Senseable Curriculum: Artful Practices for Curriculum Theory and Design

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Abstract

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Over the course of the Coronavirus pandemic, works of art explored social isolation, abolition, and climate crisis. The pandemic had ruptured normative curricular practices in schools and learning discourses focused on minimizing those interruptions. Meanwhile, works such as Ellen Reid's *SOUNDWALK,* Kamau Ware's *Fighting Dark,* and Maya Lin's *Ghost Forest* crafted relationships to knowledge through site-specific sounds, familiar materials, and sensory experiences of their environments. A group of curriculum designers, researchers, and educators, including the author of this study, affiliated with a university-based Curriculum Lab engaged with these artworks, while processing the pandemic's effects on their own curricular practices. Situated within the Lab, this project used ethnographic and speculative methods to research how the artworks' aesthetic and sensory strategies activated curricular contact zones and contributed to artful practices for curriculum theory and design. This study built on the work of critical curriculum scholarship which has demonstrated that significant forms of knowledge and belonging are produced through informal and null curriculum, and outside of schools entirely. Drawing on aesthetics, affect, and vital materialisms, this study theorized ambient curriculum: a surround through which any variety of onto-epistemological practices might cohere into relationships of knowing and becoming. At the same time, this study recognized that formal curriculum exerts a large influence on the daily lives of teachers and students, and that there are

educators searching for forms of curriculum more aligned to their commitments to social and ecological justice; beliefs about the complexity of knowledge and learning; and approach to design as a creative process. This project considers the implications of such creative processes for curriculum design as a nomadic practice and curriculum designers as nomadic becomings, making and made by their creations.

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Chapter 1

"SO THAT THE MIND AND BODY MAY THINK DIFFERENTLY"

You make your way downtown to the New Museum. The building's cool, climate-controlled air transitions your body in from the summer heat, as an elevator carries you into a dimmed room. Adjusting to the dark, you begin to recognize other bodies and nod hello to colleagues and friends. You then turn toward the main light source emanating from a film screen in the corner of the room. The film shows figures in abandoned spaces that feel familiar: the peeling linoleum of a school or civic building; the dingy yellow walls of a hallway. The film's figures wear shapeless white clothes, which recall prison garb, and appear in masks with mirrors, feathers, or foil-sculpted horns. They move in a kind of carefully choreographed improvisation: slow synchronized shuffles, a gentle touch, a staggered fall. Stories are told in a sigh and slump in a waiting room; a man running but getting nowhere, bodies around him frozen in space; someone repositioning bodies across a table, clasping their hands over one another, lifting a jaw to look across at the other's face.

You watch the film, shifting as other visitors come and go. To say it is arresting is true but flippant. You are free to turn and leave. There are more films on screens positioned at different clusters and angles, placed around the room, at the end of a hallway, and even in the bathroom. The door nearest you opens to a brightly lit room with shelves filled with books on incarceration, iPads for accessing a website with a curricular companion to the project, and clipboards with prompts on a long white table. Windows with chicken-coop-style grilles look out westward over lower Manhattan. It is the library and study space for the exhibition,

/Mirror/Echo/Tilt: “a video, performance, and pedagogical project” by artists Melanie Crean, Shaun Leonardo, and Sable Elyse Smith (2019), in collaboration with individuals affected by the justice system. In their manifesto for the project, Crean et al. wrote:

> so that the mind and body may think differently
> so that the mind and body may feel, and move
> new language
> we begin with a word that must be removed
> omitted moving forward so that we may ask different questions of our work and of our seeing.…

Laid out on clipboards on the table before you are papers with the prompt: “What might a future without prisons look and feel like?”

You take a paper and crumple it. Its loud crunch fades to a rustling as the moisture and warmth of your hands change the paper’s structure. It comes to feel like a smoldering ember, gently emitting heat. You carefully flatten the ball of paper. There are a few small holes where it has worn out entirely from the crumpling, and you notice its size has shrunk. It is soft.

“So that the mind and body may feel, and move differently”

Crean et al. described their socially engaged, transdisciplinary effort to imagine a world without prisons as pedagogical, and they designed an accompanying curriculum to make their multimodal process of inquiry accessible to more publics. They could make the same argument for criminal justice reform in a book, a lecture, a movie, a series of talkbacks, but the elements of */Mirror/Echo/Tilt*—multiple films in a series of rooms, a teaching library, writing prompts, a formal curriculum with a sequence of movement, theater, and narrative exercises—engage knowledge, bodies, and affects differently.

While remaining critical, with Springgay (2016), of “reduc[ing] art to notions of embodiment and experiential learning, thereby reducing it to both a human construct and a

human experience," which limits its political potential (p. 69), I wonder what such arts-based projects that claim to be pedagogical might offer for thinking-making-doing curriculum differently. I hope to understand how these projects support attunement to the immanence of curriculum in various environments and events, and wonder what propositions and new problems (Manning, 2016) for curriculum making might emerge from these projects. I ask what happens when we experiment with the forms of curriculum: what collapses, stutters, becomes (im)possible. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What understandings of curriculum do transdisciplinary art works and artful practices open up?
2. What do experiments with curricular practices and forms do to curriculum theorists, researchers, and designers?

The Forms Curriculum Could Take

If we want to tell different stories "so that the mind and body may think differently" (Crean et al., 2019)—different stories about race and sexuality, ability and achievement, ecological histories and futures—Natalie Loveless (2019) argued that we need to not only include different voices but also use different forms. Situated between art and art history and shaped by the fields of identity studies, Loveless (2019) pressed for forms that allow for the telling of

> stories that denaturalize singular disciplinary locations while nomadically claiming space within all of them; stories that unmake as much as they remake how we understand what we are doing as *maker-thinkers* in the—disciplined and disciplining—university today. (p. 37)

Loveless tried to agitate the objects, methods, modes of presentation of her disciplinary homes and make her way as a "nomad" across them. Similarly, in the face of economic and social inequalities exacerbated due to climate change and technological advances, Braidotti (2017)

argued that our responses must revolve around relational approaches to generating knowledge and a "definitive end of disciplinary purity" (p. 31). Her political commitment to relational, non-disciplinary curricula continually pointed toward artistic modes of making and sharing knowledge.

Curriculum's central occupation is knowledge: what knowledge is of most worth, for whom, and why; who decides; and how is that knowledge organized (Pinar, 2004; Walker & Soltis, 2009). Curriculum's apparent epistemological focus quickly becomes a concern with ontology—the inextricability of knowing and being—and with teleology or axiology—with commitments to making other worlds possible. "Such considerations of the future," wrote Elizabeth Grosz (2017), "are the concerns of precisely ethics and politics and are the implications…of whatever one commits to as an ontology" (p. 2). Resistance to forms of knowledge rooted in the assumption of a distinction between the (discursive) human and its (material) world as one that re-inscribes systems of oppression and mastery courses across new materialist, affect, decolonial, queer, and Black studies. Discussing the consequences of these shifting assumptions about the nature of knowledge and knowledge production in the introduction to their edited volume *Pedagogical Matters*, Snaza et al. (2016) argued that "a materially engaged curriculum opens onto diverse ways of analyzing, thinking, and imagining that cannot be restricted within customary disciplinary boundaries" (p. xxi). Recalling the language of Caribbean postcolonial theorist Edouard Glissant's *poetics of relation,* Snaza et al. described the contributing chapters to *Pedagogical Matters* as each "focuse[d] on movement, on errancy, on distribution and dispersal, on blurring, on crossing," whereby they "explore the manifold and shifting boundaries and borders that limn and limit educational encounters, but they simultaneously track how those borders are materially far more porous than dominant

ideologies and institutions would have us believe" (p. xxii). Curriculum becomes a slippery concept.

