mode of being. (2005, p.160)

Whether he or she knows it or not, the teacher lives always in the tension between *curriculum-as-lived* and *curriculum-as-planned*. Aoki observes that, “inevitably the quality of life lived within the *tensionality* depends much on the quality of the pedagogic being that she *is*” (p. 160).

These were new ideas for my intern teacher participants. Completing this reading gave the intern teachers a broader perspective as they delved into the *Currere* process again, this time looking behind to their internship experiences and forward to their imagined, anticipated experiences as beginning teachers.

**Time to write.** After completing the reading, I asked the participants to work through the written *Currere* process (see Appendix D). I emphasized with each of the intern teachers that my aim was to dis-cover their authentic, individual internship experiences. Pinar writes, “Curriculum conceived as a verb — *Currere* — privileges the concept of the individual in curriculum studies” (2011, p. 2). This idea is reassuring as teacher preparation and teaching practice become more and more technically oriented,

and policy makers focus more and more on efforts to standardize education in the name of accountability. Pinar continues:

Each of us is different, meaning we each have a different makeup, genetically, as well as different upbringings, families and caretakers, significant others, and, more broadly still, in terms of race, class, and gender, inflected by place, time, and circumstances. Informed by culture and other homogenizing forces, each of us is, or can be, distinctive. (p. 2)

As I researched the phenomenological question: *What is the lived experience of intern teachers using Currere to understand curriculum*, Pinar's words reminded me that I was also dis-covering how the intern teachers used *Currere* to find their individual distinctiveness. This distinctiveness is what makes *curriculum-as-lived* come to life.

The participants sent their written *Currere* process to me several days before conversations were scheduled. I read and reflected on each of these prior to meeting for conversation. As the conversations progressed, each took on a life of its own. I remained mindful of allowing the conversations to come into presence, however, in order to support the intern teachers' responses to the overarching research question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** I prepared the following prompts:

Tell me about what you dis-covered about curriculum using *Currere*.

Describe experiences of curriculum-as-plan contrasted with curriculum-as-lived.

Describe the experience of your understanding of curriculum before and after completing *Currere*.

Tell me about what it was like to write your way through the *Currere* process.

Prior to beginning my research, I wondered about the up-coming and un-known conversations. Where would these prompts take my intern teachers and me? Would they



open into new questions? I knew it was important to be mindful of staying in the phenomenological space even as I was drawn into the living conversation.

### **Conversation as a Medium for Meaning-Making**

The language of conversation is an invisible connector in-between conversants. It is the medium through which flow ideas and intentions. Gadamer observes, “To speak means to speak *to* someone. That, however, does not mean simply that it represents the intended object for me, but rather, that it places it before the eyes of the other person to whom I speak” (1976, p. 65). As researcher into the phenomenon of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum, I was present *not* as an interviewer, but as part of the shared conversation. In conversation, my presence and the Other’s presence influenced each other in the same way as the water and the riverbed shape one another. I listened and responded with deep attention to what was said while I also noticed what remained unspoken. I maintained a hermeneutic attitude toward the conversations themselves (the focus of which is described below) in order to allow each lived experience to show itself in its authentic Being. Gadamer elaborates:

It is perfectly legitimate to speak of a *hermeneutical conversation*. But from this it follows that hermeneutical conversation, like real conversation, finds a common language, and that finding a common language is not, any more than in real conversation, preparing a tool for the purpose of reaching understanding but, rather, coincides with the very act of understanding and reaching agreement. Even between the partners of this “conversation” a communication like that between two people takes place that is more than mere accommodation. The text brings a subject matter into language, but that it does so is ultimately the achievement of the interpreter. Both have a share in it. (1975, pp. 389-390)

In my phenomenological conversations with intern teachers as individuals and as a group, meaning was not only constructed, but also revealed, freed, and disclosed.

## Writing as a Lived Experience

Although van Manen (1997) cautions that many find writing difficult, the graduate level intern teachers with whom I conversed had already demonstrated their expressiveness in writing through their original *Currere* assignment from the beginning of the MAT program. I reviewed the process of *Currere* with my intern teacher participants, and I shared van Manen's suggestions for written descriptions of lived experience:

- (1) You need to describe the experience as you live(d) through it. Avoid as much as possible causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations. For example, it does not help to state what *caused* your illness, *why* you like swimming so much, or why you feel that children *tend* to like to play outdoors more than indoors.
- (2) Describe the experience from the inside, as it were; almost like a state of mind: the feelings, the mood, the emotions, etc.
- (3) Focus on a particular example or incident of the object of experience: describe specific events, an adventure, a happening, a particular experience.
- (4) Try to focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness, or as it was the first time.
- (5) Attend to how the body feels, how things smell(ed), how they sound(ed), etc.
- (6) Avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases or flowery terminology. (1997, pp. 64-65)

I echoed van Manen's wording in his request for written accounts of lived experience:

*"Please write a direct account of a personal experience as you lived through it"* (p. 65). I made clear to the intern teachers that Meaning would arise from surface self-analysis, but from hermeneutical analysis of the phenomenon as experienced once the texts are completed.

## **Journeying Onward**

As I continue my quest in Chapters Four and Five, I remember the excitement about discovering what awaited me around the next bend in the river. I looked forward to listening, thinking, and making a space for the phenomenon to show itself. I hoped to discover themes and insights to strengthen teacher preparation and support intern teachers as they develop a broadened perspective of lived curriculum that translates into strong pedagogy focused on “teaching as letting learn” (Heidegger, 1993a).

May what I do flow from me like a river,  
no forcing and no holding back,  
the way it is with children.  
(Rilke, in Polikoff [Trans.], 2011, p. 144)

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### ***CURRERE* AS WELLSPRING TOWARD UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM**

We must lay in waiting for ourselves. Throughout our lives. Abandoning the pretense that we know. (Pinar, in Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. xv)

To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as come to a sense of one's own depth. (van Manen, 1997, p. 127)

Once again, I find myself in-between. I am in-between the discovery/exploration/grounding chapters of my research and now embarking on those chapters wherein my purpose is meaning-making. In Chapter One, I set off on a grand adventure. I gathered a few provisions (notebook, sketchpad, good pens, and my trusty etymology dictionary), stepped into my craft, and launched myself from the complacent, yet eroding shores of technically and politically driven educational practices. I breathed in the solace and renewal of the flowing river of lived curriculum, and I found a compass called *Currere*. It was at this beginning that I turned to the phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?**

Chapter Two was like the wind at my back as I opened new passages in my exploration of *Currere*, curriculum, and what it means to dwell in lived experience. I returned to my own original experience with the *Currere* process, and I re-captured the connections and insights of intern teachers from years past. Chapter Three described an imaginary, yet somehow very real, day on the river with Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty in turn. The conversation sparkled as I began to uncover the many ways of being in-between during the curriculum of the internship, and the ever-present tension in-between curriculum-as-mandated and curriculum-as-human-experience.

As I began this fourth chapter, I dropped anchor to create a space and a moment

in time to orient myself in the phenomenological research process. I chose a peaceful, protected bend in my river of lived experience to moor my wandering vessel, and I perceived that the *here-in-between* was a good place to dwell for a while. I made myself at home in the river bend as I reveled in the opportunity to dive more deeply into my intern teachers' experiences with curriculum using *Currere*. As I read my intern teachers' words and engaged in conversations about their internship experiences, I charged myself with staying vigilant with regard to those seemingly empty spaces in-between words where meaning so often lives and thrives. I reminded myself to attend not just to what was revealed, but also to what was also embedded in the words. I also chose to write through the *Currere* process myself as part of my research orientation in order to move out of the in-between and into meaning making. The following moments show my movement from *in-tension* to *intention*:

#### Regression

- Sitting in Connie's living room listening to her description of being a mid-year hire and noting her tense, often agitated tone
- Reading an intern teacher's *Currere* project and noting his surprise at the discovery of his interest in becoming an administrator
- Naming the river metaphor as a way to run this course
- “Talking” with Heidegger and realizing the interconnectedness of curriculum and Being
- Writing about the nature and manifestation of the in-between and realizing the deep complexity in that ostensibly simple concept

#### Progression

- Discovering specific ways in which intern teachers experience tension
- Un-masking word meanings through studying their etymology
- Finding deep meaning in what has not been said
- Revealing themes that emerge and finding some that are expected and some that are unexpected indeed
- Describing pedagogical implications that resonate with truth

#### Analysis

- Exploring the notion of tension, both positive and negative
- Making connections

- Examining depth of meaning
- Encountering surprise
- Finding truth in meaning

### Synthesis

This brief time in the personal and protected space of *Currere* has helped me solidify my courage at this in-between moment in my research. The in-between is the place where ideas connect to one another. There will always be a push and pull dynamic in the in-between, but that is the nature of the tension that gives rise to meaning emerging in often-surprising ways. I maintain my commitment to reading, thinking, and seeing deeply as I interact with and listen to the text of my research to discover meaning which may emerge as ineffable human truth.

I dwelled for a moment between *protection* and *courage* before I entered into my research, and I considered these words' deeper origins. Protection comes from the Latin *protectionem*, “a covering over,” and courage from Old French *corage* for “heart, innermost feelings.”<sup>1</sup> I knew the time had come to open my heart to this experience, leave the relative protection of my craft, gather my courage, and jump. Before I took the leap, I wondered (as I so often do) about the legacy of the language and specific words used to make sense of the world and approach its truth.

### Beginnings

I began my phenomenological research with intern teachers in order to learn about their lived experiences using *Currere* to understand curriculum. Phenomenology resonates with me as a research medium, and even as a way of living. Heidegger writes, “The concept of the phenomenon is that which shows itself in itself. The showing-itself-within-itself signifies a distinctive way in which something can be encountered” (1962, p. 54). While researching, that is, encountering, the phenomenon of intern teachers using

<sup>1</sup>As with the first chapters of this text, except where specifically noted, all etymologies in this work are derived from *The Online Etymology Dictionary*, edited by D. Harper (2018).

*Currere* to understand curriculum, my focus was on Being-truth that transcends empiricism. I wanted to encounter human Being in a distinctive way through phenomena that show themselves in themselves. Merleau-Ponty (2014) writes of a “phenomenology of genesis” and asserts that “to understand is to grasp the total intention” and “the unique manner of existing” (p. xxxii). These philosophical ideas laid the foundation for my phenomenological research, but I was also profoundly influenced by the fact that phenomenology’s study of lived experience can as easily be phrased as the study of *Currere*, which is, in essence, lived experience itself. The intern teacher experience “shows-itself-within-itself” through the distinctive experiences of individual intern teachers.

### **Challenges to the Being of the Intern Teacher**

Of course, intern teachers are all unique, yet they each share a similar in-between existence for the duration of the MAT program. From the start, the intern teachers are encouraged to be authentic, but also advised to develop quickly a façade to hide their beginner status. The word *authentic* has an interesting history. It has an original, now-obsolete meaning from the Old French *authentique* for “authoritative, duly authorized.” The Greek form *authentēs* meant “one acting on one’s own authority” from *autos* “self” and *hentes* “doer, being.” Today, authentic represents something that is considered *real*. This word for what so many interns verbalize as a goal, authentic carries a complex background of meaning including “being authorized by others” and also “having self-control over their doing and being.” The simple word authentic has ties to authority which reveals the tension between what is granted by others and what wells up from the inside.

In contrast to authentic, façade derives from the Italian *faccia* meaning face. An exploration of the noun form reveals the use of face to represent the “outward appearance

(as contrasted to some other reality)” from the late fourteenth century. Intern teachers must not only construct an outward face for the classroom; they must also beware of “losing face” before students and remember the necessity of “saving face” before the mentor teacher. From the mid-fifteenth century, face began to be used as a verb meaning “confront with assurance; show a bold face.” Intern teachers quickly begin to make sense of the dichotomy between authentic and façade using the phrase, “Fake it ‘til you make it.” Through the years, I have seen intern teachers smile when they say this, but most also add a bewildered sigh when they realize just how many faces they are going to need.

Interns live each day in their internship classrooms somehow seeking authenticity somewhere in-between being simultaneously the students’ teacher and the mentor’s student. Student derives from the Latin *studium*, “to study.” Teach is from the Old English *tæcan* “to show, point out, declare, demonstrate” and further “to give instruction, train, assign, direct; warn; persuade.” This is also the source of the German *zeihen* “to accuse” and is related to the Old English *tacen* as in “sign, mark.” The early meaning of teacher, “one who teaches,” carried the connotation of “index finger.” The Greek *mentor* appears to be related to the noun *mentos*, “intent purpose, spirit, passion.” Tangled in all these terms is an intern teacher’s struggle to develop authority as a new persona without losing his or her authentic nature.

The intern teachers’ attention is split between focusing on students’ needs and on an understandable preoccupation with their own. As part of this inward focus, they are constantly screening for and reflecting on what they admire and what they find unproductive in their mentor teachers’ behaviors. The internship is designed, in part, to provide a space for each intern teacher to dis-cover his or her individual teaching identity.



Identity derives from 14<sup>th</sup> century Middle French *identité* which meant “state of being the same” and also from the Medieval Latin *identitas* meaning “sameness.” I had always thought of a person’s identity as unique to that one-of-a-kind person. Finding that the meaning of identity is rooted in sameness reveals a profession that, while ostensibly focused on developing individuals, is in reality encouraging sameness. In any case, even though many teaching preparation programs actively support intern teachers’ emerging identities, these identities can develop during the internship only insofar as they complement the attitudes and practices of the mentor teachers. Indeed, throughout the internship, there is a continual tug between wind and current, success and perceived failure, and existing in and out of one’s comfort zone. What opportunities exist for intern teachers to engage with more experienced others while still developing their unique, creative teacher-selves?

### **Voices of the Intern Teachers**

When you take the time to draw on your listening-imagination, you will begin to hear this gentle voice at the heart of your life. It is deeper and surer than all the other voices of disappointment, unease, self-criticism and bleakness. All holiness is about learning to hear the voice of your own soul. (O’Donohue, 2005, p.77)

Merleau-Ponty tells us that “Art is not imitation, nor is it something manufactured according to the wishes of instinct or good taste. It is a process of expression” (1964, p. 17). I saw each of these five intern teachers in my study as artists. After reading their individual *Currere* projects, I regarded every moment described as the act of creation of a teaching practice. Each intern teacher expressed artistry in a different way, and each had a strong, independent voice. Greene (2001) writes of the importance of finding one’s voice. She references a poem entitled, “The Man with the Blue Guitar” by Wallace

Stevens (p. 83) to describe how ordinary things can be seen in the light of possibility. However, Greene points out that this experience cannot happen unless individuals “find their own voices, their own visions, and try to break through the crusts of conformity and thoughtlessness” (2001, p. 83). All five of my intern research participants had different, specific ways of conceiving of teaching, but, they also showed some striking similarities. Even as beginning teachers, each of their *Currere* projects resonated with positive, clear, realistic, and attainable visions of him or herself as an educator. What follows is an introduction to my intern teacher research participants as I knew them at the beginning of my study. The introductions incorporate their distinctive voices from their written *Currere* projects.

**Jordan.** Jordan is a highly planned, detail-oriented young woman. She entered the MAT program immediately after graduation from St. Mary’s College. Before the first month of the MAT program had ended, this extraordinarily organized woman had developed and shared an assignment calendar (online and color coded) with her fellow elementary intern teachers. Jordan prefers a structured, predictable environment that is uncluttered and orderly. Structure derives from the Latin *structura* which means “a fitting together, adjustment; a building, mode of building.” Jordan’s craving for structure gave her a place to dwell in the safety of knowing-what-is-next. So, as fate would have it, Jordan found herself in a first-grade internship environment that was anything but a place to know-what-is-next. One of Jordan’s most powerful internship memories from her regression shows how Jordan’s initial temperament was challenged and tested:

A student had a bathroom accident (an ELL with limited English proficiency). I took her to the nurse, but the nurse was busy and asked me to help the child. I had to help her find new clothes and felt worried about being in a bathroom with her.

Urine got all over me. It was the most frustrating and unexpected thing I had to do during my placement.

Jordan's Progression into her first year as a teacher was focused on her developing teacher identity and desire for professional growth. As the detailed person that she is, Jordan captured a great many ideas in this summation from her Progression:

In my first year, I grew up. I took on challenges that I was unprepared for and developed my independence as a woman when I was looked to for direction, guidance, and support from a room of young students. I became confident. I did not overthink, I took risks with lessons, and I used every opportunity in the classroom to grow and become a better teacher.

Four themes emerged from Jordan's Analysis of her Regression and Progression stages:

Engagement and Energy  
 Building Relationships  
 Character Education  
 Purposeful Learning and Relevance

I was less surprised by what Jordan had listed than by what was *not* here. Jordan began the MAT program as a highly structured, almost obsessively organized personality.

While I still saw her preference for structure in words such as "engagement, building, and purposeful," her organization orientation had shifted from an emphasis on control to a softer focus on the human need for healthy routine as the basis of her classroom vision.

When I read Jordan's Synthesis for the first time, I noticed her use of the word "curriculum" was still in the context of curriculum-as-plan. As I continued and then reread many, many times, I was struck by Jordan's powerful in-between-the-lines statement valuing curriculum-as-lived:

I have synthesized my experiences in the classroom and core values as a teacher to determine that certain things are core aspects of my idea of a successful classroom: providing a safe and comfortable environment in which students are happy and willing to build relationships with me and their peers; ensuring that the

physical environment of the classroom is organized, structured, and clutter-free; establishing clear procedures for building a home-school connection; implementing lessons and activities that allow students to develop academically, emotionally, and socially; and using creativity to shape units that align with the curriculum and real-world contexts.

To me, teaching is an extremely philosophical career. Engaging in the *Currere* experience generates honest thoughts about all things teaching related. It allows me to better see myself as an imperative component to the growth and development of today's youth, rather than simply a person who dictates information to be absent-mindedly received and regurgitated.

Although she did not use the term explicitly in her Synthesis above, Jordan's innate understanding of curriculum-as-lived came through loudly and clearly. She spoke of avoiding becoming a person who dictates information and focuses instead on her developing professional identity as one who embraces creativity to help students to develop academically, emotionally, and socially.

**Austin.** Austin is a newly-turned-twenty-one-year-old SMCM graduate with a Theater and English dual major. After some soul-searching, he has chosen to certify in Theater and add an endorsement for secondary English. Austin is a very social and extraverted personality. He was chosen by the MAT cohort as one of two speakers to represent them at the MAT graduation ceremony. He is known for his involvement in campus service as a tour guide and for his celebrity status as the costumed mascot for the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs minor league baseball team. He is a mature young man, yet he has a lively nature and a spark of mischief in his eye almost all the time.

In his Regression, Austin recorded powerful memories that he says, "have stuck with me" since the end of his theater internship. Here is a representative sample:

- A transgender student asked me to teach him how to tie a tie, so he could wear one at homecoming
- The after-school rehearsals and performances of *Enchanted April* and *Cinderella*. For the first time, I was really one of the few responsible adults in the room.
- I had a student tear his knee joints in class one day (probably the most horrifying

- experience)
- I was mistaken for a student in the hallway and asked for my hall pass
  - We had a shooting threat in the school building—whereas, it was an unfound anonymous tip, but it was still jarring the first experience.
  - I had two students regularly storm out of class

Austin's Progression flowed with ideas about relationships and professional growth. He wrote of being an example for his students and showing them that "learning never stops." He mentioned looking forward to directing high school theater productions successfully. But the thread that ran consistently through Austin's Progression was the idea of building relationships both with his students and with his colleagues. This emphasis on relationships appeared again in Austin's Analysis as he identified his resonant themes as lifelong education, open and honest conversations with students, and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships. To this last identified theme, Austin added a revealing explanation:

It always made me happy to be part of my students' lives outside of the classroom because that meant they trusted me inside the classroom enough to allow me into their lives outside of the classroom.

Austin is the extraverted entertainer who knows how to keep an audience enthralled. The themes in Austin's Syntheses pointed to a classroom in which his role as change agent for himself and for his students became his major emphasis:

There are many things I learned about myself as an educator during my time in the classroom this year. Firstly, I will need to find the balance between taking advice and feedback from other teachers/supervisors but knowing that ultimately it is my responsibility to find the perfect formula between me as the educator and my students. That will have to change for every class, every day, and every year. I need to build relationships with my students to understand how they want to learn and to make my content relevant. Secondly, I need to continue to develop myself as an educator, so I know as many tools as possible to match the classroom environment that is constantly changing.

I could not help but notice the similarity to Jordan's Synthesis in that Austin did not use the term curriculum-as-lived, but he, like Jordan, expressed an implicit awareness of the concept. Austin specifically recognized the constantly-changing nature of the classroom "every class, every day, and every year." Further, he recognized his importance as a teacher aware of the dynamic nature of the classroom and his central role in shaping those changes for the good of his students. Austin wrote of his commitment to develop consciously the pedagogical attitude of staying alert to (and enthusiastic about) the changing nature of the classroom, himself, and his students.

**Alex.** Alex is a warm and friendly young woman with a smile and a kind word for all. She, like Jordan and Austin, is a recent graduate of SMCM. She built on her history degree in the MAT to certify in secondary Social Studies. Her high school level internship placement had its challenges. In the Fall of her internship, Alex received an affectionate note from a female student. Alex protected the student and herself with her professional response. She informed me and the school-based intern liaison. The liaison notified the guidance department, and the entire situation was handled tactfully and sensitively. After that event, I knew I wanted to work with Alex on my phenomenological research.

Alex is a young woman with a name traditionally given to males. "Alex" stands on its own; it is not a nickname or a shortened version of Alexandria. Perhaps that is part of the reason she chose to study classroom gender bias for her Master's Research Project (MRP). Alex began her *Currere* Regression with the memory of her first meeting with her mentor teacher and his awkward recovery after mistaking one of the male intern teachers for Alex. She remembered this same mentor offering extra credit for students

who came to school dressed as an historical figure for Halloween, and the girls asking, “Who are we supposed to be?” Alex cited this as the moment her MRP began to take shape. Alex fondly remembered genuinely loving all of her students and sadly recalled the feeling of being in direct contrast to her mentor’s attitude. However, Alex’s Regression focused mostly on bonding moments in the classroom between her and her students, especially the memory of her high school students wanting a picture with her on her last day in the internship.

It was no surprise that Alex’s Progression included having inside jokes with her classes, creating a safe classroom for taking positive risks, and being authentic with students who return year after year to visit. From her Regression and Progression, Alex easily identified with a thematic emphasis on student-teacher relationships and classroom culture. Alex expanded on these themes in her Analysis:

Almost all of my memories have foundation in these two themes, which are connected and dependent on each other. I am not surprised that these are what my memories and goals are rooted in. I am surprised though that even the memories which are more negative have these same underlying themes. For example, the moment that inspired my MRP can be considered an aspect of classroom culture, one that unfortunately contains gender bias. [I learned the value of teacher-student relationships when] I realized that my mentor doesn’t strive to develop a positive student-teacher relationship with all of our students, but only those he deems worthy, and even those relationships are shallow.

Alex masterfully synthesized her *Currere* Regression, Progression, and Analysis entries:

The memories I have recorded here, and the themes that I’ve drawn from them have truly validated my most important pedagogical thoughts and values as a future teacher. My main goal moving forward will be to maintain these themes, student-teacher relationships and classroom culture, as a priority throughout my career. I have witnessed a lot of negativity and toxic behavior from teachers throughout my internships I want to avoid throughout my career. I hope that by continuing the *Currere* process, I will be able to keep these themes in the forefront of my mind and avoid falling into the trap of teacher burnout and cynicism.

I began to wonder to what extent other interns could perceive negative experiences as positive influences as they learned what it means to be a teacher in an internship setting. I thought about how difficult it must have been for Alex to find her place in a classroom in which a virtually opposite culture had been established. Casey (2009) describes all rooms as living rooms that an individual not only lives *in*, but also lives *through*: “They serve to implace you, to anchor and orient you, finally becoming an integral part of your identity” (p. 23). Casey expands on this idea as he points out that places determine not just where the individual is, but also *how* the individual exists in relationship with others. Merleau-Ponty extends this thought as he writes, “The other’s behavior and even the other’s words are not the other himself. We only perceive the other’s behavior” (2014, p. 372). Somehow, instinctively, Alex found a way to detach tactfully from her mentor teacher’s behavior and pursue her own vision of what it means to be a teacher.

**Margaret.** Margaret is in her late fifties and was placed in a multi-primary grade level special education classroom in a Title I elementary school. She and I, being close in age, connected from the beginning of the program. During the MAT summer semester, Margaret shared with me that she felt a bit intimidated by all the young people who knew so much more about technology and did not need to adjust to being a student again. She wondered if she could keep up and find her academic groove again. I told Margaret that I had started preparing to become a teacher in my mid-thirties, and I had felt the same misgivings and tugs of insecurity. As it turned out, Margaret adjusted quite nicely and became a touchstone figure for the younger elementary interns. She was the other intern who, along with Austin, was chosen by the cohort to speak at graduation. Margaret’s



maturity and steady focus added a powerful and calming element to a group that tended toward anxiety.

Margaret's *Currere* Regression revealed the deeply challenging internship environment in which she found herself. She remembered most clearly seeing first-hand the effects of poverty on children with special needs. Margaret wrote of students' disruptions to mask their lack of reading capabilities, and also of those who were passive and non-responsive because they had given up. Margaret recalled students who became overwhelmed at the very idea of reading, and she considered the teachers' "patience, persistence, and fortitude" as they worked with their children. Margaret described her experience as the internship unfolded:

My most powerful and resonant Anchor placement experiences were when I realized that our students had made progress in learning concepts and information that we had practiced again and again and again. It was most evident when I returned from the multi week breaks in my internship for MAT classes. Children who had challenged my faith in my "anyone can learn" philosophy had made modest or great strides in their learning.

One boy, who has been held back in first grade learned his sight words and was tapping and sounding out short words. One young student who was uncommunicative and couldn't complete very basic tasks was smiling and talking in short sentences. She had learned to [eat] and drink by herself. Our third-grade remedial reading group [students] were confidently reading short stories aloud.

Margaret went on to specifically name and vividly describe the lived curriculum of her internship classroom:

The lessons were carefully planned with the interests, abilities, and curriculum goals in mind. However, it was the curriculum as lived that made the difference – the classroom environment was one where the student, regardless of ability, felt safe, comfortable, and engaged. It was very satisfying to be part of a team that taught these struggling students strategies to become motivated and self-sufficient.

As Margaret moved on into the Progression stage, I could see the deep imprint that working as a team had made on her developing identity. She described having strong,

collaborative relationships with fellow teachers as a major priority. She visualized herself working in partnership with para-educators and valuing the contributions they made.

Margaret saw herself being tested by a classroom full of new students, all of whom had different personalities, strengths, and needs, but she also stated a firm view of her future self as being a confident and successful teacher.