Literacy has also been made to slide and stutter—moves that model what I try to do with curriculum. Aiming to "render any solidity blurry or porous" by stepping in, out, and across disciplinary domains, in *Animate Literacies* Snaza (2019) troubled what literacy is. From the perspective of new materialisms and affect theory, literacy events comprise all sorts of nonhuman and human bodies and affects, implicated in projects of settler colonialism, racism, and the nation-state. It is precisely this attention to the production of paper, ink, sound, touch, and the conditions which make literacy possible—and thus particular kinds of human sociality and collectivities possible—that demonstrates how literacy has also been complicit in oppression, and how human and nonhuman agencies might be mobilized toward other political modes of becoming in the literacy event. "At once a problem, a dispute, a location, a process, and an outcome" (p. 23), literacy is an effect of such ethologies and exceeds human wills. Through creative processes and products, this study explores how curriculum, similarly, becomes an effect of material, affective, human and nonhuman assemblages or contact zones, making it rife for study that transgresses disciplinary boundaries.

In searching for models for curriculum that makes the body think, move, and feel differently, scholars working across education, art, and media studies have explored the pedagogical potential of social practice art, public art and architecture, and participatory theater and media. Affect studies and new materialisms help to explain what participatory art *does* and provide tools for thinking differently about anomalous (Ellsworth, 2005) and sensational (Springgay, 2011, 2016) pedagogies. Ellsworth (2005) analyzed the "pedagogical address" of the U.S. Holocaust Museum—how the design of space, lighting, and objects affects visitors and the

forms of knowledge which they might develop. Stephanie Springgay (2011) explored how Diane Borsato's mycology tour in Chinatown, as a participatory art piece called "Chinatown Foray," engages social difference through a pedagogy of sensation: bodies, odors, tastes. For Loveless, telling different stories means going beyond the text-bound output of scholarship to consider media such as film, activism, research-creational products as legitimate forms of knowledge production and dissemination. These "boundary objects" span genres or disciplines; they become nomadic, not fully at home in either. The process of research-creation, which produces such nomadic objects, is an extension of "interdisciplinary, conceptual, and social justice/activist legacies of contemporary art…[and]…of the pedagogical turn in the arts" (p. 9). The pedagogical turn in the arts, nearly synonymous with a social or relational turn in the arts (well documented both in art criticism and educational studies), positions people, environments, and events—even education—as the medium for art.

This pedagogical turn in the arts reflects a concurrent turn to the arts in pedagogy, in the context of Western aesthetics and curriculum. Maxine Greene (1977) saw the arts as an essential component of any educational program that aims to cultivate a situated, critical consciousness in a world increasingly characterized by technological expansion and fragmentation: a sense of "being conditioned and controlled" (p. 120). The world she painted in 1977, in which "more and more people have felt themselves impinged upon by forces they have been unable to understand" (p. 120), sounds dishearteningly close to the world we face, over 40 years later (Berlant, 2011; Hochschild, 2018; Stewart, 2007). Works of art, Greene argued, trouble social "somnambulance": they problematize life, introduce difficulties, spark moral agency, and "provoke wide-awakeness and an awareness of the quest for meaning, which has so much to do with feeling alive in the world" (p. 123). Snapping out of sleepy passivity in this encounter with

art, students and teachers question themselves and their world. As they do so, Greene suggested, "they might as well seek out answers in free involvement with a range of disciplines" (p. 123). For Greene, interdisciplinarity follows from trying to make sense of the world and respond to questions that art provokes. Furthermore, by bringing the arts and humanities into education, "it might be possible to break through the artificial separations that make interdisciplinary study so difficult to achieve" (p. 123). Greene saw art as both a catalyst and node of possibility for interdisciplinary curriculum.

Others have presented interdisciplinarity as an organization of knowledge that responds to 'the times,' reiterating the argument that such a curriculum is more relevant to the real world, overcomes fragmentation, and exposes students to a variety of perspectives (Hayes Jacobs, 1989; Vasquez, 2015). As this argument moves across curricular organizations such as the College Board's AP Central, the Coalition of Essential Schools, and even homeschooling curriculum providers such as Moving Beyond the Page, it loses its sociopolitical stakes, and instead presents a vision for the success of the individual student in an increasingly competitive battle over ever rarer spots in college and coveted jobs. It is not aimed at questioning the world, so much as making it possible for students to survive in the world and making the world survivable. For Deleuze, the rhetoric of "'achievement' skills and the mad competition to survive by acquiring them" constituted "a cognitive Darwinism of cerebral skills, working independently of cultures or locales" (Rajchman, 2000, p. 137). Deleuze saw this as a symptom of the technological 'control society' in which we find ourselves, the kind with which Greene was also concerned. In what might be an unlikely echo of Greene's argument for the arts in the quest for meaning and vitality, Deleuzian scholar John Rajchman posed the possibility for the arts to create new ways of thinking-being:

> What new *Kunst-wollen,* Deleuze seems to be asking, might we yet invent today to diagnose the maladies in this new information-achievement-cognitivism and give us the sensations—and the brains—to again breathe the fresh air of 'possibility in the aesthetic sense'? (pp. 137-138)

Greene's vision continues to inspire curricularists and educators, even as presenting the arts as an antidote to nativism, climate catastrophe, and technological control sounds hopelessly naïve. The issue is not that the basic argument is naïve, but that the ontological conception of the person and the artwork as distinct beings, instead of mutually constituted assemblages, has limited political power. The difference between Deleuze and Greene lies in their ontological assumptions of the world. Greene was a humanist: she assumed that agency is centered in the human, and that the work of art is contained in a traditional, distinct medium—the painting, the piece of music, the novel. Deleuze was asking, instead, about an agency distributed through the materials, bodies, forces, and space-time of the artwork and locates the possibility for change not only in cognitive reflection and questioning, but also in sensation and a distributed capacity to act.

This reconceptualization of agency, being, and knowledge can make a critical political difference: so that, as Crean et al. (2019) suggested, the mind and body might think differently. Here—and the arts proffer imaginings of those shifts in curricula's forms—"the questions of how to teach and what to teach are not already legislated" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 97), which makes, as Greene (1977) hinted, a more unruly study both desirable and "difficult to achieve" (p. 123). Such projects prompt more questions: How do we tell curricular stories that do not "assume we have a prior knowledge and understanding of pedagogy?" (Springgay, 2016, p. 71), but instead ask: "What if knowledge were not assumed to have a form already? What if we didn't yet know what needed to be taught, let alone questioned?" (Manning, 2016). Instead of assuming that the story has any beginning or end in which curriculum has done its job "to save us or perfect us (or to damn or corrupt us)," how do we listen for and make stories about "pedagogical [curricular]

assemblages [that] set out to complicate things" (Ellsworth, 2005)? Curriculum scholars—such as Walter Gershon (2017) in his work on sound curriculum and methodologies—do bring political commitments to bear on different forms or modalities in curriculum, but few consider what this does to curriculum's field, objects, and attachments, or how curriculum becomes and does something differently through these forms.

Speculative Middles, Minor Inquiry, and Research-Creation at a Curriculum Lab

I want to make more sense of aesthetic-pedagogical projects such as */Mirror/Echo/Tilt*; however, rather than pin down and fix their meanings with words—to say surely '*this* is what it was about'—my aim is to render the immanence of the event in a way that keeps open for the reader the kinds of meanings that could have been made. The methodology for this study becomes as much about working against the allure of the known—of what you *can* put your finger on—and toward the stuttering of trying to think-make-do curriculum differently—of what you *cannot* quite put your finger on.

This brings me to the (ever and insistently unstable) possibilities presented by post-qualitative research and methodologies in an already lively and contested literature oriented around affect's relationality and inherent resistance to representation (see, for example, Fox & Alldred, 2015; Lather, 2016; MacLure, 2013a; Niccolini & Lesko, 2018; St. Pierre, 2017; St. Pierre et al., 2016; Strom et al., 2018). St. Pierre et al. (2016) suggested that the methodological orientation of "heightened curiosity and accompanying experimentation" follows from the ethical imperative to imagine ways of living and being differently (p. 102). Methods guided by heightened curiosity and accompanying experimentation might take any number of forms—they are emergent and generative: "not completely in our control and must be constantly re-thought and re-claimed in each specificity" (p. 105). Influenced by others who do not do away with

methods in the post-qualitative churn but incite method to "go beyond proceduralism" (Springgay & Truman, 2018), I turn to speculative middles (Springgay & Truman, 2018), minor inquiry (Mazzei, 2017), and research-creation (Manning, 2016). Springgay and Truman (2018) used the term "speculative middle" to describe an event's emergent force, "a thrust, a future provocation for thinking-making-doing" (p. 207). Mazzei (2017) developed a method of minor inquiry to let the force of theory enter into the research assemblage, informed by Deleuze's conditions for a minor literature: deterritorialization, political immediacy, and collectivity (p. 676). For Loveless (2019), Truman and Springgay (2015), and Manning (2016), research-creation is a methodology that allows for experimentation with thinking in and through different disciplines and modalities, which bears on pedagogical concerns.

Finally, the notion that I, as a reflexive subject, pre-exist the research, set out to gather data that are out there in another being or body, and represent findings that might be transferable to similar cases flies out the window. Instead, a research assemblage is set in motion by this study—consisting of myself, the theories and concepts mobilizing this study, research techniques, other human and nonhuman participants in the event, its reverberations, and response-abilities (Fox & Alldred, 2015). As Loveless (2019) reminded us, methods and objects, or forms and stories, make us as much as we make them (p. 92).

This study took place a lab for experimentation with curriculum theory and design, at a university in the Northeast of the United States. The Lab aims to think differently about what curriculum could be and what it can do; its participants consist of students, alumni, and faculty affiliated with the Graduate School of Education. I also worked at this Lab through a research assistant position at the university. My own participation and facilitation, albeit enmeshed in the desires of participants, the constraints and affordances of the Coronavirus pandemic, and the

unanticipated directions of the collective mind, made this a form of self-study (Braidotti, 2018; Strom et al., 2018). The Lab explores arts-based events of social and pedagogical interest. For example, the Lab visited */Mirror/Echo/Tilt* by Crean et al. in the summer of 2019, as I was developing this study. At these and future curriculum meet-ups, methods such as sketching, listing, reading, and making might be used to attune to the minor gesture of the event-as-curriculum and its propositions for future thinking-making-doing. Those propositions rippled through the Lab's weekly meetings which, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, took place on Zoom. In addition to these weekly meetings, I originally planned to lead curriculum design workshops influenced by the propositions emerging from those events and meetings; instead, a subgroup of participants voiced a desire to design curriculum together. Four Lab members and I met weekly for 6 months and produced a curriculum based on our experiences at the Lab; this research-creational design exceeded my original plans. While mapping is often taken up as the primary metaphor for these deterritorializations of thought, I used marbling as a method of minor inquiry and analysis, and material practice, to consider what other forms curriculum might take. As I experimented with different styles of writing data and drawing the reader into curricular atmospheres and events, I created a composite second-person figure from the participants' and my own experiences While the research and analysis happened within these events, weekly meetings, and design process, continued reading, writing, and returns to the digital and physical ephemera generated from the events allowed me to continue thinking through curricular entanglements and reverberations.

Artful Practices for Curriculum Theory and Design

Most mornings, I walk past a series of panels bookended by the quotes: "Whose bodies have to justify their existence?" and (as a refrain from the penultimate panel) "a chance to be

soft." They are part of an installation by the NYC Commission on Human Rights' Public Artist-in-Residence Tatyana Fazlalizadeh, just outside my local subway station in Harlem. As part of a broader project called *Stop Telling Women to Smile,* distributed across public art in several states, social media, and book forms, Fazlalizadeh created postcards with prompts inviting responses from people who identify as women, girls, queer, femme, and Black about their experiences with street harassment and racism. This resulted in an installation with iterations across the boroughs displaying portraits of participants and some of those responses. The installation at the subway stop near me consists of six large panels, like tall sails on the sidewalk, which often support bodies that lean against them. On the north face of the panels are portraits of women rendered with the soft chiaroscuro of charcoal swept along its side. The south face of the panels include those quotations, stark white sans-serif font against a black background. On the way to the grocery store or subway, I sometimes stand and read them. I wonder if these selections came from someone who participated at the nearest postcard pop-up at the Laundromat Project, a few blocks north, on 127th St. I wonder how the folks around me might respond, how I might respond as a woman who has experienced street harassment, and how I have been complicit in and changed by these experiences of racism as a White woman. I wonder who, upon walking by and encountering the portraits, received this art as reparative. I wonder who needs to encounter these words and is open to reading them and who needs to encounter these words but forecloses themselves to this form. I wonder for whom these signs have dissolved into the texture of the urban landscape, no longer so distinct as to be noticeable. Entering into the intimacy of their words, I am intensely aware of the other bodies around me, moving in a blur toward the subway station, waiting at the bus stop, or congregating and conversing outside the grocery store and

sidewalk produce stand: a curricular contact zone vibrating with a more-than-human, *thinkingfeeling* sort of knowledge.

Stop Telling Women to Smile could be taken as new genre public art or social practice art; the categorical label is less important to me than approaching it as an example of "artful practices" which "make apparent, in the way they come to a problem, that knowledge at its core is collective" (Manning, 2016, p. 13). The sail-like panels anchored to the sidewalk might be the artful practice, but so was the event of collecting postcard responses at the Laundromat, as well as the conversation happening at the bus stop next to the installation. As Manning (2016) defined them, "artful … practices that think multiply are many: they can be activist practices, environmental practices, social practices. They can involve child-rearing, social work, teaching, playing. They can take place on a park bench, in the city, in the classroom, in the kitchen" (p. 15). *Stop Telling Women to Smile*—happening in different modalities as workshops at art schools, readings in bookstores, and street installations that bear witness to scenes of everyday life—is distributed across practices that think multiply. It is a research-creational object, drawing together ethnography, art, social activism, and public pedagogy, and gestures toward what it might mean to "think in the register of the hyphen, of the differential, in the complex field of study opened up by the undercommons" (p. 13). Like */Mirror/Echo/Tilt, Stop Telling Women to Smile* could be taken as an instantiation of the undercommons—a site of study, emergent collectivity beyond institutionalized learning—which distributes the capacity to think multiply and the political potential of study across bodies, spaces, times, and materials (Harney & Moten, 2013). What does it do to consider such artful practices which seem clearly allied to study and pedagogy curricular? How might curriculum think multiply? Does the undercommons' mode of study cause curriculum (studies) to become more capacious, or collapse?