In her Analysis, Margaret observed the following themes as common to both her Regression and Progression:

I Can Help Anyone Learn  
Reflection Makes a Difference  
Patience is Necessary – Progress Takes Time  
Flexibility and Fine-tuning is Key

At the close of her Analysis, Margaret also made this interesting observation:

If the curriculum dictated that goals be reached in a proscribed manner and on a short timeline – I found that reality did not fit that which was prescribed by people not aware of the challenges and personalities of those who were the learners.

This observation directly confirms Aoki's description of curriculum planners developing learning objectives for students they have never met (2005). All of these elements and ideas came together in Margaret's Synthesis:

Synthesizing the idea that anyone can learn and the idea that we must be flexible brings me to the realization that it is very important to have a wide range of teaching tools and a repertoire of instructional strategies at hand. I have learned that goals may be set, and that the curriculum can serve as a map. It is the learning to balance these with the individual personalities and needs of the students that will serve me on my journey to become an effective teacher who lives school life to the fullest.

I wanted to learn more in conversation about how Margaret developed resilience in the face of the intensity and stress of a demanding special education classroom. Her experience raised the question: *What is the lived experience of learning to stay energized,*

*excited, and enthusiastic about the teacher's role in the kind of caring for students that results in their progress?* Margaret's *Currere* experience not only opened her to understanding, and using, the term *lived curriculum*, but *Currere* also made an awareness of lived curriculum her constant companion.

**Kasey.** Kasey is a soft-spoken young woman with a shy smile that lights up her face. She is in her early twenties like the majority of the MAT cohort, but she has completed her undergraduate degree in History at another institution. Upon meeting Kasey for the first time, I would have never guessed that she had not completed her bachelor's degree at St. Mary's College. She was friendly toward all and soon formed close and supportive friendships with many of her fellow interns. I asked Kasey to be a research participant before I learned of the devastating experience she had undergone during her internship, a student's suicide. Kasey offered the most poignant description in her Regression:

The most powerful memory from my Anchor placement is the suicide of one of my students. He was a student that I looked forward to seeing each day. He always walked into the classroom with a smile on his face and a fact or story to share with me.

I found out about his passing on Sunday afternoon and stood to face my class alone on Monday morning (my mentor teacher was in the cafeteria with administration because she was too upset). I didn't know how to approach my students at first. I didn't know if I should keep things consistent. Everyone always says consistency is key, but that didn't feel right to me. Whether I liked it or not, it was impossible to not cry, grieve, and remember with my students.

I remember how we made it through together. So many kids came up to my desk in the weeks after to make sure I was okay, talk with me about how they felt, or just sit. One student walked in every day for two weeks, looked at me, and gave me a "thumbs up/thumbs down" and waited for a response to see how I was that day. This is the same student who earlier in the year wouldn't do any work, screamed at us, etc.

Kasey's Progression showed a strong young teacher who chose to remain optimistic and see the best in her students. Kasey saw middle school as an adventure, yet

she was also aware of the problems and pressures so many students faced every day. Kasey envisioned herself emphasizing current events in her Social Studies classroom and encouraging her students to make meaningful connections, see the relevance to their own lives, and expand their perspectives and horizons. Kasey developed an understanding that she will always seek balance among fairness, kindness, and firm boundaries, but also that she will find her way.

Kasey's Analysis identified themes including critical thinking, classroom culture, and a meaningful curriculum. Her Synthesis brought her past and future into the present:

I really want to make sure that students are critically consuming news. All kinds of news, not just the really credible sources. Students need to be able to understand that not everything that is out there is fact and how to [tell truth from fiction]. They need to practice this in a safe environment. The social media world is full of easily accessible lies and they need to be aware. Creating connections to current events within the classroom also provides meaning to students' lives. It is easier to see why what we study is important when they can relate it to something

going on now. It also makes the classroom a safe window into the world around them. Through this [classroom] window, students can explore in safety.

Each class is different. Each year is different. We grow, move forward, and better ourselves. The students won't be the same each year, why should I expect myself to be?

Kasey's *Currere* ended with an exhortation for all teachers:

As teachers, we need to realize we are part of the classroom culture. We have a large say in how things are going to go, how relationships will be built, and how we move forward together as a team. Be a leader for change, movement, and growth. And leave room for the students to surprise you, because they will.

It is rare indeed for an intern teacher to experience a tragedy of this magnitude at such an early stage of learning what it is to be a teacher. When Kasey wrote above of "leaving room" for students as part of her *Currere* process, she realized her place in the shared lived curriculum of the classroom. Van Manen names what Kasey has developed as *tact*:

Tactful action is thoughtful, mindful, heedful. But it helps to make a distinction between thoughtfulness and tact. Without thoughtfulness, there is no tact, and without tact, thoughtfulness is at best a merely internal state. Thoughtfulness is the product of self-reflective reflection on human experience. In a sense, tact is less a form of knowledge than it is a way of acting. It is the sensitive practice of heedfulness. Tact is the effect one has on another person even if the tact consists, as it often does, in holding back, waiting. (1991, p. 127)

I developed a strong foundational understanding of each intern teacher's experiences from reading their *Currere* Regressions, Progressions, Analyses, and Syntheses. Before I began the conversation phase of my research, I spent some time wandering over and over through this set of *Currere* works, wondering about common themes, and discovering what the intern teachers shared both in experiences they had as well as those they had not.

### ***Currere-as-Conversation***

love note

Perhaps living truthfully is so difficult  
because too often I wish life were otherwise

and so put on blinders to keep grief out,  
to imagine myself skipping from joy to joy

or soaring like a bird  
on the updraft of extended wing

avoiding the hard  
and difficult things

as if some place, just beyond my sight  
contained the answers.

Perhaps it is not the uncertain journey  
I am afraid to embrace

but the vibrancy of each moment,  
welling up from the darkness

confronting me with exactly  
what it is meant to be. (Glaser, 2013, p. 6)

Glaser's poetic voice spoke to my fears, but also reassured me as I entered into the conversations that became the heart of my phenomenological research. I noted the poem's title, and I realized afresh that my research was an act of love. I dove deeper and found treasure unimagined throughout my conversations about *Currere*. As I wrote my way in to a hermeneutic understanding of these conversations with each intern, I noticed first that the things of which they wrote and spoke were as different as they were similar. The insights and themes that arose are as breathtaking as they are familiar. I found myself once again in the in-between, and I realized that I had finally settled in to the purpose of this space. In *Four Quartets*, T. S. Eliot writes:

'Fare forward, you who think you are voyaging;  
You are not those who saw the harbour  
Receding, or those who will disembark.  
Here between the hither and farther shore  
While time is withdrawn, consider the future  
And the past with an equal mind. (1943, pp. 41-42)

I carried Eliot's wisdom into this phenomenological study. I found comfort in knowing that the challenges of the in-between lead to breadth and depth of understanding. I no longer desired quick and easy resolution; I preferred to linger in the in-between, ask the phenomenological question: *What is the lived experience of teacher interns using Currere to understand curriculum?* and savor the discoveries I made.

### ***Currere Brought to Life Through Language***

If every statement is incomplete and every expression is situated upon a silent tacit comprehension, then it must be that things are said and are thought by a Speech and by a Thought which we do not have but which has us. (Merleau-Ponty, 1993, p. 37)

My phenomenological research brought me to an understanding of *Currere* as multi-layered and three-dimensional. The writings, the conversations, and the realizations

based on lived and re-lived pedagogical experiences were *all* lived curriculum revealed by my research process I termed *Currere-as-Currere*. The process and experience of *Currere* itself became, “that which shows itself in itself” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 51). The ways in which *Currere* showed itself were through language that was both written and spoken. Aoki writes:

Language is understood not so much as a disembodied tool of communication caught up in an instrumental view of language, but more so language understood in an embodied way—a way that allows us to say, “we are the language we speak” or “language is the house of Being.” (2005, p. 43)

I also re-recognized Gadamer’s assertion that “It is true in every case that a person who understands, understands himself, projecting himself upon his possibilities” (1975, p. 251). Gadamer’s words committed me to dwell with an open heart with each intern teacher and to keep each conversation organic and authentic by remaining mindful of each moment being “exactly what it is meant to be” (Glaser, 2013). Other than brief pauses to assimilate new ideas or search for the “right” words, the conversations with the intern teachers flowed like a river of storytelling, laughter, emotions, and even a few epiphanies.

### ***Currere as a Way to Break Barriers***

In both the classrooms of the internship sites and the college courses, conversation is integral, but there is a different dynamic in an evaluative space. When participating in on-campus classroom conversations, there is often a certain guard that the intern teachers strive to keep in place. Britzman describes this dynamic in her work with teacher interns:

While these student teachers felt the pressure to know and the corresponding guilt of not knowing, in taking up normative discourses of classroom performance, they were prevented from attending to the deeper epistemological issues—about

the construction of knowledge and the values and interests that inhere in knowledge. Instead, knowledge was reduced to a set of discrete and isolated units to be acquired, while not knowing, and indeed, any condition of uncertainty, became a threat to the teacher's authority. (2003, p. 228)

Admitting insecurity and vulnerability can be an unsettling act, but outside these formalized educational classroom spaces, I was intentional about creating a sense of safety.

Le Guin writes, "Human communication cannot be reduced to information. The message not only involves, it is, a relationship between the speaker and hearer" (2004, p. 187). In my living room, there was no judgment and no evaluation. There was only a comfortable couch, coffee, and conversation. As the conversations unfolded, the intern teachers became more candid, and I felt a bond of trust growing between each of the intern teachers and myself. The language of the intern teachers in conversation became an embodiment of their internship experiences, and an almost-tangible sense of the Being of each shone through their honest and heart-felt words as an encounter with self and world.

### **Remembrances Re-surface as Phenomenological Themes**

Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it's caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But, because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 16)

I remember going back to visit the elementary school I had attended but had not seen in 25 years. I walked down the covered sidewalks and past the heavy metal classroom doors, and memories came flooding back. At the same time, everything seemed off; the scale was all wrong. The school was now so tiny, and the sidewalk ceilings were so low. My thoughts mixed with memories were as familiar as they were alien. Merleau-Ponty writes of thinking as having a temporal as well as a spatial quality, and I apply this idea to the *Currere* process. Re-calling and reflecting on past occurrences



through the lens of additional experiences over the passage of time creates a truth that may never match the truth as it happened. But the truth that emerges in-between the *then* and the *what-is-to-come* is fuller, more resonant, and more relevant.

One discovers that truth evolves and adapts as its being-true remains constant. Bachelard observes that the “house of memories becomes psychologically complex” (1994, p. 14). The intern teacher “writes the classroom,” and the reader of that classroom soon begins to think of some similar time and place in his own past. The reader has sensed the truth of the intern teacher’s lived accounts, and that awareness has made his own truth stronger and more vivid. Coles recalls the advice from his mentor during his training as a psychotherapist: “Remember, what you are hearing [from the storyteller] is to some considerable extent a function of *you*, hearing” (1989, p. 15). *Currere* writing and conversation combined the spatial and temporal aspects of memory with the affirmation that the experience is part of the human connection. The themes that emerged from this phenomenological research are the *being-truths* that arose from our shared connection through *Currere*.

### **Encounters with the Unexpected**

Throughout my time at St. Mary’s College, I consistently shared this small bit of wisdom with new interns as the program began with regard to their internship experience: *The best thing we can do to prepare you is to prepare you for feeling unprepared.* So, I was not at all surprised to find that, for all five of my research participants, there was a pervasive theme of encountering, and feeling unprepared for, unexpected events. Encounter is from the Old French *encontrer* “to meet as an adversary; confront, fight, oppose.” I considered the word encounter as having a neutral connotation in the years

before my encounter with phenomenology. It is interesting to think about encounter as having roots in opposition and conflict because we speak in terms of encountering (an encounter with a parent, encountering an angry student) quite often in teacher preparation. Embedded in this word is the hint that intern teachers will inevitably face conflict from surprising sources. And, in my experience, they do.

There is another way of seeing this experience called encounter. The meaning of encounter developed in the early 1900s as an existential concept meaning “meeting with deep recognition or engagement-with.” Bollnow (1972) notes that “The encountered thing is encountered as itself in its particularity” (p. 465). In this sense, encounter describes a particularly moving work of art, captures the feeling of rounding the bend and seeing a breathtaking vista, or recognizes the kindness of another human being. Heidegger focuses on the human *encounter* [emphasis added] and names *Dasein*-as-Being-with as an existential aspect of Being-in-the-world. Heidegger writes, “*Dasein*-with has proved to be a kind of Being which entities encountered within-the-world have as their own. So far as *Dasein* is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being” (1962, p. 163).

I began to wonder about this stark contrast between the etymology and existential usage of encounter. What was it like for the intern teachers to live through experiences for which they were unprepared? I realized that the intern teachers’ description of the unexpected encounters that follow began with fear and anxiety, turned to determination and courage, and ended with optimism and a sense of wonder. Bollnow contributes his thoughts on encounter as it applies to pedagogy and classroom lived experience: “It follows that the encounter with a particular subject cannot be the direct aim of

instruction. The latter can only present the manifold of possibilities in some breadth so that somewhere in this range an encounter may occur” (1972, p. 465). How did both conceptualizations of encounter come to present themselves in the intern teachers’ stories? Did their written *Currere* projects help bring out these elements? Each intern teacher’s developing pedagogy, woven with encounters and abundance, certainly yielded some unforgettable experiences.

I was taken aback by the intensity of the unexpected in each case: Jordan found herself in the awkward position of taking care of a first-grader who had wet herself. Austin took responsibility for his class during a school lockdown due to an anonymous shooting threat. Alex encountered a massive amount of pressure from teachers at her internship site that soon extended to students, all of whom wanted her to continue in the placement because the mentor was considered inadequate. Margaret initially felt prepared for facing students’ learning difficulties, but she was shocked and overwhelmed by the severity and distressing nature of her students’ challenges, and she began to doubt her ability to cope with them. Kasey faced the horrific and unthinkable suicide of one of her students.

Van Manen defines “pedagogical moments” as those situations where the child has a need that calls upon the teacher, and the teacher responds to this expectation with “trustful sympathy” (1991, p. 96). Van Manen names the teacher’s capacity for trustful sympathy (from the Greek for *fellow-feeling*) as the most essential element of pedagogical understanding. And pedagogical understanding is the essential element of curriculum. The *Currere* process contributed to the intern teachers’ meaning-making of curriculum with regard to unexpected encounters and surprising lived experiences they

dis-covered as they wrote. I remember realizing the enormity and significance of the pedagogical growth as *Bildung*, that resulted from the intern teachers' encounters with the unexpected, and I looked forward to learning more about these lived experiences in conversation.

I had my own encounter with the unexpected as I conversed with Jordan about her lived experiences connected with what she had written in her *Currere* project. Based on this project, I opened a discussion about using *Currere* to understand curriculum that centered on an intern teacher's experience with a third-grade student who had wet herself one day during recess. In conversation, Jordan's flat words-on-paper shone through her eyes and became animated by her facial expressions. The conversation that brought out Jordan's initial discouragement at the unexpected event surprised me. I was awed by the power of the depth and range of emotions that dwell in quotidian experiences to shape the teacher-self. Jordan described her experience:

I remember it like it was yesterday. It was in the last week of my student teaching. I said, "Why did you do that? What happened?" And she said, "[So-and-so] make *[sic]* me laugh."

I interjected with a question: "She's an English learner?" Jordan nodded in the affirmative:

She is Asian and has limited English proficiency. She has a lot of academic, social, and other adaptive skill needs: not tying her shoes, things like that. I said, "I'm taking you to the nurse." The nurse had about eight other kids in there. She was clearly overwhelmed and flustered. So I said, "We had a student who had a little bit of an accident, third grade, this is her name." And she [the nurse] said, "You gotta *[sic]* deal with it." I was so confused. She said, "You have to go to the bathroom. There's clothes in there and you can figure it out."

[In the bathroom,] I said, "Okay, I need to touch your pants to find the size. Do you understand?" She just kind of stared at me. We spent a lot of time trying to figure out size, and I said, "Can you try these on?" And I stepped out of the bathroom because I was already having this kind of nervous feeling about being in the bathroom with a student.

Jordan paused, looked at me with a slight frown, then widened her eyes and shook her head slowly from side to side as she relived this nervous feeling. I asked her to elaborate:

It crossed my mind immediately that I should not be alone in a bathroom with a student, especially one with limited English. I thought, what could become of this, you know? I was putting the student's needs in mind, but it made me feel very worried and kind of upset that I was in the situation.

I almost wished it was somebody else who had to deal with it, because I'm not tenured. I was not an employee of the school, I was [an intern teacher]. But I kept coming back to the fact that ... She has completely saturated pants and needs new clothes to be comfortable. I really kept trying to bring myself to that foundation of what I knew was correct.

We had been talking about China in class, and she is a student of Asian origin. I was looking through the underwear, and I held up a pair that had pandas on them. She clapped and jumped up and down, "I love panda." And I'm like, "I know you do."

I asked another question: So, you made a deliberate choice when you saw the panda underwear? Jordan nodded:

I did. We had been doing the cultural studies unit, so each week we were studying a different country. And that week we had studied China. And something as small as seeing a panda made her happy. I was trying to make that connection with her to let her know that I was seeing her and not angry or upset. I realized that I was understanding who she was and trying to meet her needs.

Van Manen's view is that "Cultural pedagogy helps us appreciate the variety of ways in which we can "see and approach children" (1991, p. 216). Many intern teachers would be understandably focused on the rush of getting the child dressed. Jordan saw a connection between their study of China and the child's home culture which changed the whole lived experience from a disaster to a relationship. Over the course of Jordan's telling her story, a frown of confusion and the tight lips of a fearful intern teacher gave way to a calm expression complete with a smile and the sparkle of pride in her eyes. I asked her to tell me what that metamorphosis was like. Jordan described the warm, satisfied feeling she was experiencing there on my couch when she realized that she had navigated

successfully through what was, for her, a nerve-wracking experience that ended with a smiling child.

Jordan's discovery of the fullness of this experience gave her a sense of conviction about her professional values, helped her define her boundaries, and brought her to a more confident place in her pedagogy. The experience itself was important, but Jordan also noted that it was *Currere*, and the conversation, that brought forth her deep realization of how transformative that unexpected experience actually was for her *becoming-as-a-teacher*.

Austin stated the idea of the unexpected quite bluntly:

You can have this ideal vision of your classroom, but you never know when that fire alarm is going to go off. You never know when a student is going to have an emotional breakdown. You never know when a fight's going to break out in class.

This comment led Austin to share a memory he had not written in his *Currere* project:

I don't know if I wrote it, but now that I'm thinking about it, I mean, I had a desk thrown at me a couple of weeks ago.

I was intrigued by this new piece of information. I said, "Tell me about that. What was it like to have a desk thrown at you?" Austin explained that his mentor teacher had left him alone in the classroom to make copies or a phone call when a student argument became violent:

A girl picked up a desk and tried to throw it at another girl, and it just missed me by a couple inches. The funny thing was that the anger wasn't even directed at me. I was standing out in the hallway [during class change] and a lot of talking goes on in my classes beforehand. These two girls, apparently, were talking about the guys they were seeing, and then they came to this realization that they were seeing the same guy. I walked in the room and suddenly, one girl stands up and says, "I'm going to fight you bitch." In that moment, I didn't know what to do or say. The other girl stands up and was like, "Well, I'm NOT going to fight you bitch," and then all of a sudden, they kind of collided.

Austin went on to describe how he felt unnerved but very focused at the same time. He said he felt as if he were on auto-pilot. All he knew was that he was called on to be the responsible adult in the room. Although he felt anything but calm, Austin stayed steady and convinced the desk-thrower to move out into the hallway. Next, he calmed the other student until the mentor teacher returned. Austin smiled ruefully:

That was such a surreal moment. I never experienced a fight break out in a classroom as a student, so, not that I never thought that it happened, but I thought it was so rare that it wouldn't happen to me.

Austin had never experienced a fight as a high school student, and he had no frame of reference for a response. As Austin and I continued to discuss the fight, we also talked more about the fact that the incident had happened while Austin's mentor was not present in the room, leaving Austin alone in the position of authority. Austin knew it was procedure to call for an administrator, but he did not wish to make trouble for his mentor who had been instructed never to leave an intern alone in the classroom unless she was within earshot. Austin recalled feeling irritated and frustrated with his mentor teacher. He felt he could not express those feelings as the intern teacher within the intern/mentor dynamic.

Intern teachers likely find themselves in positions such as these more often than is known in teacher preparation programs. Although it was my role to assist the intern teachers in handling difficulties such as these, I did not hear of any of these incidents lived by the intern teachers as they happened. I realized that I most likely would never have become aware of these unexpected occurrences had it not been for *Currere* and this research. All five intern teachers agreed that there was a lot of pressure to keep the confidence of, and even protect, the mentor teacher. In Austin's case, no one was injured

in the altercation between the two girls, and the incident was resolved, but the consequences of an absent mentor teacher and an intern teacher intervening in a physical fight could have been severe. What is it like to be caught in a violent situation as a person who is committed to care of children? Austin felt he had absolutely no choice but to intervene in the classroom fight. As for Jordan, she also did not feel she had any practical options given the pressure of the circumstances. Because of the needs of the children, Austin and Jordan knowingly put themselves at risk of losing the opportunity to teach had their interventions been misrepresented or misunderstood.

### **Making Meaning of the Unexpected Encounter**

The world is... the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. Truth does not inhabit only the inner man, or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself. (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. xxiv)

For a beginning intern teacher, every encounter is unexpected simply because it is new. As already established, it is clear that the word encounter carries a much deeper meaning than simply something that happens. There is a strong connotation of an encounter as something to fear, something dangerous. Although intern teachers enter their mentors' spaces with vast numbers of experiences in classrooms as students, they are invariably surprised by the new view they encounter from their teacher's stance. During my conversations with the intern teachers, I noted that they felt largely unprepared for the stress of some of the unexpected encounters that felt as severe as an attack. Jordan and Austin faced decisions in ambiguous legal circumstances in which the mentor teacher was not present. Alex was unprepared for her mentor's lack of professionalism that was highlighted by another teacher who also involved Alex's students in judging the mentor teacher as unfit in order to convince Alex to stay past the



internship end date. Kasey experienced the numbing horror of the suicide of a student but also had to live through the stressful and threatening atmosphere generated by community uproar over the event accompanied by finger-pointing at the school staff. Margaret's internship circumstances placed her in a special education classroom in which she encountered unprovoked screaming, head banging, and even violent responses to teacher directions from children with severe academic, behavioral, and physical challenges far beyond the usual challenges in a placement for an intern teacher. Britzman (2003) describes a very different perspective on intern teachers:

Prospective teachers want and expect to receive practical things, automatic and generic methods for immediate classroom application. They bring to their teacher education a search for recipes, and, often, a dominant concern with methods of classroom discipline because they are quite familiar with the teacher's role as social controller. (p. 63)

That all five of my intern teacher participants had extraordinarily unexpected and tense experiences is evidence that intern teachers cannot navigate the classroom prepared only with "generic recipes."

As I dove further into these intern teachers' lived experiences, I became aware that they had each successfully faced and negotiated the pressure, fear, and uncertainty associated with unexpected, extra-stressful events. Each intern teacher considered carefully his or her particular situations, weighed possible responses, and made decisions based on what he or she believed to be best for their students. These skills are every bit as crucial to teaching as the ability to engage with the content.

This is lived curriculum, and *Currere* as conversation brought this insight into the conscious awareness of the intern teachers with whom I conversed. Kasey articulated it best as she described the morning after the student suicide. She faced her middle school

students alone because her mentor teacher was inconsolable after the announcement of the tragedy. At that moment, Kasey surveyed the situation, considered possible responses, and made her decision:

I realized that I wasn't going to be okay, and one way or another I was going to make a positive impression on the kids and say okay, this is how you feel, and feelings are fine. They're a part of being human.

As the conversation continued, Kasey expressed her new understanding of, and appreciation for, her developing concept of lived curriculum through *Currere* and the *Currere* conversation. Gadamer holds that “all understanding is always already interpretation” and adds that “understanding does not reach out and take hold of language; it is carried out within language” (2001, p. 37). Kasey’s understanding of lived curriculum is dis-covered in written *Currere* but deepens as she interprets her lived experience of it through our conversation. Conversation is indeed powerful and another source of insight. The daily conversation between intern teacher and mentor teacher has its own profound influence.

### **Being Mentored – Fair Skies or Rough Seas?**

“‘Master teacher’ may be one of the most misunderstood and misused terms in teacher education. What most preparation programs really have are ‘cooperating teachers’ who supervise the student teaching experience. The selection of these cooperating teachers can be haphazard,” says Ladson-Billings (2009, p. 147). When mentors are assigned for reasons other than teaching expertise, the intern teacher is a witness and can even become an accomplice to bad practice. This is a common problem because “Often, the best teachers want nothing to do with the patronage and bureaucracy involved in student teacher assignments” (p. 147).

The value of a mentor teacher to an intern teacher's development into a well-prepared teacher is assumed, but an intern teacher's presence in a mentor's classroom space as simultaneously the teacher and the learner does not always offer the most comfortable conditions under which to develop a strong, authentic teacher-self. What is a strong, authentic teacher-self? Authentic comes from the Greek *authentikos*, meaning "original, genuine, principal." Heidegger addresses authenticity by first naming "Being-toward-death" described also as "*Being towards a possibility*" of encountering *Dasein* itself (1962, p. 305). Heidegger writes, "*Dasein* is constituted by disclosedness—that is, by an understanding with a state-of-mind. Authentic Being-towards-death can *not evade* its ownmost non-relational possibility or *cover up* this possibility by thus fleeing from it" (p. 304). Heidegger is saying that authenticity is found in those who, having faced their mortality, are not concerned with running from their Being or covering it up. Rather, they are authentic Beings-in-the-world seeking their "potentiality-for-Being" (p. 307).

Can intern teachers in the space of the internship remain authentic and true to themselves? Izadinia's (2015) work regarding the effect of the mentor teacher on the intern teacher shows that a positive mentor experience builds intern teachers' confidence, while a negative experience often results in an intern teacher's questioning her own confidence in the teaching role. Further, Izadinia's research shows a correlation between negative mentor experiences and teacher attrition. Kennedy's (2016) discussion is particularly applicable to the mentor/intern relationship as she addresses the complexity of learning to teach:

Teachers cannot address one aspect of the classroom at a time and in sequence. On the contrary, to teach effectively, a teacher must focus simultaneously on the content as well as student engagement, comprehension, and behavior. To be

successful, teachers must find a way to make this happen in an environment that fits their personalities and personal needs.