Chapter 2

CURRICULUM: A CAPACIOUS CONCEPT

Curriculum theorists have long understood that curriculum is not only a formal set of content and skills, but also myriad ways of knowing or *"doing"* at the porous boundaries of self and society (Niccolini et al., 2019, p. 159). These less orderly forms of curriculum are described as enacted, informal (Jackson, 1968) or hidden (Apple, 1971), and null (Eisner, 1985b), and are deeply relational (Grumet, 1988). Meanwhile, research on public pedagogies points to the way teaching and learning happen in out-of-school spaces such as pop culture, media, and museums (Ellsworth, 2005; Friedrich et al., 2021; Leander et al., 2010; Sandlin et al., 2011). Parallel to and neglected by this canon, female, indigenous and African American scholars and public intellectuals have persistently recognized the value of learning outside the formal institutions of the state, and critiqued the ideological function of formal, informal, null, and public curriculum projects in the service of a White supremacy and settler colonialism (Bernardin, 1997; Cooper, 1892; Williams, 2007; Zitkala-Ša, (1985 [1921]). Others theorize study: a fugitive and collective course without determined ends, a practice of refusal to the call to order of learning sanctioned by a state seeped in the annihilative logic of advanced capitalism (Harney & Moten, 2013; Lewis, 2014; Manning, 2016). Each of these perspectives push and prod the field toward a "cultural studies of education" (Pinar, 2004, p. 19), with attendant self-reflexive movements and moments of reckoning (Malewski, 2009). In such a field, a curriculum scholar's object flickers and slips out of grasp (Baker, 2009, p. ix). Even as the field engages in its own contortions, there is still the pressing "nightmare that is the present" (Pinar, 2004), with formal curriculum both caught in the crosshairs of and complicit in virulent racism, sexism, heteronormativity, and

settler colonialism that make schools "assemblages of violence" (Wozolek, 2020). The question facing us then is:

> How might curriculum theorists…approach curriculum as a hopeful doing that reanimates bodies, spaces, and "things": a doing that opens us up to the current moment, with all its horror and joy, while acknowledging that the current is always "on the go" (Bennett 2010), rife for experimentation and surprise? (Niccolini et al., 2019, p. 170)

To think about what it means to do and participate in curriculum so broadly conceived, I assembled literature on affective atmospheres, contact zones, ethologies, and pathologies. These brought me to aesthetics and sensation: modes of attuning to and participating in those curricular contact zones. Finally, I sketched the consequences of this framework for thinking about temporality, subjectivity, and design in curriculum studies.

Affects, Materials, and Bodies

In this expanded field of curriculum, Elizabeth Ellsworth's (2005) *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy* first brought together for me how places, media, and architecture make a pedagogical *address* that affects a human body, moving it into an experience of learning. Ellsworth drew on psychoanalysis (Winnicott, 1989) and Deleuzean philosophy and aesthetics (Grosz & Eisenman, 2001; Massumi, 2002; Rajchman, 2000) in ways that bear the traces of psychoanalytic and phenomenological curriculum studies toward the end of the 20th century (Britzman, 1998; Pinar 1994 [1975]), while anticipating affect, new materialist, and posthumanist theories of curriculum that have burgeoned since her publication (Dernikos et al., 2020; Friedrich et al., 2021; Snaza et al., 2016). Speaking of participatory theater, affective architecture, and interactive media, Ellsworth described pedagogy as a matter of

> the artful or banal orchestrations…of forces, sensations, stories, invitations, habits, media, time, space, ideas, language, objects, images, and sounds intended, precisely, to move the materiality of minds/brains and bodies into relation with other material elements of our world. (p. 24)

While the metaphor of orchestration suggests an Oz-like designer behind the curtain, Ellsworth defined pedagogical volition, or the will to teach, not as a property of an individual subject but as immanent to the assemblage of forces and things constituting the learning self and its milieu (pp. 27-28) and emphasized that the learning self does not precede the event. This framing of pedagogical volition immanent to an assemblage of various forces, bodies, and materials also resonates with Bennett's (2010) "theory of distributive agency, [which] … does not posit a subject as the root cause of an effect" (p. 31). Bennett called this agentic capacity of all things and federations of actants, which produces effects in interaction with other bodies, *thing-power* (p. 19). Thing-power vibrates, pulses, swarms, swerves, and swoops. Utterly indifferent to human intentions and wills, this lively world of vibrant matter intra-acts with the human mind and body. Karen Barad (2003) elaborated on how practices of knowing cannot be separated from matters of being, a premise key to much of a body of scholarship working out its implications under the broad and varied umbrella of new materialisms:

> Practices of knowing and being are not isolatable, but rather they are mutually implicated. We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because "we" are of the world. We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse. Onto-epistemology—the study of practices of knowing in being—is probably a better way to think about the kind of understandings that are needed to come to terms with how specific intra-actions matter. (p. 829)

With relevance for approaching curriculum as something already in the world rather than produced and overlaid on the world, the insights of particle physics challenge Newtonian notions of singular causes and agents underlying traditional humanist scholarship. Barad urged us instead to grasp the ethical consequences of the entanglement of our relations with matter and practices of being in intra-action with the world. Boundaries are porous in this mangle of forces,

sensations, habits, time, objects, images, and bodies that compose curriculum (Haraway, 2016; Malabou, 2009; Pickering, 2010).

In such an assemblage, this experience of curriculum is as much felt or sensed as it is cognitive and conscious: a "thinking-feeling," as Massumi (2015) would put it, or a "structure of feeling" that thinks, in Raymond Williams's (1977) terms (Niccolini et al., 2019, p. 162). The influence of the psychoanalytic inheritance in Ellsworth's scholarship percolates through Sedgwick's (2003) "touching feeling" and Berlant's (2011) "affective intelligence"; both also wrote about how the embodied, sensational experience of teaching contributes to their theorization of affect (Berlant, 1997, 2020; Sedgwick, 2003). Affect is understood as an impersonal force and intensity: "an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage (and the duration of passage) of forces or intensities" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 1). Affect disrupts assumptions about teaching and learning as discrete, linear, rational processes immune to configurations of space, bodies, and stories or genres about students, teachers, education, and schooling (Dernikos et al., 2020). While distinct from emotions, affects coagulate into "a cluster of promises," "attachments," and "public feelings" that move bodies in particular ways, for better or worse (Berlant, 2011; Cvetkovich, 2012; Stewart, 2007). Stewart (2007) wrote that "ordinary affects are public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but they're also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of" (pp. 1-2). While affect is impersonal and autonomous, it is still experienced in individual and social bodies, as demonstrated by curriculum theorists who trace the movement of hope and violence (Wozolek, 2020), failure and success (McCall, 2019), recklessness (Niccolini, 2016), jumpiness (Lesko et al., 2010), stuckness (Colmenares, 2018), resistance (Airton, 2020), and bewilderment (Snaza, 2013, 2020) through curricular assemblages.

Curricular Atmospheres and Contact Zones

The vitality of matter in the notion of *thing-power* challenges "everyday encounters with what greet us as stable bodies" in schools (Bennett, 2010, p. 57). For example, Bennett described a schoolhouse as a

> mobile configuration of people, insects, odors, ink, electrical flows, air currents, caffeine, tables, chairs, fluids, and sounds [whose thing-power or pedagogical force] might at one time consist in the mild and ephemeral effluence of good vibes, and at another in a more dramatic force capable of engendering a philosophical or political movement, as it did… in the Islamist schools in Pakistan in the late twentieth century. (p. 35)

Bennett's schoolhouse description chimes with Snaza's (2019) approach to literacy as an ethology: "where intrahuman politics of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geography shape the conditions of emergence for events that animate subjects and the political relations with which they are entangled" (p. 4). Within this ethology, a particular literacy situation might be composed of the table you sit at, or bed you flop on, or subway seat as you squeeze between other bodies while trying not to lose your place or miss your stop. There is ambient sound, whether Brian Eno or the raucous activity of peers in a residence hall; and smells, whether patchouli incense or the trash outside; and materials, whether paper or screens and the mining of resources and transnational production chains that went into their existence (p. 111). These are "ordinary affects … an animate circuit that conducts force and maps connections, routes, and disjunctures" (Stewart, 2007, p. 3). Dernikos et al. (2020) demonstrated how even formal literacy scenes—an elementary reading leveling system, for example—are "an assemblage of *sounds* (e.g., Sh!), *affects* (e.g., Dylan's willfulness), *texts* (e.g., *Biscuit*), *bod- ies* (e.g., Dylan's Black, male body), *spaces* (e.g., Dylan's table is near Ms. Rizzo's physical body), and *sociopolitical forces* (e.g., meritocratic dis-courses and national panics about literacy)" (p. 165). Stewart called this a contact zone, "where the overdetermination of circulations, events, conditions, technologies, and

flows of power literally take place" (p. 3). Given the stakes for what these materialities make possible, or impossible, Bennett (2010) argued that such affective contact zones at least "call for our attentiveness" (p. ix). Maggie MacLure used the concept of a manifold to research such spaces, where local and global materialities converge to produce a specific sense-making situation (The Manifold Laboratory, 2020).

These conglomerations of materials, sensations, bodies, spaces, and animacies contribute to the "felt…atmosphere" of a room (Brennan, 2004, p. 1). The concept of an affective atmosphere offers a way of analyzing a shared sense of being in time and space, as feelings move between bodies and materials (Berlant, 2011, p. 15): the rising hum of panic in grocery stores as their shelves empty; the collective exhaustion and frustration at yet another school closing, one's heart rate quickening in anticipation of a heated school board meeting. Not everyone experiences their ordinary, or crisis, in the same way, but affect offers a way of analyzing how individual sensations coalesce into a shared sensorium, and how public feelings hit particular bodies. Seigworth and Gregg (2010) offered the concept of an "inventory of shimmers," as a heuristic for the affect theorist's work in accounting for the composition of such contact zones (p. 11). They borrowed this image from Barthes, who, as Seigworth and Gregg put it, argued for

> a neutrally inflected, immanent *pathos* or "patho-logy" that would be an "inventory of shimmers, of nuances, of states, of changes (*pathè)*" as they gather into "affectivity, sensitivity, sentiment," and come to serve as "the passion for difference." (Barthes, 2005, p. 77, as cited in Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 11)

An inventory of shimmers is a study of the (human or nonhuman) body's passions, emotions, experiences, conditions, and capacities (for good or ill). Wozolek (2020) also advanced a method of pathology, drawing on the more common medical definition as a study of disease, which she restored to a study of experience or emotion (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). As a "method of tracing something in a tangle with care and attention…creating a cartography of affects," Wozolek used

the method of pathology to study the movements, potential, and interactions of happiness and violence in educational assemblages (p. 88). This assemblage involves "affects and spaces [that] are agential, multiple, and moving," with material, historical, political, and cultural implications (p. 103). Twice, Seigworth and Gregg (2010) described an affective atmosphere or, in their terms, "bloom-space," as "where the patho-logy of a body meets the pedagogy of an affective world" (p. 12). Pedagogy is located outside the body, in this bloom-space, colliding with the body's capacities to affect or be affected by that curriculum.

I join Seigworth and Gregg (2010), Snaza (2019), Wozolek (2020), and others in "approach[ing] the assemblage itself as inherently pedagogical" (Wozolek, 2020, p. 122), which is destabilizing for curriculum designers who assume the human is the locus of agency, intentionality, and knowledge in their work. Curricular categories inherited from the Reconceptualists—formal, enacted, informal, null—fall short of the challenge of designing for and in a curricular assemblage, where those boundaries blur together and curriculum emerges in unanticipated ways. Call it an assemblage (Wozolek, 2020), atmosphere (Berlant, 2011; Brennan, 2004), bloom-space (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010), contact zone (Stewart, 2007), ethology (Snaza, 2019), manifold (MacLure, 2020), or mesh (Springgay & Truman, 2017): curriculum exists before, beyond, between, and beside human bodies (Freeman, 2019; Sedgwick, 2003; Seigworth & Gregg, 2010).

Aesthetic and the Sensational Pedagogies

My efforts to attend the minor forces within a curricular assemblage, feel the contours of a 'bloom-space' or contact zone and trace the movements within a mesh or mangle brought me to theories of aesthetics and sensation, as they intersect with affect, new materialist, and posthumanist thought. For example, Highmore (2010) defined aesthetics as "the way the sensual

world greets the sensate body, and with the affective forces that are generated in such meetings" (p. 121), and Berlant (2012) approached aesthetics as "the place where we rehabituate our sensorium by taking in new material and becoming more refined in relation to it" (p. 12). Drawing on Deleuze and Manning, Springgay (2011) approached art as an affective connection to the world, a way of "responding and resonating with matter around us," particularly in the politics of difference (p. 653). Aesthetics and sensations offer tools for attuning to curricular contact zones and pedagogical possibilities immanent to those zones.

I became interested in how affect theorists consistently frame aesthetics and sensations as pedagogical and political (even Berlant's style of writing about affect, argued Seigworth [2012, p. 347], is aesthetic-pedagogic). Highmore (2010) referred to "pedagogy [as in] the training of the senses, of affect, of the orchestration of aesthetic life" (p. 134). That also means our current affective horizons are the result of the accumulation of our sensory, aesthetic pedagogical experiences, and so "an affective counter-pedagogy: would need to be "dedicated to opening up the affective, sensorial tuning and retuning of the social body—…it would need to be exorbitant. But it would also need to reverberate at the level of the everyday" (Highmore, 2010, p. 136). When the everyday is not merely an ordinary present but a historical present, that affective, sensorial retuning is "the education of embodied intuition" (Berlant, 2011, p. 52). Berlant saw this affective education happening through aesthetic genres; likewise, Seigworth and Gregg (2010) argued that the aesthetic expression of affect functions as "generative, pedagogic nudge aimed toward a body's becoming an ever more worldly sensitive interface, toward a style of being present to the struggles of our time" (p. 12). Aesthetics are a style of being in and becoming with the world, in genres and forms that barely register consciously, until they rub against someone else's style or until they encounter turbulence in the contact zones of their

changing world. The sensory interface of the body is a tool for attuning to these affective contact zones. Apparently minor, I argue that these aesthetic and sensory modes of sense-making—a pedagogy of *thinkingfeeling*—are still worthy of curricular attention.

Aesthetics

Although there is much disagreement, confusion, and ambiguity around what aesthetics *is* (Matthews & McWhirter, 2003), there is a shared sense of hope for what aesthetics might *do.* It might suspend a subject in time and in relation to everyday life, allowing for critical reflection and judgment (Dewey, 1934); it might spark "wide-awakeness" (Greene, 1977) or shake us from states of "somnabulance" (Berlant, 2011); it might provoke a "redistribution of the sensible" (Rancière, 2006) or function as a catalyst for "envisioning alternative possibilities to the international modern pathos of political hegemony, fundamentalist religious intolerance, economic caste systems, worker displacement, cultural annihilation, environmental degradation, and racial, gender, sexual, socioeconomic, and ethnic oppression" (Slattery, 2016, p. 652). These hopes seem to suggest that what aesthetics might be able to *do* is, somehow, renew our commitment to social justice (Greene, 2000; Scarry, 1999; Slattery, 2016); resist the epistemic violence of canonical histories (Hendry, 2011); and support reparative readings of those histories (Sedgwick, 2003).