If a teacher cannot find a way to create an atmosphere that he or she is comfortable living in, he or she is not likely to remain teaching for very long. This is a topic we rarely address in teacher education, but we should. We tend to focus on content, teaching techniques, and learning theories, all relevant to the work, but we do not address the fact that teaching is intensely personal and interpersonal work. Yet we do know that attrition from teaching remains persistently high. (Kennedy, 2016, p. 13)

How can we create spaces and experiences to explore and nurture authentic teachers?

Whether the waters of the mentor and intern teachers' collaboration are rough or calm, the intern teachers never cease to be aware that the relationship with the mentor teacher is critically important both for opportunities to learn and for earning the all-important letter of reference that will recommend them for a classroom of their own.

Kasey has a clear understanding of this dynamic:

As long as I've been there [at the internship school], there's been a place that ... There's a boundary that you don't cross as an intern. As much as we all came together over the loss of a student, I'm still an intern, so my place is kind of a step outside the circle.

I've been there since the school started, since August, but I'm not vetted. I'm not fully-fledged. I'm still under scrutiny, so how I deal with everything is also watched, I think, a little bit more carefully, because I am in this process of making the cut so to speak.

No one at Kasey's internship site verbalizes this scrutiny, but being watched and evaluated in terms of eligibility to lead a classroom can be an uncomfortable in-between space. A mask of confidence is needed to hide the fear of being judged unworthy.

Van Manen and Levering tell us that "in the way that we mask our identity, we simultaneously make manifest who we are" (1996, p. 86). The internship dynamic contributes a foundational aspect of how teachers' professional identities are formed.

Austin captures a different, geometric facet of this relationship:

For interns, it's extremely difficult because it's not our space, it's not our room. I consider the kids my kids, but I also know on paper they're not my students. I always had the pressure of trying to, I think we have an added pressure of, we've got the cooperating teacher or the mentor teacher, and we've got our students and we've got us, so now it's a triangle instead of just a line.

Intern teachers learn through their orientation to the internship that they can expect to be considered as “welcome visitors” in the school building. There are boundaries that, although sometimes blurred, cannot be eliminated. Sometimes the boundaries become stressful and even painful.

### **Isolation.**

Don't surrender your loneliness so quickly.  
Let it cut more deep.

Let it ferment and season you  
As few human or even divine ingredients can.

(Hafiz, 1999, p. 277)

During our conversations, all of the intern teacher participants spoke of struggles that ultimately propelled them forward in their becoming as teachers. Austin described this discomfort using a term I had not yet encountered when working with intern teachers:

I think there's a common theme of *isolation* coming up through this conversation. I never really thought about it before, but there's a lot of isolation [that accompanies] being a student teacher. For example, you have the common, “Oh the kids are looking at the mentor teacher.” But [as intern teachers] we don't have a school badge. As crazy as that idea sounds, not having one makes you feel isolated from the rest of the staff, and the students. If you don't have that badge it's like, well are you a real teacher? When I walk in the room with a little sticker that says volunteer, the kids are like, “Who is this guy?” That's that kind of isolation where you feel isolated from the staff because they all know you're a student teacher.

The impact of these seemingly small details was not lost on me. I began to sense the

depth of the intern teachers' feelings of being isolated that emerged as their stories unfolded. Although she did not specifically use the word *isolated*, Margaret also felt uncomfortable isolation in her special education placement:

[The adults in my internship are] not being the solution. As a student teacher there, I can't step in. [It is made clear that] it's not my place, and I don't know as much as my mentor knows. There are many troubled kids here. I'm just like, "There's got to be another way. Can I [express my ideas] now?"

I began to wonder whether the words of Hafiz that began this exploration of isolation were applicable in the intern teachers' situations. Hafiz would assure us that loneliness and isolation are paths to growth. However, in the internship situation, each intern teacher's quest for authenticity is pursued in the context of an inauthentic role.

Isolated is from the Latin *insulates* that means "made into an island." Isolated emerged in 1740 as an English rendering of the French *isolé*, meaning "standing detached from others of its kind." Intern teachers experience isolation on a continuum from a feeling of mild detachment to the frustration of being stranded alone. Heidegger characterizes isolation in terms of *Being-in-the-World (Dasein)* when he writes, "*Being-alone* is a deficient mode of *Being-with*" (1962, p. 157). He notes that one can feel isolated even in the presence of Others and explains that although "they are *there with* us, their *Dasein-with* is encountered in a mode in which they are indifferent and alien" (p. 157). An intern teacher's feeling of being isolated often develops over a period of time, but the feeling of isolation can also occur unexpectedly in real time. One example is when the intern teacher feels that the mentor teacher's actions with regard to a student are unjust, but she is not welcome to speak. She has the lonely task of worrying about the student and feeling alienated from, and disillusioned with, her mentor teacher. Paulus and Scherff (2008) sum up the possible consequences: "Isolation and a lack of support

contribute to high attrition rates among novice teachers. Despite the efforts of teacher education and/or mentoring programs, student teachers and novice teachers frequently cite the first year as unsupportive and lonely” (p. 132).

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that mentor teachers are susceptible also to the experience of isolation. Mentor teachers often have little opportunity to discuss their individual practice with other teachers. This kind of isolation can make it difficult for the mentor to clearly communicate the details and the “whys” of their practice to an intern teacher (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008).

**Silent disagreement.** An example of another form of isolation presented itself during a conversation with Jordan. A student in Jordan’s internship classroom had a flatulence problem that caused a distraction in the classroom. The other students were clearly aware of the problem as well as from whence it emanated. Jordan remembered the mentor teacher’s response as very different from the one she would have made in that situation:

We definitely adopted the ignore strategy, which I don't know if that was best. We never directly addressed the student, which I disagreed with. I wanted him to understand that it didn't make him any less welcome or any less respected in the classroom, but I did not feel that I had the right to take that step. I guess I could have, but I wanted to make sure my mentor and I were on the same page.

Unspoken but expected deference to the mentor teacher highlights the potential impact of a mentor teacher on many facets of an intern’s identity formation. Henry (2016) writes, “During a practicum, the classroom mentor is one of the most important [elements] in a preservice teacher’s identity system. This includes not only mentoring but also relationships with students and pedagogical approaches” (p. 298). Jordan’s reluctance to offer her views is the norm for intern teachers who know the classroom is

not truly theirs and who depend on the mentor teacher's positive letter of recommendation for future employment. However, the situation can strengthen intern teachers' resolve. Henry goes on to describe an intern who disagreed silently with her mentor's assessment-oriented approach to teaching who nevertheless gained the confidence over time to develop her own identity as a teacher with a student-centered emphasis on development (2016). Is the positive element regarding disagreements stronger when intern teachers think them through using *Currere*?

**From *tell me what to do to I wish I could do this my way*.** The intern teachers with whom I conversed also described occasional trouble getting their mentor's approval of their unique ideas and plans. Austin described the variance in his experiences with his mentor:

It's good and it's bad. One it's good because we can say to the [mentor] teachers, "Okay, this is what I'm planning on doing for the day," and they can look at it and say, "Well, I tried this my first year and it was the worst thing that ever happened. You should probably think about something else." But it can also be bad when we say, "Oh, I want to try this really creative form of assessment, and I really want to incorporate the arts into it, and I want to do this, and I want to do that," and [some mentor teachers say], "Well that's not how I do it, so here's my lesson plan. Go ahead and teach it."

All five intern teachers agreed that they felt obligated to defer to the mentor teacher, because, after all, it was the mentor teacher's classroom. In her exploration of the contradictory realities inherent in teacher preparation, Britzman frames silence as the expression of power struggles. She observes, "Power is relational and exercised within a context of resistance" (Britzman, 2003, p. 40). In many of the mentor-teacher and intern-teacher relationships, any resistance or resentment must be contained inside and masked with a smile. With regard to teacher preparation, Britzman adds a discouraging note, "Any theory of power must be sensitive to the capacity of persons to interpret and



intervene in their world” (p. 40). I pondered this power differential and wondered at the complex work of creating more positive intern-mentor relationships.

In a study of developing professional judgment in novice teachers, Scales, Wolsey, Lenski, Smetana, Yoder, Dobler, Grisham, and Young (2018) write:

Using professional judgment is critical for teachers because they constantly make instructional decisions (e.g., content, lesson pacing, groupings) to meet their students’ learning needs. Therefore, professional judgment should be prioritized in teacher preparation programs. How candidates change and grow in their use of professional judgment to make instructional decisions as they become student teachers and then novice teachers is needed because realizing teachers reflect on and adapt instruction in the moment could enhance their instruction for students’ benefit. (p. 8)

I began to wonder anew if the power differential issue was all negative. The intern teachers were surely ready to leave the harbor and venture out-and-into their own spaces where they could make their own pedagogical judgments.

In addition to the frustration of staying silent, the intern teachers had to also become accustomed to being observed (and often judged) constantly by the mentor teacher, informally as well as formally. The observation schedule and the concomitant evaluation forms were one-size-fits-all and institutionalized as the data gathering instruments for assessing intern teacher success. Maxine Greene describes “small schooling” as that which is intent on raising test scores, increasing “time on task,” classroom management, and accountability while it “screens out the faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons” (1995, p.11). Their initiation to this model begins in their preparation. The written and conversational *Currere* process was a space where my intern teachers could examine this reality and make their own meanings from their relationships and encounters, both positive and negative, with their mentor teachers and evaluators.

**Carrying the weight of constant observation and evaluation.** A pervasive theme that arose from the intern teachers' written *Currere* projects was that of being constantly watched. This feeling is broadly shared by novice and veteran teachers alike. Peggy Ann Howard (in van Manen, 2005), has taught for ten years and still feels the anxiety of being looked at in the evaluative sense. She writes of her experience being evaluated by her principal, "My position has changed. Frustrated, vulnerable, I am no longer in charge of myself. I have become his look—the object of his look" (p. 54). Vulnerable is from the Latin *vulnerare*, "to wound, hurt, injure." Being vulnerable can have different meanings based on the circumstances. A child in poverty can be vulnerable to diseases, a hiker with inadequate equipment can be vulnerable to the elements, and a sailor without a compass is vulnerable to being lost at sea.

For intern teachers, the vulnerability and accompanying anxiety brought on by "the look" can be almost unbearable. This type of vulnerability is entered into willingly, but the intern teachers know that being observed is a make-or-break program requirement. They must open themselves up to criticism from people with whom they have had no opportunity to develop trust. I remember an incident in which an intern accidentally received an email intended for the supervisor's daughter that shared some unflattering comments about the intern teacher's instruction. The intern teacher decided to stay with the mentor after they resolved the issue, but it was exponentially more difficult for the intern to be observed after that incident.

During my one-on-one conversations with the intern teachers, the anxiety that resulted from any discussion of being observed was palpable. Heidegger views anxiety as an opportunity when he writes, "Anxiety makes manifest in *Dasein* its Being towards its

ownmost potentiality-for-Being – that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself” (1962, p. 232). Anxiety is most often unavoidable when being observed or, as Sartre would characterize it, being watched or looked at. Sartre observes that one’s entire sense of themselves and their presence changes dramatically as a result of an Other’s gaze (Sartre, 1956). When I asked Jordan what being observed was like for her, she responded with this vivid description:

I had such a hard time. I'm sad to admit this, but I definitely went through that whole, “I can't do this” thing. When I first started kind of co-teaching and then part-time teaching in my classroom, I most definitely went through the stage of like, “My body is not going to let me do this job. What am I going to do? I can't do it.” I needed to figure out something to overcome the anxiety that I feel when I teach. And it's amazing how far I've come.

The “something” Jordan was trying to find turned out to be time and practice.

Other intern teachers had similar responses to being watched. Austin was able to describe his stressful experience of being observed teaching a theater class in minute detail:

I had this activity thing planned, and it just took forever. Granted, looking back, maybe I should have taught the content differently before giving them the activity. It made it worse for me because while this thing is crashing and burning, I could see my mentor on her computer taking notes about me throughout the experience. Whenever the eyes would come up ... she'd be sitting forward and typing, and if she leaned back, looked up, and crossed her legs, it was like “Okay, she's just observing,” but when I got the type, type, type, type, type, eyes came up, hands didn't remove themselves from the keyboard, and she just sat there and sat there, maybe leaned back a little bit but kind of turned her head to the side, kind of leaned forward again, type, type, type but didn't look at the screen, that's when I knew something was going horribly wrong.

Margaret had the most difficult mentor teacher experience I encountered in my conversations. She had to face and accept unfair and disrespectful criticism from her mentor teacher who raised her voice to “correct” Margaret:

When I know I'm going to do a lesson, I do plans. I remember one class [during which] I was trying to use leading questions. For example, I would say, "The fox was thinking he was very sly because he ..." And I wanted the kids to jump off. I had a series of that going on for 20 minutes.

[My mentor] was not quite engaged in the class. [She was] over to the side, doing IEPs, and not really attending to what we were doing. And she said the next day, "I noticed that you just, every sentence practically, you would just trail off." And she was like yelling at me about it. And I learned that with her, you never [argued or explained]. I said, "Oh, okay. I'll work on that." Because, if I ever challenged her, she was always the expert. But I was doing that as a strategy, and it was working.

Bradbury writes of her own experience with her mentor teacher as being pleasant and cooperative on the surface with tension flowing beneath (Bradbury & Koballa, 2008).

The authors go on to identify the key to a successful intern/mentor teacher relationship as fostering trust that translates into generative and productive conversations that better support the growth of intern teachers. Through the *Currere* written process and conversations, each intern teacher found meaning in, and understanding of, the curriculum of the intern/mentor teacher relationship. In the end, each of these intern teachers found a way to accept their situations and complete the internship successfully.

Britzman clarifies this situation in which intern teachers find themselves all too often:

The experience of student teaching means entering a pre-established territory and negotiating for power within that territory. Sharing territory, however, goes against the... entire organization and ethos of schooling. And in the case of student teachers, without permission and encouragement to carve out their own space, typically, each student teacher ends up reproducing the style of another while resenting such impositions. (2003, p. 157)

What is the experience of struggling to develop and maintain a strong pedagogical identity? For better or worse, intern teachers are influenced, shaped, and changed by the experience of teaching as modeled by the mentor teacher.

**Who would say such a thing?** Well-meaning faculty members are apt to add to an intern teacher's discomfort during the internship. They often say things to an intern

teacher that they would not dream of saying to a colleague. Austin remembered other teachers treating him like a “puppy dog” and that they found it “cute” when he had a hard time in the classroom. Alex faced a very unusual situation with another teacher in the high school social studies content area that had a very negative opinion of Alex’s mentor teacher. Alex planned to spend some time in a middle school setting after the main internship ended, but this teacher began pressuring her to stay – for the benefit of the kids. Alex took a deep breath before relating what happened:

It was very uncomfortable, and I was a little bit upset with her for putting me into that position. Before it came to those four weeks that we're supposed to take over 100% of the classes, that teacher had been almost begging me, and telling her own students who had either that Psych class or that Econ class with us to also ask me to take over. It was very uncomfortable, and I didn't think it was professional at all for her to be expressing that she didn't have faith in another teacher to teach these students.

Alex should never have found herself dealing with coercion and guilt in that unprofessional situation.

Although that kind of gossip and pressure is rare, other types of comments are more common. During our second conversation, Jordan shared that other teachers in the school had told her she needed to grow a backbone. Jordan winced as she recounted the comments:

“You're gonna [*sic*] get walked all over; you need to grow a backbone.” I'm getting that, and I think that that is because they sense that I have that philosophy where I want to be responsive to the students. There's a teacher I truly respect who when she found out where I got hired and in what grade level, her response was, “Holy moly, you are going to have to be mean.”

It is part of the reality of the schoolhouse that there are many attitudes among teachers that affect school and classroom curriculum, and some of them are negative and even destructive. Van Manen describes the relationship between teachers and children as

“pedagogically reprehensible” when the child “is denied his or her uniqueness” (1991, p. 211). Is this same concept transferrable to the adult relationships between mentor teachers and intern teachers? How is this experience internalized and what are the effects on the intern teachers’ practice?

I observed the ways in which *Currere-as-Written* and *Currere-as-Conversation* distanced the intern teachers from difficult mentor teacher experiences and gave them the opportunity to make their own meaning to better understand and mitigate negative effects. As difficult and uncomfortable as their internships could often be, the intern teachers also recalled many more unforgettable, authentic moments of joy and connection. The interns developed a broader understanding of curriculum using *Currere*, and this understanding included the development of a strong sense of themselves as growing into authentic professionals.

### **Timeless Moments**

There are some moments that pass without notice and others that cannot pass quickly enough. And then there are those moments that become suspended in time. Moment is from the Old French for “minute; importance, weight, value.” The word moment as I use it here does not refer to the specific time of an event, but rather a sense of timelessness. Jordan recalled becoming aware of these ineffable classroom moments of insight, but she went further to describe how she learned to anticipate, recognize, and nurture these timeless moments. Jordan’s decision to take a discussion of elephants into the realm of her students’ curiosity and the awe she recognized as they learned that elephants are pregnant for two years are the stuff of children’s lasting memories of being and becoming in a first-grade classroom with, as her students call her, Ms. A.

**Moments of care.** Whether she realized it at the time or not, Jordan's teaching was also a model for her students for what it is to care. Noddings (2012) writes:

Modeling is important in most schemes of moral education, but in caring it is especially important. We have to show in our own behavior what it means to care. Thus, we do not merely tell [students] to care and give them texts to read on the subject; we demonstrate our care in our relations with them. However, we do not care merely for the purpose of modeling. Our caring must be genuine; the inevitable modeling is a by-product. (p. 237)

Austin remembered cultivating moments outside of the classroom by attending sporting events and, of course, directing theatrical productions. He referred to these moments as "care beyond academics." An outstanding moment for Alex was her breakthrough realization that her research should focus on gender bias in historical accounts when some of her female students wondered aloud what their choices would be coming to school in costume as an historical figure for Halloween extra credit. Margaret felt her care and patience growing moment by moment as she worked with students who were not able or not yet able to control their behaviors, including head banging and shouting. These moments threaded together to reveal a main facet of her teacher self.

Kasey talked honestly and openly of her feelings about the tragedy in the classroom, and this act began a dialog among teacher and students. Noddings (2012) notes the importance of dialog in modeling and developing caring relationships:

In addition to showing what it means to care, we engage our students in *dialog* about caring. On one level, dialog is such an essential part of caring that we could not model caring without engaging in it. However, it is also important to talk about our caring because caring can be manifested in very different ways. (p.237)

Kasey treasured the moments of care that came from shared grief with her students over their classmate's suicide. She remains amazed at her students' kindness and resilience.

These are moments unbounded by temporality as they define the past and influence the future. They are chapters in the story of becoming-a-caring-teacher and understanding the lived curriculum along with the possibilities for abundance in the classroom.

**Moments to remember.** The power of conversation moved the essence of emerging themes from past memory into the present moment. Merleau-Ponty observes that “History flows neither from the past nor to the future alone: it reverses its course and, when you get right down to it, flows from all the presents” (2014, p. 80). Language shapes these re-collections, and they became beacons that beckoned to these intern teachers and guided them as they continued on the course toward becoming and growing as educators. These are the moments that resonate, that shimmer in memory, and that have the power to change the course of one’s life. Kasey’s experience of a student’s tragic suicide will shape her forever, and the memories of that student and her moments with him as his teacher are suspended in time:

This was a kid that I would see every morning. He always came up [and greeted me]. I had him [in class] later in the day, but every morning it was, “hi” and some fact about something, or showing me some book, or something along those lines. I started my day by talking to him every morning, and I ended my day with saying goodbye to him at recess, because we do recess in the afternoon. It was a hole from start to finish that was there. It wasn't just an empty desk during his class. He really had a presence.

In *The Absent Body*, Leder (1990) writes of the human tendency to lose awareness of one’s own corporeality and live primarily in the world of ideas and automaticity. Kasey and her students were jolted into the reality of death as they experienced their living bodies as existing in the *presence* of their classmate’s bodily *absence*. How does a child experience the mortality of a peer in their own bodies? Because he was no longer part of the space of the classroom, along with the heaviness of the reason why, Kasey



developed a sense of time as shifting with the perception of lived experience into the timelessness of the loss they all shared.

One of Jordan's timeless moments was the smile that broke across her student's face the moment she saw Jordan offering the choice of panda underwear. Margaret's was a discouraging moment when her mentor scolded a child for what Margaret considered innocuous behavior. The flying desk that missed Austin by inches will live forever as an influence on his pedagogy. In every case above, each intern teacher experienced his or her perceptions of these timeless moments and their meanings. In *Art as Experience*, Dewey describes the synergy between the physical sensing and the whole living being: "Hand and eye, when the experience is aesthetic, are but instruments through which the entire live creature operates. Hence the expression is emotional and guided by purpose" (1934, pp. 51-52). I see the connections among Dewey's description of aesthetics, an understanding of curriculum, and the nature of pedagogy, all of which contribute to memorable moments that can challenge the perception of time as measurable and finite.

**The joy of classroom connections.** Knowing the intensity of the MAT program as I do, coupled with my awareness of the anxiety interns express during time on campus, I was gratified to see a shared theme of a joyful classroom appear in all five *Currere* projects. *Joy* comes to us from Latin *gaudia*, "bliss, inward joy, gladness, delight" and also from the Greek *gaio* which means "to rejoice." Further, the Middle Irish *guaire* meant "noble." This small word, joy, has a heritage of representing inward and outward expressions of gladness. The "noble" aspect surprised me at first, but then I considered the nature of joy as I experience it, remembering the sense of quietness, awe, and even reverence.

During our conversations, each intern teacher beamed as they re-cognized the joy of Being-with-children in a living space. Nieto (1999) describes the creation of a classroom community:

Whether we consciously create them or not, classrooms are communities, and, like all communities, some are more or less effective than others. Similarly, each classroom develops a particular culture with its own values, rituals, symbols that either welcome or reject its members. The culture that undergirds each classroom provides potent messages to students and teachers about their roles and responsibilities, talents and limitations, and future prospects.

Creating a classroom climate in which all students feel that they have good ideas, that they have a right to learn, and that they are important and worthwhile is not an easy task. (pp. 84-85)

Each intern commented on connections with students and described the experience of becoming ever more comfortable dwelling in the teacher role. There was no trace of complaint, no self-pity, and, most notably, no detailed examples of horrible student behavior that have become such an entrenched part of the public-school stereotype. In her famous TED Talk, “Every Kid Needs a Champion,” Rita Pierson (2013) makes a powerful and lasting impression in her call for strong relationships between teachers and students based on joy:

Teaching and learning should bring joy. How powerful would our world be if we had kids who were not afraid to take risks, who were not afraid to think, and who had a champion? Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.

Pierson’s quote connects joy to the idea of having a champion. For me, the word champion immediately conjures the image of Rocky Balboa finally besting Apollo Creed. Champions are those individuals who rise to the top after intense competition with others. They are the Super Bowl winners who joyously proclaim *I’m going to Disney World* as they hoist the championship trophy high.

What does it mean to be a champion of children? What is it to champion a child? Champion used as a noun is from Old French *champion* “combatant,” Late Latin *campionem* “gladiator, fighter, combatant in the field,” and (c. 1300) “one who fights on behalf of another or others, one who undertakes to defend a cause.” In 1730, champion was first used as a sports term meaning “first place performer, one who has demonstrated superiority to all others in some matter decided by public contest or competition.” In the 1600s, champion as a verb meant “to challenge.” By 1830, it developed its figurative use as “maintain the cause of, advocate for.” Being a champion of children then, shifts the teaching perspective of fighting to win (or survive) to persistent action-toward that which serves the needs of the child. This is the advocacy-championing van Manen describes in his introduction to *The Tact of Teaching: The Meaning of Pedagogical Thoughtfulness*:

What is a child? To see a child is  
To see possibility, someone in  
The process of becoming. (van Manen, 1991, p. 1)

If the word student is substituted for child, it follows that an adult intern teacher is also someone full of possibility, someone in the process of becoming. Teacher interns in the SMCM MAT program view Rita Pierson’s TED Talk during their graduate coursework as a way to suggest that advocacy for the child is a healthy part of an educator’s identity. Identity is influenced by the manner in which one is taught. To be a champion for children, do intern teachers need to know what it is to have a champion themselves? The intern teachers have professors, supervisors, and mentors, but to what extent and in what ways do they model themselves as champions for their intern teachers?

Perhaps the intern teachers' *Currere* project emphases on joy, advocacy, and connection are influenced by the ideas in Pierson's TED Talk. Perhaps the *Currere* process itself has served as the intern teacher's champion-from-within. As the *Currere* process evolved throughout this research, I perceived a lightening in the intern teachers' words, and I sensed their growing confidence in understanding curriculum in its joyful aspect. The intern teachers most often associated their joyful moments with the connections they made with students as part of a lived curriculum. I reveled in the excited insights the intern teachers gained from past memories that they can take into their future teaching practice as champions of children.

I returned to the pedagogical conversation space with Alex in which she expressed amazement at how well her students received the instructional decisions she made and also described how she responded when the unexpected arose during a lesson:

I think that you show your students, and you show yourself, that you are a learner alongside with them.

And, one day, I did actually do it explicitly. It wasn't just me reacting to them, and them reacting to me, but I took time out of the lesson to ask them, "What are some things that you want to do in this classroom? What do you like to do? What do you need from me? What's going to make this class awesome for you?" And then I sat there with a notepad and I wrote down ideas and I implemented every single one except for "have a party."

Without naming it, Alex was championing her students by sharing the instructional space with them. Her connections with her individual students and entire classes became stronger over the course of her internship. One positive effect of having a hands-off mentor was that Alex essentially had free reign to develop classroom culture and relationships according to her own values and pedagogical orientation.

On the other hand, Jordan's mentor was mostly involved and supportive. One particular conversation stood out as the impetus for an important connection Jordan made

about the contradiction that can develop between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived. Jordan remembered:

[My mentor and I have] been talking of the fourth quarter report card lately and she's like, "I don't want to assess them on this because none of the information in the curriculum is fluid. I taught it in a moment in time. So, I know if I assess them right now they're not going to get it."

Jordan looked up at me with an expression of mild surprise mixed with relief as her thinking and feeling about testing and learning crystallized into language:

That [conversation has] been making me think a lot. Because I think that learning should be an accumulation of skills and knowledge and not a static moment in time. It just so divides me. Really, it's without a purpose. Relevance is so important to me. I don't recall things that I learned in school. I still had a great experience, but do I think that I perhaps could have been maybe more successful if I would have had more relevant experiences.

Jordan realized just how strong (and why) her commitment to making education relevant for students through a conversation with her mentor teacher. Darling-Hammond (2017) shares her view on the importance of collaboration: "Collaboration among educators is critical [in order] to take advantage of each other's knowledge and skills and create a set of common, coherent practices so that the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts. Collaboration is at the heart of effective schools" (p.111).