If we hope aesthetics might do these things (or even work against these aims), we also have to come to some understanding of what aesthetics *is.* From Baumgarten to Burke and Kant during the Enlightenment, aesthetics has come to mean, in the modern West, a universal system of taste and judgment that distinguished between Art and that which was not art (Kelly, 2014). This universalizing, Western notion of aesthetics and the senses continually omits discussions of power and social difference (Gershon, 2011, p. 7). Re-narrating this history, Highmore (2010)

pointed out that “aesthetics, in its initial impetus, is primarily concerned with material experiences, with the way the sensual world greets the sensate body, and with the affective forces that are generated in such meetings”; at its core, aesthetics is concerned with “the utter entanglements of all of these elements [materials, senses, affect]” (p. 121). Highmore instead turned to Georg Simmel, Jacques Rancière, and John Dewey to make aesthetics “work as an umbrella term for heuristic inquiry into affect and its interlacing of sense perception and bodily dispensation” (p. 123). This effort echoed scholarship that reclaims aesthetics from its exile from critical theory and post-structural scholarship, with the understanding that aesthetic judgments or matters of taste are never universal or neutral but rather inherently political, and that the aesthetic is a key dimension of postmodern subjectivity and social life (Eagleton, 1990; hooks, 1995, Matthews & McWhirter, 2003; Rancière, 2006). These studies take up Dewey’s (1934) “problem of recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living” (p. 10). For Dewey, this meant finding beauty, pleasure, and sublime in the everyday. But, it is not difficult to conjure counter-examples of aesthetic expressions of fascism, capitalism, and war (Adorno, 1997 [1970]; Benjamin, 2008 [1936]; Groys, 2008); or even participatory art pieces that produce something more akin to an “artificial hell” than the intended utopia (Bishop, 2012).

Curriculum theorists have turned toward aesthetic experiences as educative rather than evaluative, with Dewey’s (1934) “art as experience” canonical to this approach. Curriculum theorist Patrick Slattery (2003, p. 661) drew on the work of philosopher Susanne Langer, a student of Alfred North Whitehead in the 1920s, who explored the cognitive and social significance of emotions and aesthetic experiences. Similarly drawing on Whitehead, Eisner (1985a) argued that aesthetic education is critical to an appreciation of form, referring as the qualities of a completed creation, the process of creation, and satisfaction in the act of creation,

across any discipline or human endeavor. The curricular import of aesthetics has been developed extensively by Greene (2000), who also argued that if one attends to ordinary experiences as aesthetic experiences, the ordinary can spark wonder, joy, and an expanded social imagination as much as formal aesthetic experiences. Her influence on the work of Blumenfeld-Jones (1997), Irwin (2003), Slattery (2003, 2016), Gershon (2017), and so many more is evident in their efforts to open up space for aesthetic encounters in the curriculum. It feels good to imagine teaching through aesthetic experiences that "can nurture the growth of persons who will reach out to one another as they seek clearings in their experience and try to be more ardently in the world" (Greene, 2000, p. 131). However, 'being more ardently in the world' isn't always accompanied by positive affects. Ellsworth (2002), Friedrich (2011), and Lewis (2006), for instance, demonstrated how aesthetic experiences circulate in curriculum involving complex histories, national memories, and political resistance.

Rancière's (2006) conception of aesthetics as "the distribution of the sensible" takes the understanding of aesthetics as the socially conditioned system of perception, already entangled in power and politics, as a narrower band of aesthetics as a horizon of political possibility for participating in and creating the world: what can be said, felt, heard, made. Canclini's (2014) thesis on aesthetics as imminence captures the way in which aesthetics works on the horizon of the distribution of the sensible that is taken for granted by the dominant system of reason. Aesthetics, for Canclini, hovers on the threshold of what might be, and is exemplified in the art of Latin American artists who activate a spatial, social philosophy through their works. This quality of imminence, or indeterminacy, converges with anti-oppression and liberationist pedagogies. According to Freire (1970), a pedagogy that resists oppression draws on the already existing knowledge of the learners, deepens their critical consciousness, and "affirms men and

women as beings in the process of becoming—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and within a likewise unfinished reality” (p. 65). The alternative to “beings in the process of becoming” is beings who are fixed, who then have been denied the ability to change themselves or their circumstances. bell hooks (1995) wrote that this denial of the process of becoming concretizes the act of oppression: “If one could make a people lose touch with their capacity to create, lose sight of their will and their power to make art, then the work of subjugation, of colonization, is complete” (p. xv). Ahmed (2010b) posited anaesthetics as a loss of the capacity or will to be affected by anything (pp. 206-207).

Knowledge involved in the making of a different world enters into the space of thinking about how the world could be—a deeply ethical and aesthetic issue for Elizabeth Grosz (2017). Developing a theory of the incorporeal, Grosz pointed to “ethics and aesthetics [as] the ways in which we can intensify and live in accordance with what of the sense-laden excesses of materiality—those that constitute events—we can harness” (p. 157). In other words, ethics and aesthetics might offer more than a discursive framework for representing what we have come to know through sensational learning events. That is *not*, Ellsworth (2005) emphasized, that “aesthetic experience…will *teach* us this different species of knowledge,” but it may offer a vernacular for experiencing and attempting to articulate other ways of knowing (p. 161). Drawing on Guattari’s ethico-aesthetics (1995) and Deleuzian philosophy influencing Ellsworth and Grosz, Springgay (2011) considered “such creative productive encounters as an ‘ethicoaesthetics’: the concepts we form about the world when we experience bodies coming together” (p. 653). Ethicoaesthetics, in other words, helps us to recognize the political (personal and social) consequences of bodies, relations, and sensations.

Dewey's and Greene's efforts to conceptualize an aesthetics of everyday experience converge with Berlant's, Massumi's, and Stewart's turn to aesthetics as the register of affect's forces, intensities, and movements. For Berlant (2011), the "aesthetic embeddedness in the affectivity of the present" is related to "the centrality of everyday life to the conceptualizations of the ordinary" (p. 67). Aesthetics communicates something about how we relate to the material, sensual world: "how we pace and space our encounters with things, how we manage the too closeness of the world and also the desire to have an impact on it that has some relation to its impact on us" (p. 12). The aesthetic transmission of affect opens ways of understanding the everyday that are not over-determined by structural theories about the reproduction of social systems and individual agency or subjectivity. The questions become about people have made sense of and managed living in the world through "social and aesthetic technologies [of belonging, in the case of compassion]" (Berlant, 2004, p. 5). These aesthetic technologies and transmissions of affect (even a loss of capacity to affect) provide a key link between affect, politics, and subjectivity (Berlant, 2004).