Goodlad (2004) emphasizes the importance of making learning relevant for students, encouraging individual goal-setting, and offering novel approaches to accessing and implementing content. He goes on to say, "These things are not easy, and teachers learn some of the rhetoric but rarely practice the techniques in teacher education programs or later" (p. 231). *Currere-as-Written* and *Currere-as-Conversation* gave Jordan the gift of insight regarding relevance and strengthened her resolve to make a

lived curriculum of meaningful learning a priority in her future classroom. This is teaching-as-a-champion-of-children in action.

As I continued talking with my intern teachers to discover answers to my phenomenological question: *What is the lived experience of using Currere to understand curriculum?* the conversation turned toward their professional futures as teachers no longer tethered to a mentor's classroom.

### **Looking Ahead Toward Becoming Response-able**

The future was approaching for these intern teachers in which the label of “intern” would be shed. They would soon become first-year teachers and take the helms of their own classrooms. As they progressed through their internships, the intern teachers' visions of what that first year might be like grew clearer in some ways and more obscured in others. Their understandings of the unpredictability of student behavior, the stresses of grading, and the routine of planning became second nature in most cases. However, new concerns developed about being the sole authority in the as-yet-unknown territory of their first classrooms.

In both *Currere-as-Written* and *Currere-as-Conversation*, I noted many themes having to do with the developing understanding of what it means to be a teacher. As I wrote my way in, I discovered a natural relationship emerge between teaching and Heidegger's concept of *thrownness* (1962). Interns felt a pervasive sense of being “thrown” into spaces that were not theirs and into situations for which they did not feel prepared. Heidegger uses the term *thrownness* to represent the idea of *Being* as thrown into a situation with perceived externals. He refers to this also as *Being-in-the-World*. Gadamer (1975) carries forth this idea with his assertion that *Being* is not finite but is also

projected “toward future possibilities of itself” (p. 252). Gadamer writes: “Heidegger was right [in *Being and Time*] to insist that what he called “*thrownness*” belongs together with projection” (p. 252). During my hermeneutic interpretation of the teacher interns’ words, I realized that *Currere* is not only a process through which intern teachers can visualize themselves, but it is also a way to project themselves into their profession.

### **Dwelling With-in the Teacher-Self**

The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the Earth is dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the Earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. (Heidegger, 1993b, p. 349)

Some choices can be made regarding one’s professional persona, such as how to situate and decorate a classroom and what kinds of clothes to wear. But most choices are made in the moment, and these choices collectively, and over time, add up to who one becomes as a teacher. Grumet writes, “The curriculum is what happens. It is the grand order of events that school boards finance, school buildings contain, theorists analyze, and teachers organize. *Currere* is what the individual does with the curriculum” (in Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. 142). The teacher-self emerges as the result of these collective decisions over time and sets the lived curriculum of a classroom in motion. Of course, the creation of the lived curriculum is driven by all who inhabit the classroom, but it is the teacher who sets curriculum in motion. A teacher aware of her pivotal role in what happens with the children in her classroom inhabits her teacher-self with a sense of purpose.

Inhabit comes from the Old French *enhabiter* meaning “dwell in; live in; reside.” To inhabit the teacher-self is to make a home, a place of reflection, a peaceful space in which lived curriculum is a welcome companion. Each of the intern teachers had

developed a perspective on how they perceived the integration of dwelling-as-self and dwelling-as-teacher. Jordan dwelled extensively on her developing teacher identity throughout the *Currere* process. She considered her embodiment as a teacher in the classroom environment when she wrote of her initial anxiety that made her become hot and red-faced. She recognized that her skills with organization and precision were reflected in her view of herself as one who embraces challenges, takes risks that lead to growth, focuses on understanding herself as a teacher, and commits to consistent and continual professional improvement. Austin also identified growth as a teacher to include dwelling in strong relationships with others as evidence of success. Alex saw her future teacher-self as alive with humor, responsible for the classroom as a safe space, and determined to bring authenticity into the teacher role she is shaping. Margaret looked forward to being challenged and tested. She expressed certainty that challenges would lead to greater confidence and balance in her dwelling-as-a-teacher. Kasey explained that she actively seeks teaching as an adventure through which she will find meaning in broadening students' perspectives.

These intern teachers have moved beyond simple reflection on the day's events and are awake to their presence in the lived curriculum of their classrooms, a kind of internalized *Currere*. The teacher-self dwells always in itself as a living work in progress, in a perpetual state of building lived experience. Ladson-Billings characterizes the interns' views of their own teacher-selves as she writes:

Teachers see teaching as an art and themselves as artists. These teachers do not ignore scientific principles of pedagogy. However, they do not view teaching as a technical skill that requires minimal training and they do not believe that as long as one follows a kind of recipe or prescription one can predict outcomes. (2009, p. 45)



Ladson-Billings is describing a different kind of building process. Heidegger writes that building arises from dwelling; the very act of dwelling causes something to be conceived, built, and arranged (1993b). This idea extends beyond the literal to encompass the dwelling in the teacher-self toward a pedagogical identity. All of this takes place within the embodied Being of the teacher. Casey (2009) refers to the lived body as a dwelling that is not merely an object but is also a dynamic force that has the power to determine its own course.

Levin (1985) opens Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* as an openness to Being to observe that the thinking of and about Being is "borne in the world through our bodily comportment" (p. 91). Given a particular body's physical characteristics, the conditions in which it dwells, and its emotional state, Being is ultimately determined by the inseparable integration of the mind and body. The body is the dwelling place where conscious and unconscious choices are made regarding one's identity formation. The sensations of the body inevitably shape understanding regarding the meaning of the teacher-self.

### **Dwelling as an Embodied Teacher-Self**

I return to the morning Kasey went to school and discovered that one of her students had taken his own life. The news was shared through an unscheduled morning staff meeting, and Kasey described her body as first going rigid then feeling weak and limp as waves of shock and grief crashed over her. She felt a sense of being disconnected from her body while at the same time heavy with the nauseous burden of carrying it. In this bodily state, Kasey found herself on her own in the classroom waiting

to greet the students. Terror joined Kasey's other bodily sensations as she faced the immediate prospect of not handling the situation properly for her students:

They kept [my mentor teacher] in the cafeteria after the meeting, wouldn't let her leave, because she completely broke down about the whole situation. I made it back to the classroom, and I was like, there's no one else here. It's just me, and I've got to hold it together. I have no idea what to do, but I've got to hold it together.

Then [the students] walked in. They're eighth graders, but they're so small, and when they're sad, they look even smaller. Seeing them so small and sad, I [realized that, if I were them] I would have wanted to know that it was okay to be small and sad. All this is going through my head as these small sad figures are walking into my classroom, and I couldn't be okay. There was no pretending.

Kasey paused, and, although she did not cry during our conversation, I saw her eyes fill as she relived the past tears from that difficult day. I responded:

It sounds like you didn't make a decision, you just let go of what you thought you were supposed to do and just went with...

I trailed off, and Kasey finished my thought:

...what was there. Throughout the course of the day, I started realizing that there were more kids that needed to see that it was okay to not be okay than there were kids that needed me to stand up there and tell them anything about social studies.

As an intern teacher, Kasey had lived through the death of a student, one of the most difficult challenges a teacher of any experience level can face. Kasey discovered that, despite anxiety and grief, she could trust herself to do the right thing for her students and still remain authentic. She grew beyond her coursework and the written curriculum to fully embrace and express her humanity to her students. Van Manen names this authenticity as tact and writes, "A teacher who is generally tactful has learned to trust himself or herself in ever-changing situations and circumstances. And, most important, such a teacher communicates this confidence to the students" (1991, p. 158). Without knowing it, Kasey's tact and authenticity had bridged the divide of working with a

diverse set of students. In what ways can shared, authentic lived experiences and strong, trusting relationships between teacher and students contribute to academic achievement?

Nieto (2013) adds an important observation:

Learning to teach students of diverse backgrounds is about much more than methods. Specific approaches and strategies can be very helpful, but methods alone have never solved the problem of underachievement. In fact, the case can be made that a singular focus on methods might even exacerbate the problem if it leads teachers to believe that if the methods do not work, the problem must be the students. Much more significant than methods are teachers' attitudes and beliefs about their students, their relationships with them, and their knowledge about their families and backgrounds. (p. 20)

Kasey shared, and then received, compassion and tact through a lived experience with her students that will influence her pedagogy over the course of her entire career.

### **Who am I? Moments In-between Becoming and Being a Teacher**

Jordan spent a great deal of time and energy throughout the MAT program thinking about her future and pondering the teacher-self she wants to become. I asked Jordan to visualize, then describe, that future. Jordan paused briefly, and gave this earnest description:

I think every day, "*Who will I be in the classroom?*" Writing and discussing my *Currere* project overwhelms me. I am notoriously an over-thinker and a planner. I think this is why I'm emotional about [using *Currere*] because this is instinctual and not over-thought and it's what I would want. If somebody else had written this, I would say, "*Wow, that's a great teacher.*" But I wrote it. It shows me that I am already taking steps toward becoming who I want to be as a teacher, and that's really meaningful for me.

Van Manen writes of a "profound contradiction" in teachers' developing identities: "The language by way of which teachers are encouraged to interpret themselves and reflect on their living with children is thoroughly imbued by hope, and yet it is almost exclusively a language of doing – it lacks being" (2015, p. 192). Although van Manen continues by asserting that educators do not know how to talk of being with

children in terms of hope, the *Currere* process has allowed my five intern teachers to recognize and pursue hope in their pedagogy. Margaret offers a perfect example of hope for her teacher-self as she describes her unique take on developing her teacher self. She elaborates on the inspiration she found in using the *Currere* process:

I talk about the little girl that I once was reaching out to me and trying to communicate to me that she wishes she had the kind of teacher that I want to be. Also, me speaking back to her and say, “It will be okay.”

A woman in her late fifties, Margaret has the advantage of a great amount of life experience. *Currere-as-Written* and *Currere-as-Conversation* showed her that bringing her childhood into her classroom as a guide is also a way to soothe her past self that never had an understanding, hope-full teacher.

Austin saw his teacher-self as defined by simpler terms:

I never thought about this as a student but, okay, I'm the only one in the room wearing a tie. I know that's the weirdest symbol, but you're the one who's dressed professionally, you're the one who's older than everyone else in the room.

Austin was the only man in my intern teacher group of five. In his view, his wearing of a tie was an outward symbol of his position in the school. To Austin, the tie was symbolic of the fact that he was not a kid anymore, even though he felt like one on the inside.

Sartre writes, “In the shock which seizes me when I apprehend the Other’s [judgmental] look, this happens—that suddenly I experience a subtle alienation of all my possibilities (1956, p. 260). Sartre describes the feeling of objectification that can be an automatic response to being gazed upon, and the one-looked-at begins to examine and judge himself through the Other’s eyes. This feeling is known to all teachers from time to time, but it is intern teachers particularly who are already examining their every move, encountering more frequent anxiety that results from the Other’s look. Merleau-Ponty observes, “Once

the Other's gaze upon me has stripped me of part of my being by inserting me into his field, then it is clear that I can only recuperate my being by forming relations with the other or by making myself freely recognized by him" (2014, p. 374). Is the tie, then, an external representation of his teaching role where he seeks to form relationships with his students in order to retrieve that part of his being? Might the tie also be a way for Austin to "recuperate" from the otherly gaze of Austin-the-Intern-Teacher?

Once again, Austin spoke, capturing perfectly the in-between space of becoming and being a teacher. As he described his coursework on learning how to provide feedback for his high school students, he was startled to notice that as an MAT student, he was subject to the same technique:

We're taught early on you've got to sandwich things for students: Oh, you did this really well. This is the thing you can improve on, but you did that really well. Don't start with the negative. Make sure when you talk with a parent, you give them a positive first. Then you sit there as a teacher and you see an administrator do it to you, or you see your mentor teacher do it to you, or you see a professor do it to you.

I became hyper-aware of this sandwich. I would have my supervisor say, "Well, you managed your time really well in this class, but when that student asked that question you didn't answer it, you kind of stumbled on this, but you also ended the class strongly."

Then you have to sit there and think, do you actually mean these things or are you doing the sandwich thing because that's what educators [are] supposed to do? Sometimes I struggle to find a positive to give my students. Then you become hyper-aware of, well is my supervisor struggling to find something that I did well?

I asked Austin to describe what this awareness was like and why he reacted as he did:

Because you then don't know if you're actually doing good work. You know the structure, you know how the game is played, or at least you're learning how the game is played. This is probably over-dramatic, but I thought back to all the teachers I've had and all the professors I've had in undergrad and I'm like, they all kind of did that, this is what you did well, this is what you did bad, so when did they actually think that this is a good thing, or when were they just trying to find

something to say to not make my education detrimental? I don't know how to describe it. I don't want to feel like a liar to my students, but I was like, did any of my educators lie to me about what they thought was actually good?

At first, I considered that Austin might indeed be overthinking a bit, but it dawned on me that an intern teacher's life is lived in a persistent overthinking mode. Intern teachers are expected to detach them-selves and examine physical appearance and presentation including dress, movement, and mannerisms. They are reminded constantly of how much damage a thoughtless teacher can do so as to ensure that they think before they speak or act. Intern teachers are simultaneously asked to “think on their feet” and make good decisions at a moment's notice. Most of all, intern teachers are taught strategies and best practices that may or may not be effective for them and are expected to weave these into an authentic teacher-self.

Intern teachers in this in-between space of being told what is best and deciding for themselves what is best are sorting through different ways to express themselves authentically and craft their teacher-selves. The questions they ask of themselves begin to expand to include those in positions of authority and evaluation. Apple (2004) describes the hegemonic curriculum as “generally supportive and accepting of the *existing* economic, political, ideological, and intellectual framework that apportions opportunity and power in American society” (p. 101). He relates his view that the aforementioned framework sublimates students' humanity and represses many people it is ostensibly created to serve (2004). This is quite a different situation from the one these intern teachers visualize who are inspired by the idea of teaching as a human endeavor.

Noddings (2012) supports their conceptualization of curriculum:

An important argument against a curriculum defined as a set of standards, behavioral objectives, or competencies is that such a curriculum is, by its very

nature, impoverished. The idea that schools should teach all and only that they expect every student to learn is fundamentally deficient. The available or presented curriculum should be far more extensive than the material mastered by any one student or group of students. (p. 208)

### **Building a Legacy**

The story is not over. The story is still being unfolded.  
(Jardine, 1997, p. 211).

The story of a teacher is an epic adventure filled with success and failure, joy and despair, confidence and insecurity, and everything in-between. This story is a teacher's legacy. Legacy comes from the late fourteenth century *legacie*, meaning "body of persons sent on a mission," The Medieval Latin *legatia* and the Latin *legatus* was used to name an "ambassador, envoy, deputy." Legacy as a sense of "property left by will, a gift by will" appeared in Scottish during the mid-fifteenth century. This etymology shows the connectedness of the human being and what is left as a gift. Nieto (2014) describes the gift of teaching and of being a teacher who is passing on that gift to his or her students:

People continue to enter the profession, excited by the opportunity to get to know and teach young people and enthralled by what one can accomplish as a teacher. Certainly, it is not money, fame, or luxury that brings teachers to the profession, or that keeps them there. It is instead an intangible *something* that makes teaching a compelling vocation, even a passion. Those who have not taught have not experienced the sheer joy of sharing knowledge, of having students "get it," or sparking a heretofore undiscovered passion for a particular topic; and those who have never experienced the terror of getting something wrong or uttering a careless statement that may unintentionally hurt a student for years to come cannot know what it means to teach. (p. 10)

The interns have come to understand that their legacy is being built moment by moment, day by day.

### ***Being as Part of the Lived Relationship***

Skipping Stone

I skip across the river's sparkling surface  
Leaving rings expanding everywhere I touch.

Finally, just before I sink, I hear a cheer  
And a smattering of applause.  
The rings intersect and become one.  
(Palmer, 2018, Unpublished poem.)

All of the intern teachers mentioned relationships as one of the themes they discovered through *Currere*. This shared discovery was not surprising in itself, but several of the interns expanded on this idea to make some very specific connections between the idea of relationships and how they are actually developed.

### **Getting to Know You**

When Jordan completed her internship with third graders, she spent a short period of time in a Kindergarten classroom to get a taste of the primary-level elementary experience. When Jordan started working with the five-year-olds, she was startled immediately by how different they were from her former third-grade students. At first, Jordan felt frustrated by the kindergarteners' stark contrast to her older, and more independent, third-graders. She initially assumed that she was just not a good fit for a primary classroom. During our conversations, Jordan realized that the experience of being out of her element might have felt the same if she had started in a kindergarten classroom and then moved to third grade. What she realized is that the relationships she had developed over many months with her nine-year-old students were not yet blossoming with the Kindergarteners. Her moment of realization began:

It's crazy to think about the things that happen in the classroom that you would never write in your plans. My mentor was out two days last week and reading over her plans made me laugh because of the [number] of things that were not included: "Oh by the way this kid might do this, this kid might do that, this one might do this." You don't write those things down.

As Jordan was speaking, her gaze turned inward as if reliving the memory. Suddenly she looked at me and leaned forward with wide eyes:



I think that's what is impacting my time in the kindergarten. It's because I don't know the kids as well.

Heidegger (1962) writes that it is “*Dasein* as Being-with lets the *Dasein* of Others be encountered in the world” (p. 157). Further, Heidegger characterizes Being-with as “in every case a characteristic of one’s own *Dasein*” (p. 157). I understand this as the essential nature of relationships; the extent to which one knows another is a reflection of a simultaneous understanding of the self.

### **Understanding and Respect**

Margaret saw her role in the relationships she developed with her students mainly in terms of her responses to her students’ academic and personal needs. Her stated emphasis was on the realities of the classroom and the students in it rather than educational policies. She spoke of working to develop relationships with the students in her special education classes that were based on respect and understanding. She expressed concern regarding her mentor teacher’s treatment of one boy who was always in trouble and frustration that her mentor teacher made it impossible for her to raise her voice. She described how she imagined the boy’s interior monologue:

“Nobody’s getting what’s the matter with me and I can’t communicate it. Then I’m at home and it’s a bad situation, and here I am in school and now I’m being treated [disrespectfully]. The principal and everybody is yelling at me. What did I do?”

Margaret was deeply concerned that the child’s problems were being exacerbated by the treatment she saw him getting at school for behaviors he may not have been able to control. She remarked, “It’s just the feeling that we’re adding to the problems.” In the 1972 bestselling *Teacher and Child*, Ginott presents a scenario that would be laughable were it not so disturbing. The scene is a classroom where the teacher unnecessarily

intervenes, uses threats, loses his temper, and speaks rudely and disparagingly to his students. Ginott describes the result:

The noise subsided; a heavy silence descended. But the [classroom] atmosphere was filled with poison. "Today we are going to discuss concepts of mercy and compassion in the teachings of the old prophets," announced the teacher. A hollow laughter rose and died quickly in the class as the teacher began to lecture on the quality of mercy. (1972, p. 57)

Delpit (2012) describes an alternative to this kind of dismal classroom experience, with a particular emphasis on children from low-income communities:

What those who have been successful at teaching these children [from low-income families] to achieve at high levels know is that they do not need to "fix" the language of the parents, or to devise some preschool intervention that will "fix" the children, or to "dumb-down" teaching with scripted instruction. Rather, students need focused instructional strategies throughout their school years that are designed specifically for their cultural and academic backgrounds. (p. 36)

How is Margaret affected by her inability to speak openly about her concerns to her mentor teacher due to her status as an intern? Van Manen asks, "Can pedagogical understanding be learned?" (1991, p. 84). Van Manen describes an integral aspect of pedagogical understanding as "the ability to become aware of the inner life of a young person. For this the adult first of all needs to be able to listen to the child in an open, warm, and receptive manner" (p. 87). The stated foundation of Margaret's teaching is her understanding of the relationship between her adult self and her child self that "felt stupid and couldn't learn" to develop relationships with her students. How might teachers discover the importance of understanding the inner life of students and the power of listening?

### **Welcoming Students and Inviting Them In**

Alex related the strength and health of a classroom culture to the strength and health of the relationships among those who define and share it. Alex was used to having

little to no input from her mentor teacher, and she was free to experiment and build relationships as she deemed best. During our conversations, I asked Alex how it felt to realize that her understanding of, and relationships with, students were so much a part of her lesson planning and so much a part of how the lesson changed while underway.

Alex's initial response captured the surface of her teacher/student relationship:

I am so glad that I took the time at the beginning of my internship to ask [the students] what they wanted from me as a teacher, and what helped them in their classroom, because I was able to pull from that and give them what worked for them.

Nieto (1999) expands on this notion of successful teacher/student relationships:

Particular instructional strategies and a humanizing pedagogy should not be thought of as dichotomies. A humanizing pedagogy can successfully make use of innovative and creative methods. But there is no set “bag of tricks” or single approach to help all students learn. What matters most are the intentions and goals behind the pedagogy. (p. 80)

I could see the wheels turning in Alex's mind as she recalled the power of a relationship with students that included them in her plans. What came next was her own excited insight:

And, sitting here right now, I'm thinking that that's something I'm going to do every year, and maybe multiple times a year. They [students] change so much, and maybe they'll realize, “Oh, I like this more than I thought I did,” or “This actually ended up not working for me.” So, in my first day of the year plan, I'm going to explicitly tell my students that I am learning with them—every single day, and every month, and every lesson, they're teaching me as much as I am teaching them. And I think that transparency is really valuable. That kind of goes back to those two big themes of relationships and classroom culture.

Alex is a teacher who *sees* her students. Van Manen writes that “being seen is more than being acknowledged. For a child it means experiencing being seen by the teacher. It means being confirmed as existing, as being a person [as well as] a learner. Alex brought this capacity with her and developed it intentionally during her internship.

Her insights into the teaching profession led me to consider pedagogy and relationships as essential to one another. Aoki offers a way of viewing this connection through the lens of teaching, which he characterizes as “a tactful leading that knows and follows the pedagogic good in a caring situation” (2005, p. 191). What might an emphasis on care and compassion in the classroom add to the meaning of education?

Austin’s view of the meaning of strong relationships was similar to Alex’s, but he also brought forth how important the “little things” can be when building relationships between teacher and students:

I do this all the time, like just asking the student how her day is going; is this a good day to call on the student; is this a good day to push the student in a certain direction? There's also the world and the school culture that's going around them. If you know that there is a big fight that breaks out in the cafeteria before the class, you might know that it's a good day for talking about school fights because people were directly affected by it. You have to quickly adjust plans for the day.

Austin was still an intern teacher, yet using the *Currere* process helped Austin understand that positive relationships require agility due to the unpredictable nature of the schoolhouse. Building relationships means understanding the broader lived curriculum of the school and community.

### **Becoming a Community**

Kasey picked up this thread of relationships with an emphasis on the community aspect. She expressed her desire to build meaningful relationships with students as the foundation of a meaningful curriculum in which creativity and critical thinking flourish. I asked her to say more about how this would look and feel in her future classroom:

The way that I think of it is more of a climate that you set up where you start to have an understanding that you're mutually moving forward. When kids make connections that you hadn't thought of, make sure that you say [something like] “Thank you. I don’t think I would have ever thought of that,” or “That's a great connection I hadn't thought of it that way.” It's little stuff like that that really lets

them know that you're moving with them. I think it is just being vocal with students that you're learning too, which I think, in my experience, not every teacher does.

I think the biggest realization that I had was how much I wanted to view my classroom as a supportive community. The students push the teachers just as much as the teacher pushes the students, as long as the teacher lets that relationship and that climate *be*.

Without explicitly realizing it, Kasey was using “be” in the sense of allowing the lived curriculum to flow naturally. Biesta writes that “to learn from someone is a radically different experience from the experience of being taught by someone” (2013, p. 53). He continues, “We more often than not refer to experiences where someone showed us something or made us realize something that really entered our being from the outside” (p. 53). My conversations with the intern teachers revealed the centrality of positive relationships in raising teaching to the art of letting learn. Further, I grasped that relationships, for better or worse, are both the causes and the effects of lived curriculum—the waves and rivulets that set the classroom in motion.

### **What’s Next and Am I Ready?**

After all the challenges of the internship, and once this part of the MAT program was complete, the intern teachers became more concerned about their first year when they would be in classrooms on their own. Jordan spoke about maintaining her values of “engagement and energy” in her work as a teacher. Austin stated his belief that being open and honest would serve him and his students well. Margaret confirmed her dedication to remembering that with patience, flexibility, and reflection, she could help any student grow. While pondering the power of relationships, I came across this passage from Mary Aswell Doll’s *Like Letters in Running Water: A Mythopoetics of Curriculum* which applies directly to faculty members of teacher preparation programs: “Perhaps,

with any luck, our adult students can become like children, who, seeing things in simple suchness, may then know themselves” (2000, p. 165). I appropriated this passage to describe my intern teacher participants after I witnessed their use of *Currere* to understand curriculum and also grow closer to their unique selves.

The theme of relationships is one of the strongest ties that binds my research. A strong relationship in-between the past imagined teacher-self and the vision of the future teacher-self is the unbreakable line that ensures that our craft is moored securely. Strong, healthy relationships also set us free when we are ready to cast off. I have focused on the teacher-student relationships about which the intern teachers and I conversed; however, I am compelled to add another layer. Through this research process, I developed relationships that bound me more tightly to each of these intern teachers. We shared something remarkable as we talked, laughed, and cried together. That something was ineffable but felt very deeply. As the intern teachers and I conversed and shared our experiences, relationships developed between and among us as we explored the phenomenological question: *What is the lived experience of intern teachers using Currere to understand curriculum?* *Currere* had become the lived curriculum of our study, and as a result of our new way of seeing each other, we lived a model of how being present with one another in trusting relationships can translate into the classroom experience between teacher and students.

#### **Watchful Awareness of Lived Experience in the Wake of *Currere***

The tide rises, the tide falls,  
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;  
Along the sea-sands damp and brown  
The traveller hastens toward the town,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,

But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;  
 The little waves, with their soft, white hands,  
 Efface the footprints in the sands,  
 And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls  
 Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;  
 The day returns, but nevermore  
 Returns the traveller to the shore,  
 And the tide rises, the tide falls.  
 (Longfellow, 1897/2000, p. 658)

In Chapter Four, phenomenological themes emerged and took shape. I have opened to the phenomenon of *using Currere to understand curriculum* and watched it become “that which shows itself in itself” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 51). I searched for many years through coursework and academic conversation to dis-cover my phenomenological question: ***What is the lived experience of intern teachers using Currere to understand curriculum?*** My curiosity motivated me to seek answers and ask more questions. I traveled to many new intellectual and emotional places exploring, wandering, and wondering. I was fortunate to have my five intern teachers along as companions on my quest, which quickly became *our* quest. In the churned-up wake of *Currere-as-Written* and *Currere-as-Conversation*, I discovered complex, interrelated connections among themes that included: the commonality of encounters with the unexpected; the experiences of tension and isolation inherent in the intern teacher/mentor relationship; and the recognition of the element of care of the children as part of a lived classroom curriculum.