Even as artists and curriculum theorists push aesthetics and pedagogy into the realm of the ordinary and everyday, retaining a formal definition of the work of art as a bounded object and aesthetics as a philosophical framework for understanding that artwork can be useful for thinking about formal curriculum. Stephen Best (2018) wondered what it means to "think like a work of art"; he claimed that artwork, independent of artistic intention but entangled in the material and historical contexts of its production and circulation, performs critical thought and makes innovative philosophical moves. Like Best, I do return to discrete works of art and ask how they might *think curricularly*, offering processes and forms for curriculum theory and design. I join other bodies of theorists and researchers, such as Feel Tank, Pedagogical Impulse,

SenseLab, and TheManifoldLab, in making philosophical and curricular analyses of works of art with the hope that they might shed some light on other ways of relating to the political (which is also to say, the epistemological, the ethical). The types of artworks these labs, and myself, are interested in are associated with genres of participatory, socially engaged, or social practice art and relational aesthetics.[1] For example, Feel Tank Chicago studies political emotions through performance art and public interventions. In 2007, the activists and artists, political and affect theorists, staged *Pathogeographies: Or Other People's Baggage,* to explore the movement of minor political feelings through space. *Pathogeographies* involved the Fifth Annual International Parade of the Politically Depressed, inspired by Robert Motherwell, and variations on the Institute for Infinitely Small Things' 'Unmarked Packages,' which explored feelings of suspicion and anxiety through the movement of an unmarked suitcase in public space (Zorach, 2008). Describing similar projects in the genre of relational or social aesthetics, Canclini (2014) urged us to "observe their conceptual and formal mechanisms, which change the way questions can be made visible" (p. 28). As Best argued, such works of art do not merely illustrate political and philosophical ideas, but they do the work of philosophical and political thought.

It is this understanding of aesthetics as not only a manifestation of affect's movements and intensities but also a mode of thinking (or *thinkingfeeling*), that compelled artist and philosopher Erin Manning (2016) to explore and advocate for artful practice as a site for the creation of new philosophical concepts. The artwork, art performances, and arts spaces Manning

[1] These genres of art—participatory, socially engaged, relational—are informed by feminist commitments and critical pedagogy, such as those by Tania Bruguera, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, and Suzanne Lacy. The pedagogical turns in art and the pedagogies of participatory art are closely related. See, for example, Bishop (2012), Bourriaud (2002), and Podesva (2007) for a critical discussion of participatory, relational, and pedagogical art in art theory and criticism, as well as Garoian (1999) and Irwin and O'Donoghue (2012) for examples of this conversation from the perspective of (art) education. The pedagogy of participatory art also intersects with studies of public pedagogy (Sandlin et al., 2010) and research-creation (Loveless, 2019; Manning, 2016; Truman & Springgay, 2015).

took up are typically social and spatial, and the principles of relational aesthetics led Manning to argue that the "artful practices" operative in such works are not unique to the Arts, but "can be activist practices, environmental practices, social practices" (p. 13). "Artful practices," Manning explained, "honor complex forms of knowing and are collective not because they are operated upon by several people, but because they make apparent, in the way they come to a problem, that knowledge at its core is collective" (p. 13). Such practices, Manning continues, involve examples close to common-sense understandings of education—"child-rearing, social work, teaching, playing"—as well as places that curriculum theorists understand as pedagogical sites—"on a park bench, in the city, in the classroom, in the kitchen"—and are allied to "the complex field of study opened up by the undercommons" (p. 13). Artful practice is the "aesthetic yield" of art. As Manning put it, "artfulness…depends on the human getting out of the way" (p. 62). Snaza (2019) reminded us of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) understanding of art, as a plane of thought prior to the human and "a question of territory" (p. 89); art is a matter of "contact among a range of animacies" or more-than-human materials, affects, and meetings among bodies. In this contact zone or ethology, artful practices are about generating minor gestures: collective movements of deterritorialization that yield different approaches to knowledge, existence, and politics (p. 198).

Sound

When I set out to explore participatory, transdisciplinary "artful practices," I did not anticipate, to my ocular-centric surprise, that sound and touch would be so central to these ways of knowing. As the pandemic continued, sound art and sound walks proliferated. They offered safer ways of experiencing art and learning at a distance from others, outside or at home. The significance of sound attuned me to how sound had already been a part of the field of study, as I participated in workshops led by the sound activist group UltraRED (Berlant, 2011, pp. 245-248)

and artist Todd Shalom, who creates in the medium of participatory walks (Shalom, 2019). These sound events had already begun to shape my understandings of relational aesthetics and curricular contact zones.

It is impossible to talk about sound in relation to curriculum without a debt to the scholarship of Walter Gershon (2017), who in turn acknowledged the significance of the insights of W.E.B. Du Bois, Anna Julia Cooper, and Ted Aoki into the relationship between sound and ways of knowing and being in the world. While much scholarship on sound and curriculum focuses on music education, or using strategies of music making (improvisation) as metaphors for curriculum and pedagogy, or on music as a text (song lyrics, etc.) related to class content, Gershon (2017) emphasized the constant physical and affective presence of sound:

> No matter where you are or what you're doing, you're gaining sonic information. And, regardless of what those sounds mean or their impact on your person, just as you are but a small part of the deep matrix of sonority, you are at once a node in sound ecologies and a contributor to these ever-emergent, undulating vibrations, always a medium and a media. (p. 26)

The onto-epistemological entanglement of sound and the human subject means that sound has always been part of how we know the world. This can be biological, as when tinnitus or loss of hearing induced by very loud noises affects one's orientation to people and space. It is sometimes preconscious, or affective: our body reacts before our mind thinks when a sudden sound startles us. But our interpretation of sounds as dangerous or soothing, as appropriate or not, as taken-for-granted 'background' or a noteworthy shift in the atmosphere of a room, is socio-culturally conditioned.

Brandon LaBelle (2015) also defined sound as inherently spatial and social, produced from vibrations moving through space, bounding off bodies and the built and natural environment, and moving through and beyond bodies (the bass of a car passing on the street that

causes my writing desk to vibrate; the rumble of a subway that rattles the classroom's windows). For LaBelle, "the sonorous world always presses in, adding extra intensities by which we locate ourselves" (p. xiii). LaBelle traced the development of sound art to performance and installation art in the 1960s and 1970s: art that sought to push the boundaries (within the Western canon) of site, participation, duration. While LaBelle did distinguish sound art from music—the use of sound as an artistic medium—he largely focused on the Western categories of art and sound, turning to John Cage's experimental music as the seminal source of sound art (p. xiv). Sound art raises the question of whether all background noise is aesthetic—"designating not so much what goes unnoticed, but what in a sense cannot be ignored. And how the background often contains the very substance by which the foreground gains significance" (p. xx). Background noise: the sounds of the crowd in a public space; of noise pollution or organic matter in a given environment; of bodies and desks and devices in a classroom. LaBelle is particularly interested in works like John Cage's 4'33" performance—both in a concert hall and in a Boston commons—that frame background noise as aesthetic.

An aesthetic framing is also an ethical framing, and the way those 'extra intensities' of the sonorous world press in are not equally received by all human listeners. Some have tried to escape these intensities, and Marc Hagood (2019) drew critical attention to some of those methods for shutting out unwanted sounds. Hagood brought these arguments around sonic difference to sound technologies specifically designed to alter the sonic experience of the individual user such as white noise machines, noise-canceling headphones, 'hearables,' and other technologies that enable users to resist the affective power of their aural environment. Hagood argued that in amplifying our ability to remove unwanted noise from our environment, these

"orphic media" enable a "a suppression of difference that actually makes us more compliant as subjects of the control society we inhabit" (p. 6).