Now here, in-between Chapter Four and Chapter Five, I pause to lay in provisions for the last leg of this dissertation odyssey. In the next and final chapter, I explore and articulate the pedagogical implications of my study with Alex, Austin, Jordan, Kasey, and

Margaret. I present how *Currere* has helped intern teachers better understand curriculum and make meaning of teaching. I describe how intern teachers dis-covered the concepts of stewardship of a classroom and care of children in *Currere*.

I have always planned to sail back up the river and re-turn to the place where I had such fine grounding experiences pedaling on that fine day in Chapter Three with the philosophers. I know I have been changed by this research, so I am looking forward to en-countering the place from this new perspective. One of the most marvelous and transformative insights I have gained from my study is that these beginning-teachers-in-preparation are philosophers in their own right. So, I am delighted that they have all accepted my invitation to accompany me as crew members as we sail. I am confident that our group will have as fine a conversation as I did with Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty. As we begin our journey, I re-examine my individual conversations with the teaching interns to discover the ways in which *Currere* has changed and shaped their views of curriculum. Once we return to the beginning, I drop anchor and turn my attention to a conversation shared among the six of us. After I say goodbye-for-now to the intern teachers, I detail my own new perspective and how this research has changed me profoundly.



## CHAPTER FIVE:

### LIVING *CURRERE*: EN-VISIONING THE FUTURE, RE-TURNING TO THE SOURCE, AND EM-BRACING THE PRESENT

Even though I know the river is wide  
 I walk down every evening and I stand on the shore  
 And try to cross to the opposite side  
 So I can finally find out what I've been looking for

I've been searching for something  
 Taken out of my soul  
 Something I would never lose  
 Something somebody stole

I know I'm searching for something  
 Something so undefined  
 That it can only be seen  
 By the eyes of the blind

We all end in the ocean  
 We all start in the streams  
 We're all carried along  
 By the river of dreams (Joel, 1993)

As I get underway in this, my final dissertation chapter, I am energized by the insights that I am awakened to through *meaning-making* as I write. I no longer need to struggle to remain oriented to the phenomenon; my deeper understanding of lived curriculum as all that *is* sharpens my senses, heightens my awareness of myself as a living being, and guides me to act more intentionally. I feel dramatically changed by my research into the phenomenological question **What is the lived experience of intern teachers using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** I am intensely curious about what more *Currere* has done with my intern teachers as we undertake our group conversation “voyage.” In what ways are they changed, and what pedagogical implications emerge?

After all I have learned, I have refined my understanding of *Currere* beyond its existing simultaneously as a noun and a verb, but also in the ways of knowing *Currere*:

*Currere*-as-Written and *Currere*-as-Conversation have brought forth an awakening to *Currere*-as-Lived. For the intern teachers and me, *Currere* has released *curriculum* from the bondage of the binder in which the technical demands of curriculum have been encoded into the hegemonic meaning of curriculum as a *thing* to be imposed on human beings.

In Chapters One, Two, and Three, my anticipation grew as I envisioned the lived experience of conversing with intern teachers as part of my research into the question: ***What is the lived experience of intern teachers using Currere to understand curriculum?*** Because I already knew the intern teacher participants, I looked forward to lively, passionate exchanges. This vision indeed became a reality, but my interactions with the intern teachers far surpassed anything I could have imagined.

In Chapter Four, the intern teachers and I came together upon an existing foundation of trust that freed us to be vulnerable with one another. We shared more than *stories* of how *Currere* changed us; we also shared the pain, the insecurity, the laughter, and the experiences of the ineffable. *Currere* became the common bond that opened space for our being-with-one-another. These five intern teachers used *Currere*-as-Written and *Currere*-as-Conversation to make meaning from the inside out, meaning that coursed into *Currere*-as-Lived.

In this final chapter, I open up what the intern teachers and I have experienced in Chapter Four and consider implications of our experiences with, and ideas about, *Currere*. First, I en-vision the future of the intern teachers finding their own meanings in what it is to Be a teacher. The etymology of envision presents in two parts, en- meaning “to make, put in” and vision from Anglo-French *visioun* meaning “something seen in the

imagination or in the supernatural” and Old French vision meaning “presence, sight, view, look.” Envision also derives from the twelfth century Latin *visionem* for “act of seeing, sight, thing seen.” In the history of the word envision I find that imagination, presence, and act of seeing combine to reflect the experiences of the intern teachers as they contemplate their futures through the *Currere* process. I display *what is* with regard to the current state of education and curriculum, and I invite some of the many voices that speak fervently of what can be into the space of the community the intern teachers and I have found together.

After that exploration, the intern teachers and I set sail. Now that I have become part of this community of six, I want their company as I come full circle and re-turn to the place in the river where I conversed with Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty. This re-turning to the philosophies that shaped me, the voices from the past that propelled me forward, reminds me that *Currere* is not linear or finite. It is the repeated, but never duplicated, process of re-turning and be-coming. Return is from the Old French *retorner* meaning “turn back, turn around.” Return developed an additional meaning from circa 1600 as “give back, restore.” Having my intern teachers with me as I turn back to that philosophical grounding space grants us the opportunity to perhaps re-store, in Joel’s words, “something so undefined” (1993) but something so real, so human, to the practice of teaching.

I close this chapter and this research by disclosing and embracing what this phenomenological expedition to understand curriculum through *Currere* has done with me. Embrace is from the Old French *embracier* meaning “to clasp in the arms, enclose; covet, handle, cope with.” Clearly, this word has diverse meanings from showing

affection as a hug to the act of coping with challenges and discomfort. The intern teachers have each navigated the challenging internship experience that is the beginning of Being-and-becoming a teacher. Over the course of our sharing with one another, they have become a part of me. I enclose these five intern teachers in the deep love I have for them and their pedagogical legacies, and I embrace the ways in which this experience has shaped, guided, and nudged me forward on my life course—the *Currere* that is my own that flows just like a river.

### **What is it to Be a Teacher? *Currere* and Making Meaning**

I was sitting in the river named Clarion, on a water splashed stone  
and all afternoon I listened to the voices of the river talking.  
Whenever the water struck a stone it had something to say,  
and the water itself, and even the mosses trailing under the water. (Oliver, 2013, p. 86)

There are so many voices speaking about what it means to be a teacher, usually describing the role in the form of *doing* rather than *being*. Some speak of the teacher primarily as a classroom manager, some proclaim that the teacher is there to prepare children for a career, and still others see the teacher as test-giver and data-analyst.

Oliver's words above remind me that what it means to be a teacher originates with-in from listening carefully to the interior voices of past experiences, future possibilities, and the presence of the lived curriculum to which she is inexorably connected. Meaning is made within each teacher.

### **The Meaning in Letting Go and Letting Learn**

I revisit Heidegger's observation, "What teaching calls for is this: to let learn" (1993e, p. 380). I adapt Heidegger's words to address its implications for teacher preparation: What teaching teachers calls for is this: to let learn. What being an intern

teacher calls for is this: to let the experiences teach. Opening to this simultaneous letting learn and letting teach through the *Currere* process has been the pathway to what it means to be a teacher for my intern teachers and me.

Jordan found meaning in her teaching by letting go of her rigidity and anxiety and being fully present with her students regardless of who might be observing:

[For my] observation number five, my supervisor watched me teach about India. For whatever reason, I didn't include it in the plan to show students where India is on a map. But one of the students asked, and it wasn't in the plan. I thought, 'Oh my gosh! I can't believe I forgot! How could I not show you where it is on the map?' I pulled up the map and said, 'Okay, this is India. It's in what continent?' And that was 10 to 15 minutes off track, addressing what the students were interested in, and probably something that was pretty important to their understanding of what I was teaching.

When I asked what it was like to make the decision to deviate from the plan, especially during a formal observation, Jordan continued:

It felt effortless. I'm glad they asked that question, and that showed me that I had really grown and become more flexible.

Jordan made the decision to let go and give herself over to the lived curriculum of the classroom. In doing so, Jordan found a different kind of teacherly "control." Jordan recognized the amazing insights that can be gained from very commonplace moments that many teachers might let pass without any consideration whatsoever. *Currere* has empowered Jordan to see the magical in the quotidian and translate that into her professional identity and her relationships with her students. Palmer (1998) writes of a classroom that "has a presence [that is] so real, so vivid, so vocal" that is "so alive that the teacher can turn to student or student to teacher, and either can make a claim on the other in the name of that great thing" (p. 119). Jordan's view of teaching now includes opening to allow the students to teach her. Aoki describes a teacher's understanding of

lived curriculum using words that suit Jordan's experience equally well: "She knows the significance for herself as a teacher of allowing space for stories, anecdotes, and narratives that embody the lived dimension of curriculum life" (2005, p. 209).

*Currere* helped Kasey rise from the devastation of losing a student to suicide. Her *Currere* experience gave her a mooring that allowed her not to just process her internship experience, but also to find meaning in it:

I do want to say explicitly that [*Currere*] has changed the way that I think of myself as a teacher and my relationship with my students, as individuals and as a group. *Currere* is something that I plan on continuing to do as I move through my career, because I think that it provides the combination of broadening the way you look at things, making sure that you're taking everything in, but then also providing that focus as to what you really want to achieve.

Dis-covering the *Currere* connections Jordan and Kasey both made between seeing the lived curriculum and responding to it was a moment to savor and a memory I treasure. In their individual and unique experiences, I see the possibilities for *Currere* as a mindful process that opens teaching practice, reveals meaning, and inspires pedagogical letting-learn.

### **Articulating Meaning and Purpose as a Teacher-Being**

When Jordan returned for our second one-on-one conversation, she shared additional thoughts about the personal implications of what she had discovered about the meaning of teaching through the *Currere* process:

In job interviews recently I was asked, "Why are you a great asset?" And I said, "I'm resilient, and I'm not going to leave. I'm going to stay no matter what." Had I not done this [*Currere*] research, I don't know if I would have said that. Teaching tests my creativity and allows me to be my best self. I'm not one to really be fluffy in that I was "made to do this," but there's nothing else for me to do. It is my purpose to inspire and build the youth of today. There's nothing more fulfilling in life. Before, I was very much a teacher using curriculum-as-plan. The curriculum-as-lived experience matches better who I am today as a teacher.

Jordan's assertion that she is resilient and not going to leave reveals her unconscious awareness of the concern that is rising in public education with regard to teacher attrition. She begins by reassuring the interviewer that she can be counted on to persevere in an environment from which so many are running away. Then she continues to note teaching as her "best self" whose purpose is to inspire. The role of *Currere* has been to bring this moment forward for Jordan to see and understand more clearly the meaning she finds in being a teacher.

### **Internalizing Meaning and Purpose as a Teacher-Being**

Kasey found resonant, enduring meaning in teaching when she used *Currere* to describe and reflect upon the lived experience of working with her social studies students with a focus on primary sources [that depicted] the ways in which slaves in the American South experienced life:

We talked about how primary sources are going to be different in a couple of generations when people are looking at things like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook posts.

It was cool watching them have this sudden insanely fearful realization that someone was going to read everything, they could read everything that they'd written down. That it's not going to go away, that it's there forever and that what they are creating—what they're doing in their lives—is going to be important because their lives fit into the greater spectrum of society.

I really wanted to try and connect in some way that realization that they are creating things that even if it's not a hand-written letter in cursive and even if it's not this parchment paper that looks like it should be from the 1700s. That's not what a primary source is. A primary source is something that's created by the people that are living through an experience.

Kasey and her students together lived-through the difficult and frightening experience of losing a classmate to suicide. When Kasey described what that was like in Chapter Four, she also spoke of searching for some meaning that could come from her student's death. Kasey kept her classroom alive as she set in motion the lived curriculum of studying

primary sources. Kasey's reference to "living through an experience" indicates that moving through the *Currere* process had a role in Kasey's knowing instinctively how to rejuvenate her classroom by turning the focus to primary sources that show how lives continue to speak. What are the implications for students who learn that they themselves can author primary sources that have lasting meaning? Kasey finds meaning in being a teacher by helping her students find meaning in the lived curriculum while they also learn to cope with loss. What implications exist for *Currere* as a way of honoring and nurturing the humanity of all who dwell in the classroom together?

### **The Meaning of Teaching and Building a Just Society**

Society has a greater likelihood of achieving "justice for all" when people come together as a unified body, share a common meaning and passion, and understand their purpose in coming together. Do teachers who seek and recognize the meaning, opportunity, and potential embedded in lived curriculum have a part to play in fully realizing the vision of a just society? Apple emphasizes the idea of education as a meaningful vehicle for social change:

A conscious advocacy of a more realistic outlook on and teaching of the dialectic of social change would, no doubt, contribute to preparing students with the political and conceptual tools necessary to deal with the dense reality they must face. However, can we accomplish the same for curricularists and other educators? Can we illuminate the political and conceptual tools needed to face the unequal society in which they also live? (2004, p. 97)

The call to be present with children in a lived curriculum has never been more important as American schools become more focused on text, oriented toward control, and increasingly threatened by gun violence. Van Manen sounded this warning in 1986:

There are educators who believe that their own education is complete. They will probably try to impose a taken-for-granted set of beliefs and values. Inevitably, such "education" turns into a pedagogy of oppression—an authoritarian form of



domination of adults over children. The “completed” educator tends to see children as incomplete. No need then to listen to children. Impossible to learn from them. (1986, p. 15)

Chapter Four is brimming with examples from the intern teachers who defy the description above. Their voices imply that *Currere* offers teachers a way to see the possibilities for contributing to building a more just society. Austin has begun working with the *Currere* process as a digital, living document that he intends to continue as a touchstone for him to hold tightly to the meaning he has made of being a teacher and his commitment to his practice. During our second conversation, Austin spoke of *Currere* as a way to review his progression and growth as an educator as he works toward helping create a more equitable world. Continuing *Currere* will also become a space for Austin to deepen his understandings and shape the intentions that are part of an inclusive and generative lived curriculum.

### **To Transform, Be Open to Transformation**

Through the *Currere* process, Alex discovered that she had undergone a transformation from self-consciousness to a focus on the humanity and needs of her students. Rather than focusing on the tangible product of her written *Currere* in our conversations, Alex focused instead on the action and experience of working through her *Currere* process. Alex explained that, as she wrote, it became suddenly and abundantly clear to her how much she missed her internship students. She realized just how much they had contributed to her Being as a teacher:

I missed my students and learning with them as I was getting to know myself as a teacher. And after I did the *Currere*, I wrote in my synthesis that I hope that I can use this process to continue to look back at what my goals are and try and keep that constant and steady throughout my career.

Alex's simple comment that she was "getting to know [herself] as a teacher" signifies a search for meaning in her teaching that is focused on students.

Danielewicz writes, "Teaching entails a greater investment [than playing a role]—one's identity must be on the line" and characterizes the classroom as a "compelling and serious place where the stakes are high" (2001, p. 3). She and Alex share a desire, as Danielewicz describes it, "to be remembered as one of the good ones who transformed and inspired" (p. 3). The meaning of teaching emanates from this desire, and teachers discover that being transformative and inspiring for their students means that they, too, must be open to transformation and inspiration. Alex and I discussed her thoughts about revisiting *Currere* on a consistent basis. We agreed that establishing such a tradition would not only benefit her becoming as a pedagogue, but that her collected *Currere* processes could eventually become a remarkable source of inspiration for others.

### **Finding Meaning in Humans' *Being***

Margaret's poignant response to the *Currere* process showed its influence on her new understanding that the meaning of being a teacher is also at the heart of her life's purpose:

You're thinking of these formulas that are supposed to work, these strategies that are supposed to work in curriculum-as-plan. When you get into the classroom, you're like, "Yeah. I'm going to use those, but I need to add my own personality and take into consideration the situation, emotion, the background, the everything this child has." That is the thing. I think, too, being older, I am not going to have any more kids. I don't have to save anything of myself up. I'm at the age where I feel like I don't want to die with all of this in me. I'm going to give it. You get so much back.

When teacher interns conceive of teaching as a job that can be done by following a set of steps, they can come to a narrow view of curriculum in only its technical aspect. Margaret's lived experience with *Currere* shows that seeking meaning and finding

purpose in teaching is ageless and open to all. Merleau-Ponty adds to Margaret's vision regarding possibilities for the teaching profession:

The world is *what we see*, and, nonetheless, we must learn to see it—first in the sense that we must match this vision with knowledge, take possession of it, *say* what *we* and *seeing* are, [and] act therefore as if we knew nothing about it, as if here we still had everything to learn. (1968, p. 4)

Through the use of *Currere*, the intern teachers and I came to understand that in the pedagogical space shared by teacher and students an environment that includes both safety and adventure is critical to humans Being in a lived curriculum. From that vantage point, we also developed the desire to protect and preserve the meanings of teaching that bring humanity into the lived experience of the classroom curriculum.

### **A Sense of Stewardship**

Said the river I am part of holiness.  
And I too, said the stone. And I too, whispered the moss beneath the water.  
(Oliver, 2013, p. 86)

My intern teacher participants demonstrated a deep sense of stewardship for their students using *Currere*. Stewardship is the position of being a steward from the Old English for housekeeper with roots in to “perceive; watch out for.” At some point during the research conversations, each of the intern teachers discussed their orientation to students as fellow humans with desires, fears, strengths, personalities, and experiences that make each unique. This evidence of the intern teachers’ maturity and kindness so impressed me that I wanted to find a proper descriptor. I recalled an oral history course project I did with Guffrie Smith, Jr. The oldest of 17 children while his father fought in WWII; Smith had responsibility thrust upon him at an early age. He came of age during the Civil Rights movement and became the first Black principal of a Calvert County, Maryland public school. He has served until recently as President of the Maryland State

Board of Education. Smith offered the term steward when I asked him to sum up his life's purpose. I realized that his term fit perfectly to represent my intern teachers' orientation toward teaching.

Heidegger likens stewardship to the role of shepherd as he writes:

Man [sic] is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being. Man loses nothing in this "less"; rather, he gains in that he attains the truth of Being. He gains the essential poverty of the shepherd; whose dignity exists in being called by Being itself into the preservation of Being's truth. (1993c, p. 245)

Although the intern teachers did not explicitly use the words *steward* or *shepherd* to describe their roles, their expressions of care for their children is very much akin to that of a shepherd. Steward takes this idea further to include the idea of watchful perception. Jordan named it as respect—a major focus for her classroom. She wrote of an “active, vibrant classroom” with an “intriguing, relevant, and worthwhile” curriculum. Alex expressed her vision of developing a culturally relevant classroom environment in which all are safe to be themselves. She identified this culture of safety and authenticity as the key to “lasting bonds” with students who will return in future years to visit and catch up.

The beautiful theme of stewardship emerged from the discussions of the teacher becoming. Even in this early stage, the intern teachers all expressed their commitment to their students in a way that was focused on the care of the whole human being. This is a departure from the typical experience many children have at school. Why is this so?

Biesta (2016) offers one possible explanation:

[Although some] seem to have a certain fear of teaching on the assumption that teaching can only appear as an act of power that limits rather than enhances freedom, I explore the opposite option—one where the act of teaching and the experience of being taught are precisely aimed at my freedom, albeit that this freedom is not understood as sovereignty but in terms of authority, that is, in relation to working through the difficult challenge as to what legitimately should have power over me. (p. 832)

### **What is Best for My Students?**

Alex always wanted to match her instruction to what was best and most relevant for her students. As she implemented her Masters Research Project (MRP), she made changes large and small to tailor her study to the interests of her students. Alex completed her MRP research prior to entering the research relationship with me. Alex described what it was like to maintain the integrity of her own research while also giving her best to her students:

It's a little nerve-wracking, because you're making those decisions on the fly based on what you perceive as your students' needs. But you don't know how they are going to react or fit in with this change that you've decided ... until you do it. You're seeing something that's happening, and you're like, "Oh, here's what I can do right now instead," and you do it, and it works, and you're like, "Yes, that was awesome."

Although I had intended to change the curriculum [as part of my MRP], the curriculum that I was adding changed based on my students' reactions and my own judgment of how this was going to fit within the unit. I think it all comes together in that in-between period of reflecting on the lesson and planning what's going to come after it.

Heidegger characterizes the in-between as that which "has its time" as the "until-then" that can expand to be "divided up by a number of from-then-till-thens" (1962, p. 461). Given this description, I have come to conceptualize lived curriculum as a vibrant space of in-betweens that dwells within the curriculum-as-planned and allows for possibility and pedagogy that can be accessed and enhanced using Currere. Aoki expands on this by addressing the tensionality inherent in the in-between as he recounts the story of Miss O:

[A teacher] indwells between two horizons—the horizon of the curriculum as plan as she understands it and the horizon of the curriculum-as-lived experience with her pupils. Both of these call on Miss O and make their claims on her. She is asked to give a hearing to both simultaneously. This is the tensionality within which Miss O inevitably dwells as a teacher. And she knows that inevitably the

quality of life lived within the tensionality depends much on the quality of the pedagogic being she *is*.

Through Miss O, Aoki opens up the negative aspects that are part of the in-between and shows a different way in which the perceived difficulties and tensionalities become that which, over time, shapes the teacher as running water smooths the river stone:

Miss O knows that it is possible to regard all tensions as being negative and that so regarded, tensions are “to be got rid of.” But such a regard, Miss O feels, rests on a misunderstanding that comes from forgetting that to be alive is to live in tension; that, in fact, it is the tensionality that allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck, and that tensionless strings are not only unable to give voice to songs, but also unable to allow a song to be sung. (2005, p. 163)

Miss O views tensionality in all its positive and negative aspects as part of her pedagogic responsibility as a steward of her students. Like Miss O, the intern teachers have embraced this tensionality of the in-between. *Currere* has opened the intern teachers to the in-between as a source of their Being-and-becoming-as-teachers who also embrace the role of caring steward. Huebner (1999) adds:

This willingness to be influenced demands an openness toward the world. It demands that man recognize that he is never a completed being but is always in the process of becoming, and hence is willing to find the new, the unexpected, the awe and wonder in that which he repeatedly faces. (p.78)

### **Care for the Child**

Yes, it could be that I am a tiny piece of God, and each of you too, or at least of his intention and his hope.

Which is a delight beyond measure.

I don't know how you get to suspect such an idea.

I only know that the river kept singing.

It wasn't a persuasion, it was all the river's own constant joy which was better by far than a lecture, which was comfortable, exciting, unforgettable. (Oliver, 2013, p. 87)

*Dasein's* Being reveals itself as *care*. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 227)

For Heidegger, the word care re-presents what the human being is concerned with or cares about. This care can be concerned with infinite issues from desire and ambition to concern and anxiety. The intern teachers spoke about moments of realization of the ways in which *Currere* shaped their internal views of themselves as teachers and what that meant to their individual development as teachers. This realization emerged as an additional theme showed itself as an external focus on what is good for the child beyond standards and objectives. *Currere* revealed this kind of care as infused with meaning that made it an integral part of the Being of a teacher. In its noun form, care comes from the Old English *caru* for “sorrow, anxiety, grief” and “burdens of mind.” In the 1580s, care came to mean “object or matter of concern.” As a verb, care derives from Old English *carian* meaning “to be anxious or solicitous; grieve; feel concern or interest.” More positive senses of care as a verb such as “have an inclination” and “have a fondness for” developed later “as mirrors to the earlier negative ones.” In these etymologies, it is clear that the warm feelings and intensions of care also must contend with the weight of anxiety, grief, and “burdens of mind.”

Does the meaning of being a teacher lie in-between these dichotomous roots of “care”? Caring for children as a teacher can be as heartbreaking as it can be exhilarating. Using the *Currere* process to look inward for opportunities hidden in anxiety and look outward to see children contending with their own inner worlds is a powerful way in for dis-covering the teacher-self. The meaning of Being-a-Teacher is different for each but the common tie that binds pedagogues is the seeking of meaning. It is not achieving a specific, measurable goal; rather, it is the resolute pursuit of greater knowing of the self

as a teacher and the resilience to rise again and again to the call. Parker Palmer begins Chapter One of *Let Your Life Speak* with this poem by William Stafford:

Ask Me

Some time when the river is ice ask me  
mistakes I have made. Ask me whether  
what I have done is my life. Others  
have come in their slow way into  
my thought, and some have tried to help  
or to hurt: ask me what difference  
their strongest love or hate has made.

I will listen to what you say.  
You and I can turn and look  
at the silent river and wait. We know  
the current is there, hidden; and there  
are comings and goings from miles away  
that hold the stillness exactly before us.  
What the river says, that is what I say. (Palmer, 2000, p. 1)

Palmer writes that, for him, this poem is a reminder of “moments when it is clear—  
—if I have eyes to see—that the life I am living is not the same as the life that wants to  
live in me” (p. 2). He characterizes the authentic life as “hidden like the river beneath the  
ice” (p. 2). After trying to imitate those he admired, and after trying for a time to live up  
to the high ideals he considered as what he should be, Palmer arrived at a discovery:

Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to  
do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to  
live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you  
represent. (p. 3)

Intern teachers are so often presented with a description of a teacher as fitting a  
certain mold that includes such ideas as classroom discipline and standards-based, data-  
driven instruction that will all fit very nicely into the teacher tool kit. But how can the  
deepest meanings of teaching be discovered with-in a rigid framework? How can schools  
nurture individual students toward achieving their human potential while their teachers



are evaluated based on a one-size-fits-all rubric? Rather than focusing on the hegemonic view of what a teacher *is*, I see that rational accountability can coexist with supporting and valuing teachers as the ice is allowed to melt and reveal a free-flowing river. Based upon all I have experienced through this phenomenological research process, I have come to understand the potential of *Currere* as part of this needed shift in teaching and in teacher education.

### **A Caring Classroom Space**

Kasey and I had a conversation about respectful behavior among her eighth-grade students during disagreements. Kasey described how she guided conversations by asking questions that allowed students to air their frustrations in a way that contributed to resolution. Kasey spoke of how much calmer and respectful her students and classes became after focusing explicitly on expressing themselves more proactively and positively. I asked Kasey to give me her thoughts regarding the extent to which *Currere* supported her efforts and offered a lens through which she could recognize her students' growing maturity. Kasey shared what she learned about care for her students through the *Currere* process:

I'm realizing these are the times that I did something different, that I made connections for them that were different, that we talked about things in this different way, and then I have the realization that I truly care for them. I think the biggest thing for me was realizing how much I was connected to my students and they were connected to me, and how we really were in it together.

Of course, there are boundaries that exist between and among teachers and their students, but there need not be barriers between human beings exploring lived curriculum together. Kasey has already learned that respect is gained by earning it through care rather than control. Doerr (2004) writes, "Through the process of *Currere* the student becomes aware

of his perception of his connectedness to others. He begins to explore how human values fit into his life and the degree of importance he has so far delegated to them” (p. 10). This is also true for adult teacher interns learning for themselves what it means to be a teacher.

Alex developed this same sense of connection and camaraderie with her students. During her written *Currere*, Alex found she was most often negative when recalling memories of her internship with regard to mentoring. When she revisited this during our *Currere-as-Conversation* she saw things in a new light:

But then, when I kind of flipped a switch and started thinking about my students, then it became a one hundred percent positive experience of recalling all of the things that had happened, and those special moments. It was interesting that I initially thought, “What do I want to avoid as a teacher?” Once I changed my focus, the question became, “What did I cherish with my students that I want to continue to develop as I grow?”

Cherish is from Old French *chierir* meaning “to hold dear,” and from Latin *carus* meaning “dear, costly, beloved.” *Carus* is also the source of the Catalan *car* which means “indulge and encourage in the mind.” In the origins of cherish, I note its close relation to care. Perhaps care is what is given and cherish is the realization of the self as one who cares. Van Manen describes Alex’s experience as he writes, “Teachers often develop deep affection and love for their students, they feel responsible for the young people in their charge, and they cherish hope for the children they teach” (1991, p. 7). Alex made the decision to move her emphasis from herself as teacher to herself as teacher of children about whom she cared and who she cherished. This decision brought her to the awareness of pedagogy as meaning-making where she intends to dwell throughout her career.

Jordan struggled with this idea at first. In her written *Currere*, Jordan depicted her initial reluctance to deviate from a plan as well as her conception that everything she

needed could be found in the proverbial “teacher tool box.” I saw Jordan come to the full realization of the transformation she had undergone as she shared this story during our conversation:

We had this conversation in my third-grade class about shoes. There's a little boy in our neighboring third grade classroom who was diagnosed with autism, and he wears *Ugg* brand boots—nontraditional shoes for a boy in their eyes.

I heard chit chat about it one morning. When we came to the carpet I brought it up. I said, “You know, I heard people talking this morning about shoes. Why does it matter what kind of shoes people wear?” We had a conversation about it, during which I asked, “When you see somebody's shoes, does that change how you talk to them?” I looked at them for a moment, and then asked, “Do we need to judge people based on what kind of shoes they wear? Does it change the person he is because he likes to wear a certain kind of boot?” I paused and said quietly, “Just let him be happy if he wants to wear those boots.”

By the end of the day they were like, “Yeah, yeah, just let him wear the boots, it doesn't really matter.” Sometimes they open up and give that glimpse of ... I understand that they're human, and they have those kinds of deeper understandings.

Jordan's care for a single student inspired her to lead all her students to a new way of thinking. She instinctively felt that the moment was right to help the group develop an understanding of kindness. Van Manen describes Jordan's experience as he writes:

No matter how well I have planned my lesson or how enthusiastic I am about the subject matter, the interactive situation in the classroom is such that I must constantly remain aware of how it is for the kids. And yet this awareness is more a thoughtfulness than a calculating or deliberative reflectiveness, which would put one equally out of touch with the students, since that would create a distance that accompanies any manipulative interpersonal relation between teacher and students. So, as I interact with the students I must maintain an authentic presence and personal relationship for them. (1991, p. 112)

Jordan's experience, captured and brought into her consciousness by the *Currere* process, exemplifies the ways in which teachers nurture a lived curriculum of care and respect that ultimately allows them to lead children to new ways of being-with one another. Doerr writes, “*Currere* has allowed me to use my teaching to help create those kinds of human beings. In transcending that space between teacher and student, *Currere*

offers me and my students a chance to transcend ourselves” (2004, p. 146). Jordan’s discovery of deeper meaning in teaching springs from her developing awareness of a lived curriculum of being who one is in the classroom. What possibilities for education might arise from a greater teacher education emphasis on care, connection, kindness, and respect?

### **Opening Up the Meaning of Curriculum Using *Currere***

The method of *Currere* is a strategy devised to disclose experience so that we may see more of it and see more clearly. With such seeing can come deepened understanding of the running, and with this can come deepened agency. (Pinar, in Pinar & Grumet, 2015, p. xiv)

Curriculum and *Currere* are inextricably connected. The former is a noun, and the latter is the verb form. The course of curriculum is run as the lived experience of *Currere*. A course without a vessel is irrelevant, a vessel without a course is easily lost.

#### **The Way It Is**

Of course for each of us, there is the daily life.  
Let us live it, gesture by gesture. (Oliver, 2013, p. 88)

As a way to recognize all the themes the intern teachers’ *Currere* participation disclosed, I asked interns to ***Tell me about what you dis-covered about curriculum using *Currere****. Austin described the foundation as he saw it upon which *Currere* builds:

I think we all have this preconceived notion about curriculum, and it may just be the way the word is used, of it being about the content. I think we all kind of understand that as a teacher you’re not only teaching the content of the [curriculum] that the school system hands you, but we’re teaching **life skills** at the same time.

Austin is speaking of the way teachers serve, for better or worse, as role models of attitude and behavior for their students. Van Manen (1991) names the positive attitudes and behaviors as “pedagogical tact” and writes, “Pedagogical tact does what is right or

good for the child” and suggests that “pedagogical tact does the following: preserve a child’s space, protect what is vulnerable, prevent hurt, make whole what is broken, strengthen what is good, enhance what is unique, and sponsor personal growth” (p. 161). In Austin’s view, teaching students is about developing the whole human being with care in the hope that it will be passed on to others.

Austin also mentioned his initial naiveté in his original belief that all teachers approached teaching with an orientation of care toward students’ lives. Kliebard (in Flinders & Thornton, 2013) describes a very different scenario as he explains a conception of curriculum from the past that still clings to the traditional structures of schooling. He describes the view of some that curriculum exists for turning children into adults. Teaching, then, becomes an institutionalized method through which results can be predicted and measured. The curriculum lays out the specifications for the students as end-products, and “teacher education, in turn, [is] the process by which persons are transformed into efficient manufacturers” (p. 76). Olsen addresses working conditions that lead to teacher attrition as “little to no opportunities for collaboration, working days governed by strict scheduling and the constant ringing of bells, and a lack of autonomy in one’s daily work” (Olsen, 2010, pp. 135-136). In addition to philosophy and conditions regarding what it is to teach, Aoki (2005) describes much of teacher preparation as being “a compulsory core course in curriculum and instruction.” It prescribes a repertoire of “basic skills and strategies of teaching,” thought to be key to the classroom-teaching situation. Aoki lists these basic skills and strategies as follows:

1. Classroom management and discipline. This would include such topics as organizing and managing routine tasks and physical arrangements, individualizing and grouping for instruction, behavior management and/or modification, and pupil reinforcement.

2. Curriculum planning: the development of skills in relation to goal setting, writing lesson objectives, lesson and unit planning, motivation of students, and selection of appropriate materials and aids.
3. Instructional strategies or methods: examples of and opportunities to practice different skills related to the presentation and discussion of information, [including] such items as questioning, explaining, and demonstrating, along with methods of achieving lesson closure and giving directions.
4. Assessing and evaluating student behavior: observation and listening skills, other diagnostic techniques [such as testing], and record keeping. (pp. 126-127)

The notion of “competence” exhibited in the foregoing as management skills, planning skills, instructional skills, and assessing skills is legion and is of the same order as many typified expressions we find in current educational literature—“competency-based teacher education,” “competency-based curriculum development,” “competency-based testing,” “management by competency-based objectives” and their many derivatives. As such, “competence” reflects what might be seen as the current mainstream metaphor of teaching, schooling, and curriculum thought. This metaphor sees “competence” as a means to given ends, skills, and techniques oriented toward efficient control (p. 127).

Competence derives from the Latin *competentia* “meeting together, agreement, symmetry.” And *competens* meaning “fall together, come together, be convenient or fitting.” Clearly, the emphasis of competence is on sameness and convenience. Perhaps the emphasis should instead be on “agreement together.” In this new orientation to competence, *Currere* is the consistent process that provides the basis for connections, while it also frees each teacher to explore and interpret their lived experiences in a way no one else can. The resulting discussions are so much richer, and teachers’ perspectives and perceptions of what it means to be a teacher continue to expand.

## The Way It Can Be

Aoki's list of the elements of the current paradigm of competence above reveals American schools as overly focused on the technical aspects of teaching in spaces where children learn their place and mere teacher competence is the expectation. However, I see my intern teacher participants as pioneers in the educational field. Having experienced the *Currere* process, even at this early stage in their teaching careers, the intern teachers have already developed a healthier perspective of their teacher-selves and what it means for each of them to be a teacher. Further, they possess an expanded understanding of curriculum, to include lived curriculum, as a result of their individual and shared experiences using *Currere*. This is what true competence is all about. Aoki (2005) interprets competence in the classroom as including students and teachers in "critical venturing together" (p. 131). Aoki describes his vision of this kind of classroom:

The teacher in becoming involved with students, enters into their world as he or she allows them to enter his or hers and engages with students mutually in action-reflection oriented activities. [The teacher] questions [self and] students as he or she urges the students to question the teacher and themselves. Mutual reflection allows new questions to emerge, which, in turn, leads to more reflection. In the ongoing process, which is dialectical, and transformative of social reality, both teacher and students become participants in open dialog. (p. 131)

There are implications for *Currere* as part of teacher education given Aoki's construction of competence and open dialog. In what ways can *Currere* contribute to classrooms becoming places for "critical venturing together"? What other forms, concepts, and abilities are needed to support this kind of classroom? Huebner (1999) describes additional competencies necessary to fulfill his vision of teaching:

The teacher needs to be aware of the shape of the movement of the experiences created during the day or over a period of several days. The staging and flow of events; the control of the passage of time, its compression and extension; the handling of tension among people belong to the craft of drama. Movement is the

province of dance. These are neglected elements in most classrooms though, for the flow of events tends to be a mechanical rhythm determined by purpose and its accomplishment, which may not be the best means of handling time and duration in a classroom. The teacher also depends on space and visual factors of color and design which are the province of the visual arts. Again, skill in these crafts might be used by the teacher as he becomes master of the art of his teaching. (p. 34)

Using *Currere* allowed my intern teacher participants to encounter competence not as a fixed set of disparate skills (the prototypical teacher's tool box), but rather as a holistic, artistic concept inclusive of all the living beings in the classroom. Competence brought the teacher and students into relationship such as when Jordan and her student chose the panda underwear together, when Alex gave her students a voice in selecting types of learning activities, and when Kasey and her students drew strength from one another as they faced tragedy together.

**A gathering of voices.** The visions of Aoki and Huebner represent a sea change, especially given the prevailing educational emphasis in schools on testing and accountability. However, voices are growing in volume and numbers speaking on behalf of a different focus and vision of what school curriculum can be. During a visit to a physically disintegrating high school in New York, Kozol (1991) quotes an English teacher who is trying to work within the existing parameters of his job, "I have strong feelings about getting past the basics. Too many schools are stripping down curriculum to meet the pressure for success on tests that measure only minimal skills. That's why I [also] teach a theater course. Students who don't respond to ordinary classes may surprise us, and surprise themselves, when they are asked to step out on a stage" (p. 123). This teacher has risen to the challenge of acknowledging students' unique humanity within the testing culture. Austin has made similar observations through the *Currere* process in his role as a theater teacher who wants to free his students to become themselves.



In order to make a positive classroom rich with lived experience for students in these days of education as data, Greene (1995) calls upon teachers to “learn how to move back and forth, to comprehend the domains of policy and long-term planning while also attending to particular children, situation-specific undertakings, the unmeasurable, and the unique. Surely, at least part of the challenge is to refuse artificial separations of the school from the surrounding environment, to refuse the decontextualizations that falsify so much” (p. 11). While this call came nearly 25 years ago, data still drive how we see children.

Greene also addresses the idea of “benevolent policy making” that is oriented toward progressive social changes via changes in schooling. Her concern is that these well-meaning initiatives focus on percentages, scores, and accountability while they “screen out the faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons” (p. 11). My experience during this research as part of this community of interns has shown me that *Currere* creates a space to ponder the truths and fallacies in policy, even policy that originates from good intentions but is founded on the misperception of children as data sets.

Ravitch (2010) confronts head-on the opportunity cost of the overriding focus on educational data collection and testing:

We have seen schools drop subjects not because they lack importance, but because they are not tested. We have seen cheating scandals. And when we reflect on why education matters, we think of virtues that are not and cannot be measured: character, curiosity, responsibility, persistence, generosity, integrity, kindness, initiative, ingenuity, compassion, creativity, moral courage. Even subjects studied in school are not always easily quantifiable; a great history teacher, for example, inspires a passion for history, as great teachers in general inspire a love of learning. We don't know how to measure love of learning, but we do know that it matters more in the long run than any question that might be asked on a multiple-choice test. (p. 280)

The wave of a new conversation about curriculum is growing stronger and swifter, and the current of curriculum theory continues its insistent and relentless tug toward reevaluating the educational relationship with curriculum. Again and again, educators point out the conundrum of accountability in education: that a number cannot be assigned to what is most highly valued. Michie (2012), a teacher, author, and advocate for equity and humanity in education writes:

Our hearts, our whole beings, too often tend to be disregarded in the public conversation about schools and what's best for children. Everything is intellectualized, and some would say that's as it should be. But maybe that's why many teachers feel so overwhelmed, even paralyzed, by the last decade's seismic shift toward test-centric, data-driven education. Good teachers know that much of their work is about connecting to the hearts and creative spirits of children, not just their minds. But the policies that direct and constrain their efforts insist otherwise. The current taken-for-granted equation—that great test scores = great schools = a great education—has become an unchallenged starting point for any conversation about schooling in the United States. The goals of schooling in a democracy are—or at least should be—expansive, inclusive and full of hope. They defy the measure of any test. (p. 129)

**Advocating for abundance.** During one of my conversations with Jordan, I mentioned Jardine's (1997) concept of a curriculum of scarcity versus a curriculum of abundance. I explained that a curriculum of scarcity, the norm in most schools, presents knowledge as a limited resource which is gained through competition. A curriculum of abundance rejoices in "the abundance and intricacy of the world, entering into its living questions, living debates, living inheritances" (p. 8). Jordan was quite taken by the idea of an abundant classroom and asked to borrow *Curriculum in Abundance*. She made a connection between abundance and *Currere* and noted how the process has expanded her understanding of curriculum. In Chapter Four, Jordan developed the language to speak of the classroom as a place where students (and the teacher) can thrive in an abundant lived

curriculum when she described her future classroom as a place of creative opportunities, expressed her view of teaching as a philosophically-based practice, and claimed the space of teaching for allowing students to grow academically, emotionally, and socially rather than dictating information to be “absent-mindedly received and regurgitated.”

Gadamer (1975) notes that only poets and artists remain true to language that reveals the truth of things rather than language that seeks control. Since *Currere* helps reveal truths to each who enters into the process, I may become so bold as to begin referring to the process as The Art of *Currere*. What happens in classrooms in which teachers see themselves as artists guiding students to find their own educational truths? Jordan’s ideas about her future classroom lived curriculum align perfectly with Jardine’s Introduction to *Curriculum in Abundance* in which he writes in opposition to a curriculum of scarcity in favor of abundance:

Treating the curriculum topics entrusted to schools under the image of abundance rather than scarcity has a profound effect on how we teach, what learning means, what the role of students and teachers is, how knowledge itself is imagined.  
(1997, p. 9)

Following the theme of an abundant curriculum, Kasey articulates her expanded understanding of curriculum based on her use of the *Currere* process:

I think that curriculum is the information that you are imparting to kids, and when you impart curriculum in a way that connects their experiences, their lives, and your lives as a classroom together, then that’s going to make it meaningful. That’s going to connect it for them, and it’s not going to be the ‘Columbus sailed the ocean blue’ rhyme. It’s going to be something that they can draw on.

Kasey’s focus is on connections, relevance, and meaning which are the main ingredients of a lived curriculum of abundance. I appreciate Kasey’s emphasis on connections, but I also notice her use of *impart*. *Impart* is from the Old French *empartier* meaning to “assign, allot, allocate, share out.” Since the 1540s, its usage has meant to “communicate

knowledge or information.” This is the institutionalized understanding of the teacher and students—the teacher provides the information and the students take it in. It is an environment in which the teacher is indisputably in control.

### **Impediments Remain**

As young as Kasey is, and even after her *Currere* insights, she still carries the imprint of that socially ubiquitous understanding of teacher-as-teller. What is it that keeps this traditional view of teaching and teachers so deeply rooted in the profession? Surely, there is no one, simple answer, but there are factors that can contribute. Kasey’s internship placement was in a school that serves a diverse community that also struggles with poverty. Gutmann (1987) addresses inequities in the classroom that, in her view, interfere with the goal of a democratic society when she writes, “Teachers typically resist changing their teaching methods, often on the well-intentioned misperception that their obligation is to *impart* [emphasis mine] knowledge, not to develop the moral character of their students” (pp. 163-164). To the idea of moral character development as a goal of democratic society I add opportunities for critical thinking and curiosity-based exploration in an environment that offers an abundant lived curriculum. But Britzman (2003) reveals another facet of why teacher-as-imparters-of knowledge is so prevalent:

The conditions of spontaneity and the unexpected disrupt any attempt to predict the effects of teaching. But while they are significant features of the student teacher’s lived experiences, the institutional push to present a stable appearance tends to make the student teacher perceive the unexpected as a “bind” rather than an opportunity. (p. 224)

Britzman (2003) expressed this concern 15 years ago, and yet the attempt to control and even prevent unexpected experiences that are so integral to lived classroom curriculum persist. To what extent are teacher preparation programs unconsciously (or

consciously) replicating ideas that inhere in the traditional concept of what it is to be a teacher? Britzman describes the consequences of perpetuating the stagnant concept of control as she continues:

The pressure to control learning, however, affects more than the student teacher's practices. It also constructs views about knowledge and the knower. When the double pressures of isolation and institutional mandates to control force teachers to equate learning with social control, pedagogy is reduced to instilling knowledge rather than coming to terms with the practices that construct both knowledge and our relationships to it. Such pressures deny the webs of mutual dependency and the power relationships that shape classroom life. Consequently, the subtext of classroom life remains "unread" when the student teacher feels compelled to predict, contain, and thus control what is to be learned. (p. 225)

Using *Currere*, Jordan, Austin, Kasey, Alex, and Margaret grew to acknowledge, appreciate, and even embrace the ever-changing modes of curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived. Their expressed intentions include making space for more motivating, more human, more caring, and more culturally relevant educational experiences for their students and themselves. In what ways might *Currere* influence a reconceptualization of teacher and student roles and relationships?

### ***Currere* as Curriculum of Care**

William Doll notes the relationship of "similarity between curriculum and *Currere*—that which is laid out publicly and that felt, experienced personally" (in Doll, Fleener, Trueit, & St. Julien, [Eds.], 2005, p. 48). The intern teacher participants discovered pedagogy as the heart and center of their *Currere* experiences. I, too, encountered a new dimension of *Currere* as this study shaped my own understanding of curriculum with regard to the pedagogy of teacher preparation. In my experience, pedagogy is not a word used or heard with any regularity. I see a space for explicit and concentrated study of all that pedagogy represents in the teacher preparation curriculum.

It is more likely that intern teachers will embrace the concepts of curriculum as lived experience and care of the child if they are encouraged to explore them while novices in their preparation programs. To that I would add that the current deemphasis on pedagogy in teaching practice sends the message that it is not worthy of inclusion. We value that for which we allot time, and intern teachers are too often denied the productive search for the meaning of teaching-as-pedagogy. But if teaching is indeed an art, then pedagogy is in the company of poets. And teachers, like poets, need time to contemplate what it is that they want to express.

In *The Tact of Teaching*, van Manen (1991) includes an anecdote about the poet Rainer Maria Rilke to represent his ideas regarding the ways in which teachers develop tact. The story goes that Rilke went to Paris to write but could not produce any poetry. He sought advice from the sculptor Rodin. Rodin suggested that Rilke go to the zoo, choose an animal, and watch it with total absorption for an extended period of several hours a day for several weeks in order to become fully present with the animal and truly “see” it. Rilke chose the panther and eventually wrote a poem of the same name. Van Manen exclaims, “Just imagine looking at an animal with that kind of patience and attentiveness!” (p. 111).

Unfortunately, this philosophical, contemplative *Currere* practice faces an uphill climb. Even though Doerr (2004) writes at length of the energizing lived curriculum that emerged as a result of using *Currere* with her high school Ecology class students, she has a less-than-hopeful view of the potential for *Currere* in the classroom and in teacher preparation:

In a world of such as we are now, less and less value is being placed on creative teaching and more emphasis is being put on prescriptive teaching, teaching where

schools can publicly laud their students for passing various proficiency tests in reading, writing, math, and so on. When a pedagogy such as [*Currere*] is addressed to the majority of practicing teachers, it is not really skepticism that prevents most from even trying something like it. It is the atmosphere created in today's schools as accountability becomes the watchword of the day, and taxpayers and parents demand certain levels of writing and reading and math deemed appropriate for certain grade levels. The teacher who advocates methods such as [*Currere*] may be super-enthusiastic about the outcomes of such an experiment, but s/he will find spirits quickly dampened by the all-pervading milieu of national norms, national testing, and national curriculum. Where does the art of pedagogy fit into this early part of the twenty-first century? In many ways, it does not. (2004, p. 2)

After this research experience with *Currere*, I have a much broader view of *Currere*'s potential and implications for education. I have seen my intern teacher participants light up over the insights and understandings they derived from using *Currere*. Might there be opportunities for teachers to choose a shared *Currere* over an observation? Could completing the *Currere* process and subsequent conversation with a small colleague group be considered the Action Research many schools now mandate? What if teacher preparation programs, especially those that follow the Professional Development Schools (PDS) model, introduced *Currere* to mentor teachers as part of the internship experience and relationship with the intern teacher? This is a conversation worth having.

### **Moving Ahead by Going Back to the Source**

Throughout this research, my five intern teacher participants' responses showed dramatic variation in perception of the experience of writing *Currere*, but I found it notable that all of their responses were open-hearted and deeply personal, although they ranged across a wide continuum from motivated and excited to calm and introspective. My one-on-one conversations with the intern teachers helped us come to know one another even better beyond the teacher-student relationship. We developed connections

in-between our differing experiences based on the common experience of sharing and exploring the meaning of curriculum using *Currere* in writing and in conversation.

I began to re-call fondly that beautiful Chapter Three day I spent conversing in turn with Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty as we navigated tributaries together in that little pedal boat for two. I felt so fortunate on that day to be in the presence of these philosophers, and it washed over me in a sudden wave that I had spent time since that day in the presence of the intellect and wisdom that flowed from my intern teacher participants in similar ways. Like Heidegger, they had spoken of anxiety and feeling thrown into unexpected situations. They expressed their desires to find meaningful ways to dwell with-in their teacher-selves. Through *Currere*, the intern teachers embraced the lived curriculum of teaching as letting-learn. As Gadamer spoke of truly shared conversation as the way in to meaning-making, the intern teachers spoke passionately of their insights regarding curriculum using *Currere-as-Conversation* launched from *Currere-as-Written*, and they expressed amazement at how they discovered the extraordinary in the seemingly ordinary experiences of teaching. In the same way that Merleau-Ponty emphasized the connections between mind and body and expressed his philosophical view that human consciousness exists in-between the intellectual/emotional and the physical, the intern teachers expressed their becoming acutely aware of their embodiment in the Being of a teacher. They spoke of the anxiety of being expected immediately to project a teacher persona that they had not yet developed or even understood. They shared experiences of being observed, challenged, and placed in the role of caregiver when they themselves wished for one.



I grew excited about the idea of gathering all of the intern teachers together to set sail in the vessel in which I had heretofore been traveling alone. The following represents actual quotes from the intern teachers excerpted from the transcript of our gathering for a group conversation that took place on the backyard deck of my home. I have reconceptualized my backyard deck as the deck of a sailing craft, and I will alter my language to depict a day of sailing while maintaining the truth and spirit of the lived conversation. Inviting the intern teachers out onto these waters with me is my way of honoring the thoughtful wisdom and enthusiastic search for meaning these intern teachers shared with me. They are, each of them, as inspiring to my life moving forward as a teacher, researcher, and curricularist as are the three venerable philosophers who helped prepare my course. The day the intern teachers and I set sail was just as bright and welcoming as before, and the six of us pulled together to create quite a memorable and life-changing journey. Because I have dwelled in the flow of these waters for years, I have become intimately familiar with the route. As I share the conversation of that day, I will be sure to point out all the marker buoys that introduce new ideas and help me stay true to my course.

### **Bringing Lived Experience to Life Through *Currere* Conversation**

Leslie: Welcome aboard, everyone! I know I have already told you all about my pedal-boat experiences with the philosophers Heidegger, Gadamer, and Merleau-Ponty, so today I want to take you all back to that bend in the river to show you where those conversations took place. Thank you all for agreeing to join me so we can come together as a whole group and have what, no doubt, will be a lively conversation. As you all know, my research question is *What is the lived experience of intern teachers using*

*Currere to understand curriculum?* I started this research by “using *Currere*” very literally to include just what gets written in the four stages. But based on the realization of curriculum as moving, of *Currere* as the verb form of curriculum, the concept has become broader. Just as curriculum escapes from the binder containing a list of objectives and the scope and sequence to become a living thing, you have all helped me see *Currere* in broader terms, too. As we have talked about what you have written in your *Currere* projects, the conversations about *Currere* have become *Currere* in their own right. As we move forward, I name *Currere* as the current that carries us through lived experiences.

### ***Currere* Marker One—A Fresh View of Curriculum**

Leslie: What has your experience of *Currere* been like for you and your understanding of curriculum?

Margaret: I was thinking that curriculum is the rules, the guidelines, the framework within which you must work to satisfy course standards of your school system and your principal—keep them happy. But I found that lived curriculum is so eye-opening once we're in the schools in our placement. We read about classroom management, and it just seems so inauthentic sometimes.

Austin: Beforehand, I always thought that curriculum was the binder and that was it, that's all that counted. And I knew that the lived experience part of curriculum happened, but I didn't know that was actually part of what curriculum is. Curriculum, when we talk about it in undergrad and grad, always seems to be that binder. And that was always the symbol I thought of when I thought of curriculum. But now it's more for me and the classroom itself than just the binder because you can always put that curriculum binder in the classroom.

Margaret: So, what you're saying, Austin, is that the binder can come into the classroom, but the classroom will not fit into the binder.

Whole Group: Aaahhh!

Austin: Exactly! That's exactly what I'm saying!

Leslie: Maurice Merleau-Ponty shared a fascinating thought with me that applies to the idea of curriculum as you are discussing it. He said that we do not perceive the world, the world is what we perceive. So, Margaret, to your point about the difference between reading about classroom management and then experiencing life with children in a classroom space, your world view changes when you have that personal experience. And I think this also fits with the whole binder idea. It seems to me that the binder is what we perceive as a guide to daily classroom experience, but that we change that world once we see that the binder is not the child. And by the way, I don't think it is a mistake that it is called a *binder*, but I think *Currere* helps free us from the bonds of scope and sequence.

Kasey: I thought in the beginning, I thought of curriculum as the list of things that I have to try to accomplish, and now, from a social studies perspective, it is really cool to view the curriculum as almost a catalog of the experiences that I am trying to teach my students by connecting those lived experiences to their lived experiences. That brought curriculum into a new light.

Jordan: I think I am kind of straight-laced, and so when I heard the word curriculum, I thought of it as a tangible item that operates in isolation. I would say, can you tell me the curriculum, can you give me the curriculum? Now, when I think about it, that doesn't make a lot of sense. As Austin said, I thought of it as a binder or a scope ...

You also said scope and sequence, which is a word we use a lot, so. The list of things you should be teaching and the order in which they go. But now, when I reflect on my teaching experiences and look forward to what I think will happen in the future, I see the curriculum as a function of what each individual student has to bring to the classroom. It is an intangible grouping of occurrences that happen in the classroom based on the context that you're placed in, as opposed to a tangible thing. I think I've come a long way in my understanding of curriculum.

### ***Currere* Marker Two—Encountering Abundance**

Leslie: Jordan, I remember our conversation about how inspired I am by Jardine, Friesen, and Clifford's *Curriculum in Abundance*. I haven't forgotten that you want to borrow it. Anyway, in his preamble to Chapter Fifteen, Jardine (1997) describes a curriculum that is possible through the understanding of abundance. His view is that the contents of the binder need not be perceived as written in stone. Instead, the lists and directives in the binder can be seen as having a future existence in your own classroom. In this way, each content area is a "living discipline" (p. 211) waiting to come alive as part of a lived curriculum.

Alex: I feel exactly the same way as all of you. But the way that I visualize it, and I told Leslie and Austin this, is that it is a lava lamp, and the lamp is the curriculum binder objectives, and then myself and the students and all the stuff that happens is the glue trying to fit together inside, moving every which way, each and every day, adapting and reacting to each other.

Margaret: Wow!

Kasey: That is super cool.

Leslie: That a really good comparison! So, has this new understanding of curriculum-as-plan existing alongside curriculum-as-lived made any difference in your practice? What are some specific classroom recollections of experiencing this broader meaning of curriculum?

Jordan: I think perhaps because I have been interning in the kindergarten, it has influenced the way I teach, because ... I don't know if anybody else has a similar experience, but I think that it taught me to build patience, which is something that all teachers, I think, need, and something that I was lacking. I could almost list things that happened throughout the day and my immediate reaction to them, but when I delved deeper and reflect on what happens to really understand some backstory, and to really try to incorporate all of the things that each student is really bringing into the classroom, I think it helped me to build a better understanding of that classroom culture and to be more patient with them.

Leslie: That is such an outstanding example of active reflection within lived curriculum. Yes, I just made that up! And your experience reminds me of Heidegger's assertion that *the world is what we perceive*. I read something similar in the 2004 *Liberating Scholarly Writing* by Robert Nash: "We do not live in reality itself. We live in stories about reality" (p. 33). It makes sense that the way in which we perceive the world is through story. Is there a story that describes your reality as you developed patience and what it was like to live through it?

Jordan: Um, the first couple weeks in kindergarten, I was very shut down. I was getting easily frustrated with some of their behaviors, because I wasn't used to being

around five and six-year-old children all day. I had spent most of my time in the third grade. But by the last couple weeks when I was teaching, and I noticed them doing weird little things at their table, like taking a pencil and fidgeting with it trying to make it fit in their hand, I understood behavior that is developmentally appropriate. I was just patient with them. And to me, that was curriculum. That was their lived experience. They were trying to make the pencil fit into the hand. Before, it looked like they were playing to me, so immediately I told them to stop playing! Tools aren't toys, tools aren't toys! But really, when I realized one of my students with fine motor difficulties was trying to fix her pencil grip, I understood that she wasn't playing. And I think that I wouldn't have come that far, had I not reflected on some of the experiences that I'd already had in the classroom.

### ***Currere* Marker Three—Seeing More Clearly**

Leslie: Reflection is much more powerful, and useful, when one *sees* her students. You can't always know what you're looking for, but being oriented toward seeing opens the way to better relationships. Van Manen names this as tact. He says, "Tactful action is always framed by the special orientation or commitment that defines my relation to others. The pedagogical orientation to children is conditioned by the intentionality of our love, hopes, and responsibilities" (1991, p. 123). Tact is another way of expressing care for children.

Kasey: That's awesome. For me, I had thought I needed to make all my classes the same. I teach six a day, and I was always kind of stressed that I needed to get through everything that I got through with one class with another class, and I needed to be the same with this class that I am with that class because it's fair to all the kids. Through this

reflection process with *Currere*, I've come to understand that the set of lived experiences of each classroom that my kids bring with them when they walk into the actual physical room is completely different. It's okay if we get off onto something that's going to be important for that class, but another class might sail through it.

Leslie: That's something I think is a concern for most secondary teachers. Elementary has a different set of concerns. In our previous conversations, Jordan and I were talking about being prepared yet also allowing space for lived experiences. As I recall, the topic was elephants, and Jordan had begun to acknowledge and embrace the idea of a classroom lived curriculum.

Jordan: And I was really proud of myself for that! Before, if I had written a lesson on elephants, I would have listed all of the facts and points that I wanted to address, although in kindergarten they literally talk about that they're gray, they have big ears and they have trunks. So why would I waste my time writing those things out? That was just the way I operated before. I liked to have that structure in the curriculum as planned, but I just had this gut feeling that we were going to have some questions and have some things come up that I couldn't predict, because I understand the classroom culture and how things play out. Based on the kids' questions, we ended up doing some Internet research and talking about how mom elephants, which are called cows (which is hilarious by the way) are pregnant for two years. And the kids wondered why mommy elephants are pregnant for two years, but human mommies are only pregnant for nine months. Would I have ever written that in my curriculum as planned? Absolutely not. Compare elephant pregnancies with human pregnancies—definitely not! And it is not in the kindergarten curriculum at all. But I saw the opportunity for some higher-order thinking. We had also

read that baby elephants are 200 pounds when they are born. I wanted them to make that connection, that, okay, the elephants are pregnant for longer because they're growing a much bigger baby. And we ended up getting there and I thought that was valuable to the lesson.

Alex: My Ed Psych [MAT course] mini-lesson was about how elephants are very similar to humans.

Leslie: Not with their pregnancy timeline!

Alex: Not with that! But they grieve, and they mourn their dead. They will bury fruit until it ferments.

Jordan: Yeah. Raccoons can do that sometimes. I don't think it's on purpose, but I have seen it.

Alex: Yes. They do.

Jordan: I've seen a drunk raccoon, but elephants are my favorite animal.

#### ***Currere Marker Four—Building Rewarding Relationships***

Leslie: I wish you both could see yourselves through my eyes right now. You are both sharing with such enthusiasm; it is very childlike—in the best way, of course. Van Manen and Levering write of the importance of giving children space to wonder and develop curiosity that goes beyond gathering facts (1996). What you two just experienced is how that lived curriculum moment must have felt for the kindergarteners. What curiosity and wonder you both possess, a superb combination for teaching a living curriculum!

Alex: Lately, I've been thinking about how I'm going to address the difference between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived in my new classroom next year.



I am very interested in this idea of explicitly explaining the curriculum as lived to my students in the very beginning of class, because I'm a secondary teacher, and I think that they can handle it.

Leslie: What would you say to them?

Alex: Something like: so, every day I'm going to come in with my A-game plan, but I know that you are your own humans just as I am my own human and we are our own group, and things can change, so it's okay to make mistakes. This is a learning environment, we are all here to grow together, we're safe, comfortable, all that sort of thing. I think that *Currere*, as lived experience curriculum, blows open the door for all of those important classroom environment setup foundational talks that you're supposed to have with your students at the beginning.

Leslie: Are you thinking also of introducing *Currere* to students?

Jordan: Do you ever think it would be reasonable to ask students to work with the *Currere* process?

Kasey: We need to talk about this.

Leslie: Marilyn Doerr is a teacher who writes of using *Currere* with her high school ecology students. She chose *Currere* because she sees the process as “an awakening to the indifference that is so often promulgated in schools, where students absorb the reality the schools construct. Their consciousness becomes submerged in the oppressive atmosphere of the classroom. Pinar believes the habits and compliance that schools produce can be shaken up by allowing students to address questions that increase awareness of how they live within their worlds” (2004, p. 9). So, introducing *Currere* with students has been done successfully.

Jordan: Okay, in kindergarten, *Currere* is obviously not feasible, but maybe in fourth grade, where I'll be, and definitely secondary ... write about your past school experiences, and even look forward to ...

Kasey: Well, with little kids you could do it as a discussion. You could ask about their memories from last year.

Jordan: What happened last year, what do you think will happen this year, what do you think will happen next year? How are these two things the same, how are they different? I think that's a feasible idea.

Leslie: Just as Doerr adapted the *Currere* process to focus on her students' lived experiences concerning the environment, I took the idea of *Currere* and did something a little different with it in a four-week, Friday summer program on campus for rising ninth graders. The first thing I asked the kids to do, on the first Friday, was to describe in writing what they were like in fifth grade as well as any memorable things that happened. The next Friday I asked them to make a T-chart and describe on one side how they were still the same and the other side the ways in which they had changed in the three years since fifth grade. On the third Friday, I asked them to create another T-chart. They transcribed their current descriptions of themselves from the previous T-chart on one side and then described the way they imagined themselves at the end of high school. On the fourth and final Friday, I asked them to visualize themselves as about to graduate from high school. I asked them to write a letter as that future person to the person they were in the present as beginning high school students. In the letter, their future selves were to describe what their experiences had been like in high school, what they had learned,

challenges they had had, and their plans for the next steps after graduation and beyond. I encouraged them to put their letter in a safe place and read it on graduation day.

Austin: I remember you talking about doing that with them and you talked with our [Classroom Management] class about whether we thought that that would be a good thing to do. I remember thinking, I don't really know, they're kind of young, I don't think they're going to get it. But what I found out, as I worked with my summer group, was that they really loved it and talked about it for the rest of the whole camp. I was kind of surprised at how much they really liked the *Currere* process, even at that middle school to high school age.

#### ***Currere* Marker Five—An Empowered Classroom**

Leslie: It's just interesting to get that insight ... it's kind of an exhilarating, surprising sort of experience. I am reminded of a comment by Jonathan Kozol in *Savage Inequalities* that when kids are allowed to move past the basics and try another approach, such as theater, they can surprise the teacher and themselves. I know kids can rise to challenges when they feel a connection and a sense of ownership, you know, having a say in things.

Margaret: I think [*Currere*-inspired activities] give the students power, a voice, and a way to arrange their reality. One of the things I'm thinking of is an exercise where students write about something they wish they could change. And some of the answers were pretty interesting such as my dad has left me; my grandfather died, and he took care of me; I don't like sitting next to Lisa, and I want to be moved. These were the kinds of things that were uppermost in these children's minds. Nobody was listening to them and the kids did not think they could voice them.

Leslie: When you give students a chance to analyze, synthesize, and then evaluate, they get to the top of the critical thinking chain. And they can do it. They really can. And *Currere* can be topical. I had students in my Children's and Young Adult Literature class complete a *Currere* process on their experiences with literacy. *Currere* can adapt. It is rich with possibility.

### ***Currere* Marker Six – Spreading the Word**

Austin: Well, Alex and I talked about ... Last time, in our impromptu conversation, that we thought that ... and sorry if I'm speaking for you, correct me if I'm wrong ... but that the *Currere* process of writing is not the most important part. It's a start of the process but a lot of it happens with the debriefing afterwards and the talking afterwards, and that one of the most important things, because ... because you were saying, for some people, a very sensitive thing to look back in your past, and ... that you have to be really comfortable in your environment. We were saying how ... this whole study ... time to get meta. This whole research wouldn't happen if we weren't comfortable around each other and if we hadn't spent so much time together and if we didn't know Leslie that well. That all these truths and casual conversation, it wouldn't come out the same way.

So ... I don't know if it's the best icebreaker per se, but it would be a good thing once students start to get to know each other and get comfortable with each other, and even staff members ... We talked about how it would be nice if administrators and cross departments got together, even if they started in their own departments comfortable with each other ... Or, you started in elementary school with the fourth-grade team, and then spreading out.

Jordan: That's a really good idea, I just had maybe a light bulb.

Kasey: Wow, what a great idea-

Alex: Maybe jigsaw the departments to develop a shared school culture.

Kasey: You've got to really make sure everybody is on board. So, yeah, making sure people are open enough to receiving the raw information that tends to come out in *Currere* projects [is important]. I feel ownership of the *Currere* process, and I want to share it. I want to say, hey, I did this *Currere* process. I feel like an advocate for something, and I think that is similar to what you all are describing. Like we have some sort of ownership over something that connected us with each other and with ourselves. I just want to tell other teachers that they should do this, too, because they'll realize that they're great teachers.

Leslie: And it was easier for me. I gave it to you all as an assignment, but I made it very clear that you had complete control over it. I wanted you to enjoy it. So, you *had* to do it, but you also *got* to do it. It was the closest I could get to your choosing to do it yourselves, because you wouldn't have known to choose it if I hadn't told you about it. So, for me or anybody else who's not part of a school to go in and say, hey, new policy, you've got to do this ... what's going to happen? They are going to find every way to not do it, and they're going to laugh at it. I think the way to introduce *Currere* is to have people who feel drawn to it complete a written process, share it with each other, and see what happens. So, that brings me back to our group.

### ***Currere* Marker Seven–Emotional Impact**

I would like to officially ask the question again: **What is your lived experience**

**of using *Currere* to understand curriculum?** What is it like to use the process to find a fullness of understanding curriculum?

Margaret: Looking back at my past informs me more than sometimes what's actually happening in the classroom, as to how I want to handle, how I want to approach, and how I want to get to know the child. I think curriculum as taught is a formula, it's the guideline that exists already. It's what you create with that and I, with my background, I'm bringing that into it, and then I'm also applying it and seeing the children's backgrounds. So that's how the *Currere* has affected me; I look at the past, I imagine where I want these children to be in the future, and also where I want myself to be as a teacher. When I look back on this new career, I want to not be the neglectful or the temperamental or the lazy, or the irritable teacher. I look at the good teachers and I think about how they showed their love and care for me, and they were so patient, and they're the people that were inspirational for me to go into a program that would help me give the opportunities to kids that I wish I'd had.

Leslie: It seems to me that experiencing this *Currere* process has had a kind of a calming, centering effect on you.

Margaret: And it validated me, because I know for certain now that I want to be a teacher. I knew it was there, but I couldn't name it, and I didn't know where it originated. I knew who I wanted to emulate, and I knew where my dream came from. In these next 20 years, or however long that I live, this experience will help me make a big difference in the world and make my life more meaningful.

Jordan: How fortunate I feel to be starting so young. I feel almost lucky that I have figured out that teaching is my purpose already. But Leslie mentioned the calming

sense of the *Currere* process, and that hits it for me. I almost find it therapeutic. Teaching does tend to pull on the heartstrings almost every day. And I almost intentionally try to remove myself from some of the situations because I know I am vulnerable to anxiety and I have some health-related issues related to anxiety-inducing situations. So, in the movement ... in the moment of experiencing things in the classroom and feeling removed, but then going back and reflecting, it ... drew that line of balance for me to where I don't feel the anxiety, because it's already happened but now I can think about it and learn and grow from it in a therapeutic sense. Now I'm trying to let things go that I can't do anything about now, but still hold onto them to use them as a learning experience.

Leslie: It occurs to me that with time, you may find some peace in those moments, and be able to ... it's called healthy detachment. You protect yourself, but somehow, you're also totally present at the same time.

Jordan: Now that I have this knowledge of the *Currere*, I know later on, later this evening or whenever I get home from work, I'll have the opportunity to reflect on what's happening in the classroom. I'm going to notice a stressful situation but not react, because that's self-preservation for me. It's very natural for me to react in the classroom. In all my interviews, when asked about my biggest weakness as a teacher, I said making quick decisions in response to unexpected, unpredictable events. I struggle with having the appropriate response to the myriad of crazy things that children can do in their school day. And now I think I've increased my ability to notice events that are worth noting, but not depleting my energy or patience or anything like that in responding to the situation because I know I have that chance later with the *Currere* process.

Kasey: *Currere* helped me make sense of parts of my internship that didn't go as

well as I had hoped. When we lost our student and—I haven't cried about it in like three weeks—lots and lots of concerns came up at the exact same time: about my kids, lots of concerns about how I was going to handle it, lots of concerns about how the administration was going to handle it. Lots of concerns about what questions I would be asked and what I could and couldn't answer. And then I questioned how the suicide of a student is was going to affect me going forward as a teacher. There were so many questions that were going through my mind and there were kids that I was concerned about on so many levels, and still am. There was just a huge shift in the classroom environment. Everything changed. And I really wanted to make sure that something positive, even if it was really small, at some point came out of it. And I really wanted a way to make my experience solid in some way, shape, or form. And the *Currere* process allowed me to do that and also figure out how that specifically was going to affect me. It helped me make decisions about how I was going to take back control and make this devastating experience something positive for the kids that I would have in the future and for the teacher that I want to be.

Leslie: I love what you just said about *Currere*, because I hadn't really thought of that when I wrote mine. That first *Currere* process became a moment in my life that took me someplace I really needed to go. When I have had moments that are intensely difficult, and by *moment* I also mean *time period*, *Currere* has really helped me process the swirling thoughts and feelings in a way that helps me cope but also grow. In my conversation with Heidegger, we discussed how his philosophy regarding technology in terms of making *things* can also represent lived curriculum through the metaphor of the



human condition as a crucible for being tested, challenged, shaped, and ultimately transformed through difficulty.

Kasey: For me it was a couple things. First, I felt like [*Currere*] put control back with me. Being an intern, you end up in situations that are brand new that make you feel unsure of yourself. At the same time, you're also supposed to control everything! Because you're supposed to be taking over the classroom and you're supposed to be doing all these things, but also, you're not. At all. In any kind of control. You're still in somebody else's room, and they're still sitting there, and they're still doing all these things, and you don't have control over any of that. And the kids feed off of that. So that can be frustrating. And then you also feel like you have to fit the mold of the classroom that you're in. And there's very little opportunity to branch out and explore what you want to be, because it's not your classroom and there's all of this pressure to conform to the mentor, to the system, to what is expected of you and to not break any invisible rules or burn any bridges. And then there is all this other stuff, because, fingers crossed, there's a job waiting at the end. I think that the process of looking back, looking forward, figuring out what I want to be out of what I've been through kind of matched that input. *Currere* allowed me to regain control of what I want to be, which was really nice.

Alex: When I wrote my *Currere*, I found my two main themes in both my positive and my negative memories: the importance of student-teacher relationships, and a comfortable classroom culture. Those themes had always been part of how I envisioned myself as a teacher. To see those connections in my own memories of this year made me realize that I had become the teacher that I wanted to be. It was very validating for me. I'm doing it!

Leslie: Alex, you're absolutely lit up. You have this beautiful radiant shine about you.

Alex: In my first conversation with Leslie, I cried. I had picked up those themes in my *Currere*, but when I was talking about it with Leslie, it really hit me that I was the teacher I hoped to be. The conversation about what I discovered in my *Currere* just made it so much more powerful.

Kasey: I know what you mean. While I was typing my *Currere*, I was like, yeah, yeah, this is really good, I did this...that was good...way to go. And then when I talked about it, I was like, whoa, that's everything I ever said I wanted to do. It just adds so much to talk about it.

Leslie: On the day I was conversing with Gadamer, he pointed out that man tends to use language to show dominance over meaning and that respect for language and allowing it to reveal meaning is rare. Your use of conversation to allow meaning to emerge during our conversation is beautiful. Gadamer would be so proud!

Alex: Having an emotional response during the conversation was a very cool moment, and I'm glad that I had that moment.

Leslie: I have to tell you all, sitting in my position here behind the wheel looking at this group, I feel as if you share a bond that I'm actually in on, too. It feels like we're part of a special club. Do you know what I'm talking about? Do you feel it, too? There's this connection, that we all have through *Currere* even though our individual experiences have been vastly different.

### ***Currere* Marker Eight—Influence on Identity and Practice**

Leslie: I never anticipated how powerful *Currere* conversation would be. The

writing is so important, of course, but then when you start sharing it through conversation, that's where the...

Jordan: That's where the lived experience is.

Group: Ooh!

Alex: It's really cool to sit here and listen to what everybody else has to say and be able to nod and say, yeah, that resonates with me. I feel those same things even if it's not exactly the experience, or exactly the right words for me. There's still the same kind of footprints or patterns that we're seeing through all of these.

Austin: Listening to all of you, I was just reminded of how *Currere* saved my teaching career. And I know Leslie knows this, but I haven't really shared this with a lot of people. The summer when I took Leslie's Education in America class I almost gave up teaching even though I had wanted to be a teacher since I was in second grade because I loved my second-grade teacher, Ms. Cooper. But I got cold feet, and I started applying for other jobs. I became a full-time marketing director of a minor-league baseball team. Then I took Leslie's summer class and went through the *Currere* process for the first time, and it just reminded me of how happy the thought of being in a classroom full of kids made me, and how I was going to miss out on my calling if I didn't go do this.

Leslie: What was it like to feel like your decision was clear?

Austin: I felt a lot more confidence because I was reminded of how much I've actually wanted a teaching career and how this is what I'm meant to do. It gave me the motivation of a true sense of a purpose for my life. I think we sometimes forget in the middle of the MAT, the lived experience of the MAT, why we're all here, and it's nice to be brought back to the bigger picture of why we want to be teachers.

Leslie: It seems as if *Currere* gave you a foundation, a sense of solid ground upon which to make your own meaning of what it is to be a teacher.

Austin: Well, I know you and I had a conversation near the beginning of your summer class. We barely knew each other, and I kind of broke down in your office. I was questioning whether teaching was right for me, and two days into the class I'm in your office crying because I was so unsure of myself in terms of teaching. But because of the *Currere* assignment and coming in to talk to you about it...I just realized that *Currere* kind of found me. But the human interaction, the conversation, and the actual literal crying in your office was what changed me. My written *Currere* jump-started my thinking about becoming a teacher after all, but it didn't finish it. You and other people are the ones who finished it.

Leslie: Well, that's really interesting, because researching the lived experience of using *Currere*, started with the written word. You all were certainly living through the writing experience, but those words really come alive when *Currere* becomes conversation. Am I hearing that right?

Austin: Oh yeah.

Group: Definitely. Absolutely.

Alex: I just thought of something else. I think that the conversation after writing a *Currere* project is best with someone that knows about *Currere*, preferably someone who has written through the *Currere* process, too. I think that that's really critical, at least it was for me. Through our conversations I've realized that saying things out loud makes them real, I guess, for me, but that happens with a lot of people. Talking about what was written on the page made it so much more meaningful to me. Conversing helped me

discover a lot that I had written that I hadn't been conscious of, or cognizant of, when I was writing it. And I don't think that you get the same kind of...

Jordan: Catharsis?

Alex: The same control, the same catharsis, the same feeling, the same understanding ... without that conversation. It was very helpful for me.

Leslie: Yes. I feel that, too. We have really connected. I almost said "communicated," but Huebner (1999) says that communication implies only a transmission of information from one to the other. Conversation occurs when the listener is inspired to act on what she has heard, then respond on a new level. Huebner speaks of a conversation as authentic when each participant brings a "willingness to be influenced" and an "openness toward the world" (p. 78).

Margaret: For me, having a group of us together that has found a lot in common with each other even though our internships have been so different. It is very enlightening and...

Jordan: It's reassuring.

Margaret: It is reassuring ... it is the shared lived experience of *Currere*.

Alex: But I think that it's important that you find that reassurance after you go through your individual process, too, that it's not a jump right into this whole group discussion.

Leslie: I think your idea about beginning *Currere* conversations with small groups is wise. Small groups seem to lead more quickly to the personal connections that make *Currere* conversation even more insightful and rewarding.

Kasey: It's interesting how everything in teaching can seem so complicated.

*Currere* is a way for teachers to find joy in the classroom. It seems so simple.

Leslie: Perfect timing, we have arrived at my old river bend. I feel as if I have come full circle and that this place where I grounded my philosophy has now become the place where my philosophy has matured. I have learned so much from all of you!

### **We Arrive, and—Surprise!**

We approached the dock to tie up for a while and enjoy the scenery. As we neared, I noticed three familiar figures seated together on a bench. And, to my surprise, they were my fellow philosopher/pedal-boaters from that day not too long ago. I waved and hurried to tie up the boat. The intern teachers and I disembarked, and I made the introductions. I asked the three how they happened to be together on this day.

Heidegger: We were emailing one another about our individual conversations with you, you know, comparing notes, and we decided to meet here and have a conversation together face to face.

Gadamer: This is some coincidence!

Merleau-Ponty: I don't believe in coincidence.

I told the three that the intern teachers and I had just finished a long conversation about the very act of conversation. One of the intern teachers asked if the philosophers had any comments to expand on the idea of conversation.

Heidegger gave the interns something to remember as he said, "Language speaks. If we let ourselves fall into the abyss denoted by this sentence, we do not go tumbling into emptiness. We fall upright, to a height. Its loftiness opens up a depth. The two span a realm in which we would like to become at home, so as to find a residence, a dwelling

place for the life of man” (2013, pp. 189-190).

Leslie: That sounds just like the in-between spaces we have been talking about and how they are actually spaces to grow. Do we understand that correctly?

Heidegger smiled and nodded. He opened his mouth to continue, but Gadamer jumped in.

Gadamer: I know you have been working with the *Currere* process, so I want to make a connection for you between *Currere* and language itself. “Language is the medium in which past and present actually impenetrate. Understanding as a fusion of these two horizons is an essentially linguistic process, so language and understanding are really one process” (1976, p. 25).

Merleau-Ponty: I want to add to that. Remember, “For the speaker, speech does not translate a ready-made thought; rather, speech accomplishes thought. Even more so, it must be acknowledged that the person listening receives the thought from the speech itself. Through speech, then, there is a taking up of the other person’s thought, a reflection in others, a power of thinking *according to others*, which enriches our own thoughts” (2014, pp. 183-184).

I thanked each of the philosophers again.

As I stood there in the presence of these three admired philosophers and these five beloved intern teachers, I understood how fortunate I was to be in of the presence of such wisdom. In this moment, I realized that my role is situated in between philosophy and practice. I discovered that my life’s purpose is to help humanize education for teachers as well as their students.

### *Currere* as the Course of Lived Experience

And still, pressed deep into my mind, the river  
keeps coming, touching me, passing by on its  
long journey, its pale, infallible voice  
singing. (Oliver, 2013, p. 89)

At the end of Chapter Four, I mentioned that this research experience has had a profound influence on me. I like to call myself an “expert beginner” because I have found myself in new positions again and again in my experiences shifting from elementary, to middle, to high school teaching over 12 years. I have felt the anxiety of a steep learning curve many times, and I have enough experience now to know that those feelings are temporary. When I began this dissertation, I had been the Director of Student Teaching at St. Mary’s College of Maryland for eight years, and now I am a high school English teacher for the St. Mary’s County Public Schools (SMCPS). Returning to the classroom after so many years has been difficult, rewarding, frustrating, and exhilarating.

The move happened quite spontaneously. I received a call one August afternoon from a colleague in the SMCPS human resources department. She called from time to time when she was seeking a teacher for an open position. When she called to ask if I knew anyone interested in a high school English position, I heard myself say, “What about me?” Upon reflection, I realize that the research conversations about *Currere* with the intern teachers had already plotted my course to return to the classroom. Their energy inspired me. I also thought about the fact that I was in the business of preparing teachers with an understanding of the classroom that was almost a decade old. I know that future research and writing will be more productive coming from a refreshed and realistic experience of the highs and lows of teaching.



### ***Currere* and Re-claiming the Space of Teaching**

I draw on Casey's (2009) concept of *homesteading* to deepen my understanding of the meaning of my decision to re-turn to the classroom. As I conversed with the intern teachers about *Currere* and curriculum, they spoke to me of classroom places I could know "only from the accounts given by others" (p. 290). I understood their experiences in the classroom only peripherally through their descriptions. I gained a first-hand understanding when I re-became a public-school teacher, and I decided to settle myself in that new place and make it my teacher-self-home. After being away from the classroom for so long, I felt as if I were home again. Casey speaks of a paradox involving *homesteading* and *homecoming*:

In homecoming, I can find myself in the extraordinary situation where I return to a place which I can be said to know *for the first time*, even though in fact I have never been there before and still retain intact memories of my earlier experiences there. (p. 293)

As one who conceives of in-between spaces as opportunities, it is no surprise that I find myself somewhere in-between homesteading and homecoming. My awareness that I am an experienced teacher and brand new at the same time helps me to stay present and alive in this new/old place. My recent classroom experiences have confirmed my suspicion that I was no longer fully in touch with the realities of the classroom in my role as part of a teacher preparation program. My experiences using *Currere* continue to shape me. I have oriented myself toward my return to the classroom based on the broadened perspective I have gained from this research, particularly *Currere-as-Conversation*.

### **Envisioning Possibilities for *Currere***

I am dedicated to teacher preparation more than ever, but also to new teacher support and retention beyond canned, crowd-based induction activities. I envision

offering the *Currere* process and allowing teacher communities the space to make their own meanings of what it is to be a teacher. Pinar (2004) also envisions a positive shift in teacher education as he writes:

Whether “fast” or “slow,” teacher education (if it remains at all) must be reconceived from a skills-identified induction into the school bureaucracy to the interdisciplinary, theoretical, and autobiographical study of educational experience in which curriculum and teaching are understood as complicated conversations toward the construction of a democratic public sphere. Informed by curriculum theory, teacher preparation becomes the education of self-reflexive, private-and-public intellectuals, intellectuals whose primary loyalty is multiple, shared among their academic discipline(s), the social reconstruction of the institution and society in which they teach, and the intellectual and psycho-social development of the students they teach. Multiple loyalties require multiple curriculum designs, not the simple-minded alignment of the school subject with the academic disciplines (although, of course, there will be educators who choose this design). Opportunities for curricular experimentation are educational expressions of academic freedom. (p. 229)

I notice that Pinar’s words come from 2004. He has been at the vanguard of teacher education for many years, but his influence is yet to be fully realized. His *Currere* process has a place in teacher preparation, in conversations about the meaning of curriculum, and in realizing the visions of so many who see education as a human endeavor. A great advocate of teachers, Parker Palmer (1998) ponders a question and possible answer:

Could teachers gather around the great thing called “teaching and learning” and explore its mysteries with the same respect we accord to any subject worth knowing?

We need to learn how to do so, for such a gathering is one of the few means we have to become better teachers. There are no formulas for good teaching, and the advice of experts has but marginal utility. If we want to grow in our practice, we have two primary places to go: the inner ground from which good teaching comes and to the community of fellow teachers from whom we can learn more about ourselves and our craft. (1998, p. 146)

*Currere* is the chart and sextant that can help educators navigate the “two places” of which Palmer speaks above. *Currere-as-Written* offers space to explore and find

meaning in that inner ground. *Currere*-as-Conversation provides a shared language to empower a community of fellow teachers. These are the riverbed and the water which are both essential to understanding the ever-changing river of curriculum. As we are part of the always-becoming river of lived curriculum, Huebner reminds us that conversation “demands that man recognize that he is never a completed ‘being’ but is always in the process of ‘becoming,’ and hence is willing to find the new, the unexpected, the awe and wonder in that which he repeatedly faces or which he partially knows” (1999, p. 78). The wonder of continual seeking and becoming becomes a kind of destination.

### **Dwelling in *Currere* as the River of Curriculum**

I have come a long and winding way on this phenomenological research journey. I stand, gazing at the river that has taught me so much by allowing me to learn. The river is a pedagogical force in my life, as are the teacher interns who shared their conversation and insights in a community of fellow teachers. I think of Jordan, who just completed her first year as a fourth-grade teacher in a Title I school. Kasey went to work for an alternative placement school working with students who come with myriad challenges to bring them the joy of history as the story of all our lives.

Through this research, I have developed a stronger pedagogical stance toward these fledgling teachers than I thought possible. I have seen their honesty, their vulnerability, and their humanity, and it has been a transformative experience. I care for these intern teachers so deeply, and I hope they have been nurtured by becoming participants in my research. I hope I have made them aware of the depth of my care for them and that they pass that love along to their own students. The lived experience of using *Currere* to understand curriculum has also formed the five intern teachers and me

into a community of pedagogues-together. My wish is that all teachers discover this kind of community. I like to think of our experience sharing *Currere* together as a pebble dropped into still water. Long after the pebble has disappeared, the concentric circles continue to ripple outward.

**APPENDIX A:****INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

**Researcher: Leslie Moore  
University of Maryland College Park  
2017**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for your expressed interest in participating in my research. The study will explore your lived experience of using *Currere* to understand curriculum using four activities through which I plan to uncover this phenomenon. First, I will ask you to complete a brief reading: Chapter 6, *Teaching as Indwelling Between Two Curriculum Worlds* from *Curriculum in a New Key: The Collected Works of Ted T. Aoki* (2005). Second, I will ask you to complete a *Currere* project based on your internship experiences. Third, I will ask you to have two individual, one-hour conversations with me after which I will ask you to write a brief reflection and e-mail it to me within two days. These conversations will be one week apart. At the beginning of our second conversation, I will provide you a written transcript of our first conversation to get your comments and feedback. Finally, an additional week after the second individual conversation, I will ask you to join me and my other five participants for a group conversation. Before we begin, I will provide each participant with a written transcript of our second conversation for comments and feedback.

As a participant in this study, you have the choice about whether or not your real first name will appear in the published findings. No last names will appear. After I have completed the research, I will share my insights from the chapters dealing with thematic structures. At that time, I will encourage you to provide me with either written or oral feedback.

By signing the attached consent form, you agree to join me in this research project. I appreciate your willingness to participate, and I look forward to working together. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at (301) 752-0106. You can also reach me via email at [lmoore@smcm.edu](mailto:lmoore@smcm.edu) with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Leslie Moore

**APPENDIX B:  
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK  
ADULT CONSENT FORM**

Project Title	<p><i>Project Title</i> Streams that Run into the River of Lived Experience: A Phenomenological Study of Intern Teachers Using <i>Currere</i> to Understand Curriculum</p>
Purpose of the Study	<p>This research is being conducted by <b>Leslie Moore</b> at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a Master of Arts in Teaching Intern. The purpose of this research project is to study your lived experiences of using <i>Currere</i> to understand curriculum.</p>
Procedures	<p>The study procedures involve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One introductory reading</li> <li>2. Completion of a <i>Currere</i> process project</li> <li>3. Two 1-hour individual conversations with the researcher, each followed by a written reflection Possible Conversation Starters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Tell me about what you dis-covered about curriculum using <i>Currere</i>.</li> <li>➤ Describe experiences of curriculum-as-plan contrasted with curriculum-as-lived.</li> <li>➤ Describe the experience of your understanding of curriculum before and after completing <i>Currere</i>.</li> <li>➤ Tell me about what it was like to write your way through the <i>Currere</i> process.</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. One 1-hour conversation with the whole group and the researcher followed by a written reflection from each participant</li> </ol>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	<p>There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study.</p>
Potential Benefits	<p>There are no direct benefits to participants. However, as a participant, you may gain insights upon which you can build as you begin your teaching career. I hope that, in the future, other educators might benefit from this study through improved understanding of using the <i>Currere</i> process to understand curriculum. There are not likely to be any health risks as a result of participating in this research study.</p>

Confidentiality	<p>Participants' identities will be kept confidential. Participants will receive a copy of transcripts that represent recordings of conversations in which they participated. These will be returned to the researcher after participants' written reflections are completed. In the text of the dissertation, only first names will be used. Participants will be made aware of this, and the actual participant's name will be replaced by a pseudonym at the request of that participant. The researcher will keep all transcripts and notes in a locked file in the researcher's home office.</p> <p>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing the conversation texts in this secure location. Further, if I write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</p>
Medical Treatment	<p>The University of Maryland does not provide any medical, hospitalization or other insurance for participants in this research study, nor will the University of Maryland provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law.</p>
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: Leslie Moore at 301-752-0106 or llmoore@smcm.edu.</p>
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <b>University of Maryland College Park</b>  <b>Institutional Review Board Office</b>  <b>1204 Marie Mount Hall</b>  <b>College Park, Maryland, 20742</b>  <b>E-mail: <a href="mailto:irb@umd.edu">irb@umd.edu</a></b>  <b>Telephone: 301-405-0678</b> </p>

	<p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects</p>			
<p>Statement of Consent</p>	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study which includes audio recording of all conversations. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</p>			
<p>Signature and Date</p>	<p><b>NAME OF SUBJECT</b> <b>[Please Print]</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT/or Parental or Guardian Consent</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Printed Name of Parent or Guardian for Minor Study Participants</b></p> <hr/> <table border="1"> <tr> <td> <p><b>DATE</b></p> </td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		<p><b>DATE</b></p>	
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**APPENDIX C:  
CHAPTER SIX**

**TEACHING AS INDWELLING BETWEEN  
TWO CURRICULUM WORLDS<sup>1</sup> (1986/1991)  
(Aoki, 2005, pp.159-165)**

Even before day 1 of the term, our teacher, Miss O, walks into her assigned Grade 5 classroom. Because Miss O is already a teacher, by her mere presence in the classroom as teacher, she initiates a transformation of a sociocultural and physical environment into something different. Even before a pupil walks in, she silently asks: "Can I establish myself here as a teacher?" and the classroom's desks, walls, chalkboards, floor, books, and resources jointly reply, albeit wordlessly, by what they are. They respond to Miss O's intention and presence. And when the pupils arrive, things and pupils arrange themselves, as it were, around Miss O's intention. They become "suitable," "teachable," "harmful," "difficult," "hopeful," "damaging." The environment ceases to be environment, and in its place comes into being a pedagogic situation, a lived situation pregnantly alive in the presence of people.

Within this situation, Miss O soon finds that her pedagogic situation is a living in tensionality—a tensionality that emerges, in part, from indwelling in a zone between two curriculum worlds: the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experiences.

**CURRICULUM-AS-PLAN**

The first of these, the curriculum as-plan, usually has its origin outside the classroom, such as the Ministry of Education or the school district office. But whatever the source, it is penetratingly and insistently present in Miss O's classroom. This curriculum-as-plan is the curriculum that Miss O is asked to teach the Grade 5 pupils who are entrusted to her care.

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<sup>1</sup> This invited article first appeared in *The B.C. Teacher*, 65 (3), April/May issue, 1986, a publication of the: British Columbia Teachers' Association. The article was inspired through conversations with Miss "O," a Grade 5 teacher at Westwind School in Richmond, BC. Miss "O," now Mrs. S. Chamberlain, was principal of Maple Lane Elementary School, Richmond, B.C. at the time. This article is reprinted from: Aoki, Ted T. (1991). "Teaching as indwelling between two curriculum worlds." In Ted T. Aoki (Ed.), *Inspiring Curriculum and Pedagogy: Talks to Teachers* (pp. 7-10). Edmonton, Alberta: Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta.

In curriculum-as-plan are the works of curriculum planners, usually selected teachers from the field, under the direction of some ministry official often designated as the curriculum director of a subject or a group of subjects. As works of people, inevitably, they are imbued with the planners' orientations to the world, which inevitably include their own interests and assumptions about ways of knowing and about how teachers and students are to be understood. These interests, assumptions, and approaches, usually implicit in the text of the curriculum-as-plan, frame a set of curriculum statements: statements of *intent* and *interest* (given in the language of "goals," "aims," and "objectives"), statements of what teachers and students should do (usually given in the language of *activities*), statements of official and recommended *resources* for teachers and students, and usually, implicitly, statements of *evaluation* (given, if at all, in the language of ends and means).

If the planners regard teachers as essentially installers of the curriculum, implementing assumes an instrumental flavor. It becomes a process, making of teacher-installers, in the fashion of plumbers who install their wares. Within this scheme of things, teachers are asked to be doers, and often they are asked to participate in implementation workshops on "how to do this and that." Teachers are "trained," and in becoming trained, they become effective in trained ways of "doing." At times, at such workshops, ignored are the teachers' own skills that emerge from reflection on their experiences of teaching, and, more seriously, there is forgetfulness that what matters deeply in the situated world of the classroom is how the teachers' "doings" flow from who they are, their beings. That is, there is a forgetfulness that teaching is fundamentally a mode of being.

#### CURRICULUM-AS-LIVED-EXPERIENCE

The other curriculum world is the situated world of curriculum-as-lived that Miss O and her pupils experience. For Miss O it is a world of face-to-face living with Andrew, with his mop of red hair, who struggles hard to learn to read; with Sara, whom Miss O can count on to tackle her language assignment with aplomb; with popular Margaret, who bubbles and who is quick to offer help to others and to welcome others' help; with Tom, a frequent daydreamer, who loves to allow his thoughts *to* roam beyond the windows of the classroom; and some 20 others in class, each living out a story of what it is to live school life as Grade Ss. Miss O's pedagogic situation is a world of students with proper names—like Andrew, Sara, Margaret, and Tom—who are, for Miss O, very human, unique beings. Miss O knows their uniqueness from having lived daily with them. And she knows that their uniqueness disappears into the shadow when they are spoken of in the prosaically abstract language of the external curriculum planners who are, in a sense, condemned to plan for faceless people, students shorn of their uniqueness, or for all teachers, who become generalized entities often defined in terms of performance roles.

On one side of Miss O's desk are marked class assignments ready to be returned with some appropriate remarks of approval or disapproval – some directed to the whole class, others directed to selected pupils. And on her desk, too, sits a half-written memo eventually to be delivered to the office to make sure that a film ordered 3 months ago will be available for the first class in the afternoon.

Living within this swirl of busyness where her personal life and her life as teacher shade into each other, Miss O struggles with mundane curriculum questions: What shall I teach tomorrow? How shall I teach? These are quotidian questions of a teacher who knows, from having experienced life with her pupils, that there are immediate concerns she must address to keep the class alive and moving.

### DWELLING IN THE ZONE OF BETWEEN

In asking these questions our teacher, Miss O, knows that an abstraction that has distanced but "accountable" relevance for her exists, a formalized curriculum, which has instituted legitimacy. She knows that, as an institutionalized teacher, she is accountable for what and how she teaches, but she also knows that the ministry's curriculum-as-plan assumes a fiction of sameness throughout the whole province, and that this fiction is possible only by wresting out the unique. This kind of curriculum knowing she understands, for she knows that generalized knowing is likely disembodied knowing that disavows the living presence of people, a knowing that appeals primarily to the intellectual. So, she knows that this generalized knowing views a teacher like her as one of the thousands of certificated teachers in the province, and children like Andrew, Sara, Margaret and Tom merely as Grade *S* pupils, children without unique names, without freckles, without missing teeth, without their private hopes and dreams.

But she knows deeply from her caring for Tom, Andrew, Margaret, Sara and others that they are counting on her as their teacher, that they trust her to do what she must do as their teacher to lead them out into new possibilities, that is, to educate them. She knows that whenever and wherever she can, between her markings and the lesson plannings, she must listen and be attuned to the care that calls from the very living with her own Grade *S* pupils.

So, in this way Miss O indwells between two horizons—the horizon of the curriculum-as-plan as she understands it and the horizon of the curriculum-as-lived experience with her pupils. Both of these call on Miss O and make their claims on her. She is asked to give a hearing to both simultaneously. This is the tensionality within which Miss O inevitably dwells as teacher. And she knows that inevitably the quality of life lived within the tensionality depends much on the quality of the pedagogic being that she *is*.

Miss O knows that it is possible to regard all tensions as being negative and that so regarded, tensions are "to be got rid of." But such a

regard, Miss O feels, rests on a misunderstanding that comes from forgetting that to be alive is to live in tension; that, in fact, it is the tensionality that allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck, and that tensionless strings are not only unable to give voice to songs, but also unable to allow a song to be sung. Miss O understands that this tensionality in her pedagogical situation is a mode of being a teacher, a mode that could be oppressive and depressive, marked by despair and hopelessness, and at other times, challenging and stimulating, evoking hopefulness for venturing forth.

At times Miss O experiences discouragement by the little concern the public seem to display for teachers' well-being—zero salary increases, colleagues' layoffs, and problems of too few teachers resolved simply by increasing class size with little regard for the quality of the curriculum-as-lived experiences. Yet even in such greyness, her blood quickens when she encounters Andrew's look, Sara's rare call for help, Margaret's smile, Tom's exuberant forgetfulness, when light that comes from contacts with children glows anew.

And Miss O knows that some people understand teaching for the second year a Grade 5 class, as she is doing, is teaching the same class as last year, in the same room as last year, in the same school as last year, with the same number of pupils as last year. But Miss O knows that although technically people may talk that way, in teaching this year's Grade 5 class, the seemingly same lessons are not the same, nor are the Grade 5 pupils though they sit in the same desks, nor *is* Miss O herself for she knows she has changed from having reflected upon her teaching experiences last year with her Grade 5s. She no longer is the same teacher. Miss O knows that "implementing" the curriculum-as-plan in this year's lived situation calls for a fresh interpretive work constituted in the presence of very alive, new students.

Our Miss O knows that some of her colleagues who faithfully try to reproduce the curriculum-as-plan are not mindful of the lived situation, and that in so doing, they are unaware that they are making themselves into mere technical doers. In so making, they embrace merely a technical sense of excellence matched by a sense of compliance to the curriculum-as-plan, which exists outside of themselves. They tend *to* forget that gaining such fidelity may be at the expense of the attunement to the aliveness of the situation.

She knows, too, that some of her colleagues who are tuned into the pragmatics of what works in everyday school busyness—the curriculum grounded in the pragmatics of life as experienced in everyday life—may become skillful in managing the classes and resources from period to period—and survive well—keeping the students preoccupied and busy. But our teacher, Miss O, wonders whether a concern for total fidelity to an external curriculum-as-plan and a lack of simultaneous concern for the aliveness of the situation do not extinguish the understanding of teaching as “a leading out to new possibilities,” to the “not yet.” She wonders, too, if an overconcern for mere survival in the lived world of experience may not cause a teacher to forget to ask the question, *Survive? What for?* – the fundamental question of the meaning of what it is to live life, including school life. Miss O realizes the challenges and difficulties that living within the Zone of Between entails, but she learns, too, that, living as a teacher

in tensionality is indeed living teaching as a mode of being that with all its ever-present risks, beckons the teacher to struggle to be true to what teaching essentially is. Miss O, our teacher, knows that indwelling in the zone between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived experience is not so much a matter of overcoming the tensionality but more a matter of dwelling aright within it.

### COMMENTS

In our effort to understand the world of curriculum, we joined our teacher Miss O in her indwelling between two curriculum worlds: the world of curriculum-as-plan and the world of curriculum-as-lived experiences. We have seen a glimmer of what it is like for a teacher to be situated in the Zone of Between. The calling into presence of two curriculum forms, even though often singularly understood—like the reading curriculum, the social studies curriculum, the music curriculum, and so on—allows us to understand more fully teachers' curriculum life. Some features of this life are sketched next.

1. We can see in Miss O's story, how truncated our understanding becomes when we see only a single curriculum-as-plan awaiting implementation. In this truncation, teachers are often technicized and transformed into mere technical implementers, and good teaching is reduced to mere technical effectiveness. The portrayal of Miss O's indwelling in the Zone of Between calls on us to surmount such reductionism to seek out a more fully human understanding of who a teacher is and what teaching truly is.
2. The portrayal of Miss O's indwelling shows us, too, how the appeal of commonplace logic can, at times, give credibility to simplistic and mechanical understandings of pedagogic life, which sees a linear movement *from* curriculum-as-plan *to* curriculum-as-lived-experience. The story of her indwelling in the Zone of Between, by revealing the naiveté of the linear understanding with its linear logic, calls on us to take heed of understanding indwelling as a dialectic between complementaries with a logic of its own. For many of us, grounded in linear logic, such an understanding may seem to be a totally new way of understanding. Hence, many of us may need to open ourselves to this fundamental way in which we all experience life.
3. We also can see in Miss O's story how indwelling dialectically is a living in tensionality, a mode of being

that knows not only that living school life means living simultaneously with limitations and with openness, but also that this openness harbors within it risks and possibilities as we quest for a change from the is to the not yet. This tensionality calls on us as pedagogues to make time for meaningful striving and struggling, time for letting things be, time for question, time for singing, time for crying, time for anger, time for praying and hoping. Within this tensionality, guided by a sense of the pedagogic good, we are called on as teachers to be alert to the possibilities of our pedagogic touch, pedagogic tact, pedagogic attunement—those subtle features about being teachers that we know, but are not yet in our lexicon, for we have tended to be seduced by the seemingly lofty and prosaic talk in the language of conceptual abstractions. We must recognize the flight from the meaningful and turn back again to an understanding of our own being as teachers. It is here, I feel, that teachers can contribute to fresh curriculum understandings.

4. In Miss O's indwelling in the Zone of Between we see the teacher's dwelling place as a sanctified clearing where the teacher and students gather—somewhat like the place before the hearth at home—an extraordinarily unique and precious place, a hopeful place, a trustful place, a careful place, essentially a human place dedicated to ventures devoted to a leading out, an authentic "e(out)/ducere(lead)," from the "is" to new possibilities yet unknown.
5. We are beginning to hear that in Canada, some architects-developers of lived space who have claimed disciplined understanding of human space, guided by their zeal for high technology – have constructed buildings (places-to-experience-life) that now are called sick buildings. We hear that the architects of these buildings were not attuned to the fundamental meaning of space-as-lived-experience. What does this say to curriculum architects?

For curriculum planners who understand the nuances of the indwelling of teachers in the Zone of Between, the challenge seems clear. If, as many of us believe, the quality of curriculum-as-lived experiences is the heart and core as to why we exist as teachers, principals, superintendents, curriculum developers, curriculum consultants, and teacher educators, curriculum planning should have as its central interest a way of contributing to the aliveness of school life as lived by teachers and students. Hence, what authorizes curriculum developers to be curriculum developers is not only their expertness in doing tasks of curriculum development, but more so a deeply conscious sensitivity to what it means to have a developer's touch, a developer's tact, a developer's attunement that acknowledges in some deep sense the uniqueness of every teaching situation. Such a

sensitivity calls for humility without which they will not be able to minister to the calling of teachers who are themselves dedicated to searching out a deep sense of what it means to educate and to be educated. To raise curriculum planning from being mired in a technical view is a major challenge to curriculum developers of this day.

## APPENDIX D:

### ***CURRERE* PROCESS GUIDELINES**

#### **Stage 1 - Regression:**

Think back as far as you can and record your memories in a stream-of-consciousness manner. Just think about teachers, experiences with education, impressions, and media—anything at all that is vivid to you as you grew up with the concepts of education and teaching. Here are two sample excerpts from my original 2011 *Currere* project:

##### *Regression – Vivid Memories of Teachers, Teaching, and Education*

My first-grade teacher tied a boy, Lazar (whom she called Laser) into his chair with a playground jump rope when he couldn't stay in his seat.

In eighth grade, Mr. A., the math teacher, used to tease me when I couldn't get the answer after he called on me. I would stammer as he quoted from a popular McDonald's Big Mac commercial. He would taunt me, asking "Onions? Pickle? Special Sauce?" while I struggled in front of the class.

#### **Stage 2 – Progression:**

Next, project yourself into your future and record "memories" of things that are likely to happen based on this foundation of memories and ideas about teaching. (It is common to find this challenging.) Here is one example from my *Currere* project:

##### *Progression – "Memories" of a 100-year-old Teacher" (excerpt)*

I wrote a book called *Curriculum of Revelry: Toward an American Renaissance* based on my dissertation study of *Currere* and lived curriculum. I also wrote a user-friendly guide for parents to empower them in helping shape their children's schools as partners. It covered topics from how to work effectively with schools and teachers to how to effectively influence legislation.

#### **Stage 3 – Analysis:**

Look at the connections between your past memories and your ideas about the future. Make an objective identification of the common themes and connections between the first two stages. Here is a description (not an actual example) of how I approached the Analysis stage:

In the Analysis stage, I looked at my Regression and Progression and recognized my perfectionistic tendencies across both. I identified perfectionism as one of the connections, and I wrote about how my perfectionism might have come from the fact that I was a teacher's kid going to the same school where my mother taught. I also wrote that, while these tendencies resulted in my often being dreadfully hard on myself, they also pushed me to perform and be successful as a teacher. (This represents just one example of the many themes I discovered.

#### **Stage 4 – Synthesis:**

Finally, pull the whole thing together— (where you've been, where you're going, and the common themes)—and write about how you will use this new self-knowledge to make conscious, informed decisions about your practice as an educator. Here is a description (not an actual excerpt) of how I approached the Synthesis stage:

In the Synthesis stage, I made some decisions about each connection I had made and previously analyzed. Regarding perfectionism, I realized that some of my success had been motivated by a fear of failure. I did not want to let fear be what guided my teaching. I decided work on being gentler with myself while still maintaining my drive to do well. I realized I could be a better model for my students by allowing them (and myself) the freedom to make mistakes.



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