Many of these arguments center around who has the right to hear (or not) and to be heard. Robinson (2020) instead asked: who has the right to listen? Robinson named the "settler colonial forms of perception" that violently mishear Indigenous sounds, from the rejection of song as legal text to assimilation of Indigenous musicians into the logic of Western music performance, "hungry listening" (pp. 2-3). Drawing on Indigenous and critical affect studies, Robinson challenged the assumptions of unidirectional knowledge sharing and dyadic listener- and listened-to-subject relationships in the Western episteme. Robinson called for an ethics responsibility not only to the human subjects producing sound but also to the subjectivity of *sound itself* and its nonhuman bodies producing and circulating sound. By refusing 'hungry listeners' access to sonic content and ability to extract or instrumentalize Indigenous sounds, Robinson strove to create a space for Indigenous sensory sovereignty.

Drawing on a similar archive of White encounters to non-White sounds, Jennifer Stoever (2016) argued that the very interpretation of sonic vibrations as good or bad—"*music*/noise… *word*/sound, *sense*/nonsense…*cultivated*/raw, *controlled*/excessive…*proper*/improper, *assimilable*/foreign, *listener*/performer…*quiet*/loud, *smooth*/rough…, and *cold*/emotional"—reproduces Whiteness (p. 13). Stoever called this social valuation of noise "the sonic color line," in homage to W.E.B. DuBois's piercing insights. While the physical properties of sound—vibrations at different frequencies that move through the air, interact with bodies, and are picked up by the ear—are neutral, *listening*—the interpretation of sound—is socially constructed. Stoever used the term "listening ear" to describe these normative practices of interpreting sounds (p. 7). Contemporary scholars have continued these arguments, across other contexts and

categories of social difference. Marie Thompson (2017) critiqued the positioning of 'unwanted noise'—for whom? by whose standards?—as 'bad' and 'aesthetic moralism' of preferences for sounds congruent with the Western musical tradition and Whiteness. In schools, Gershon noted, such "sonic differences" come to be seen as social deficits (p. 73): schools regularly enforce quiet docility and silence in the pursuit of White norms around productivity and intelligence, while "policing joy as noise" (pp. 80-81). When social and cultural norms determine what joy "sounds" like, what "good work" sounds like, aesthetics creeps in as an exclusionary evaluative system. Gershon called for curriculum workers to assume instead that they will mishear and misinterpret sound and, therefore, approach each encounter from "doubt and uncertainty, listening deeply" (p. 196):

> Because each hearing is a mishearing and what you heard, you misheard. Try to listen again more deeply. Did you hear it again? Always already misheard. (p. 196)

Soundscapes and Soundwalks

In the 1960s and 70s, parallel to site-specific movements in art such as the Fluxus movement, and to the Reconceptualization of curriculum studies, R. Murray Schafer developed the field of acoustic ecology, with particular focus on soundwalks and soundscapes as a way of experiencing and recording acoustic ecologies (Wrightson, p. 10). At this time, this study omits a fuller review of soundwalk and soundscape research, which is salient to the examples of site-specific sonic experiences included in Chapter 4, but includes a brief overview here. Concerned about the impact an increasingly ocular-centric culture had sonic awareness, Schafer promoted increased education in listening skills and developed a variety of exercises geared toward enhancing the ability to deeply listen to and differentiate sounds. A concern with increased noise pollution in the 20th century led Schafer and colleagues, including Hildegard Westerkamp, to develop the World Soundscape Project, which has since nurtured the research and production of

soundscapes and soundwalks (McCartney, 2014). According to McCartney (2014), “soundwalks take the everyday action of walking, and everyday sounds, and bring the attention of the audience to these often ignored events, practices, and processes” (p. 215). Early soundwalks developed by the members of the WSP placed an emphasis on teaching audiences to slow down, listen to, appreciate, and analyze their acoustic environments. Soundwalks have since proliferated and taken on a variety of forms: individual listening walks, guided audio walks, shadow walks, and sound installations, with varying emphases on politics, history, environmental ecology, emotions, or artistic creation. Soundwalks place a particular emphasis on listening in conjunction with movement through a space, drawing on traditions of walking in Transcendental and Romantic aesthetics and philosophy, the urban investigations of the flaneur, and the conceptual interventions of the and Situationist and Fluxus movements. A similar history informs contemporary research on walking and curriculum, such as that produced by the WalkingLab (Springgay & Truman, 2017). Some of those site-specific sonic experiences might be better described as soundscape compositions, whereby “composers listen to the relations of people and other inhabitants of places, producing pieces which are sonic expressions of not only landscape formations and lived environments but also the daily social histories and political organization of the space” (McCartney, 2002, p. 1).

Ethical questions run across soundwalks, soundscapes, and other explorations of acoustic ecologies. These ethical issues revolve around the right to listen and record sounds, and around access to and mobility within a space (McCartney, 2014). Considerations include the power held by the composer, researcher, or narrator of a sonic experience, their status as an outsider or insider in relation to the space, and the ways the raced, classed, gendered, and abled bodies of the sound researcher-creator and of listener (which may sometimes be the same) intra-act with others

in that space. Drawing on Luce Irigaray's concept of love in an intersubjective practice of listening, Andra McCartney (20160 proposed a framework of intimate and improvisational listening in her *Soundwalk Interactions* project. Such a framework, which assumes the agency to listeners or audience members and to some extent the environment, allows McCartney to attune to the creation of unanticipated knowledge, which emerges from situated and partial perspectives of participants in a particular place and might spring from "productive confusion" that ensues from those intersubjective meetings. Reflecting on the experiences of *Soundwalk Interactions,* McCartney wrote that

> what excites [her] about intimate listening is that it is neither purely about contemplation nor about mastery—it is very much an in-between place, about touching and being touched, resonating, while realizing that that moment of touching is ephemeral and partial, ungraspably in its totality. (p. 52)

This position of the listener—one suspended between mastery and ceaseless mulling, felt and fleeting—resonates with the curriculum designer intuiting the emergence of curriculum in a swirl of affective, sensory atmospheres.

Sensory Curriculum

As aesthetics and pedagogy are frequently intertwined, so too are sensations. [2] According to Highmore (2010), "politics is a form of experiential pedagogy of constantly submitting your sensorium to new sensual worlds that sit uncomfortably within your ethos" (p. 135), as in trying different food in a school cafeteria, or the bravado of a White British man asking for the spiciest

[2] I refer more frequently to sensation because sensory studies widely acknowledge the artificial construction of the five senses in the West—there is also proprioception, synesthesia, the sense of time, among others. Panagia (2009) preferred the term *sensation* to refer to the way something registers on the body, distinct from any singular sense or perception (p. 2). While I sometimes use "sense" as other authors use the term (i.e., Freeman's "sense-methods" or Grosz's "excess of sense," noting that those authors were also referring more to a bundle of bodily sensations and perceptions than a singular 'sense') and "senses" to refer to the body's collective organs for encountering the world, I generally use "sense" to refer more to a kind of nonrepresentational, embodied understanding than one of the five distinct "senses" of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell (i.e., making sense of something).

vindaloo. Springgay (2011) explored a similar pedagogy of difference through the tastes and smells of mushrooms on Dianne Borsato's *Chinatown Foray,* arguing that there is a "viscerality to the creation, regulation, and interpretation of alterity" (p. 653). Histories of the senses have demonstrated how the sociocultural education of the sensorium—the interpretation of sensation—has produced devastating dehumanization of people of different races, genders, abilities, and classes (Fretwell, 2020; Grosvenor, 2012; Panagia, 2009). As Springgay (2011) put it, drawing on Guattari and Manning, "politics is not beyond the body; it is of the body," and so too, is pedagogy (p. 653). Gershon (2019) emphasized this quality of sensuous curriculum. While sense perception is personal, the interpretation of that sensation hangs on socio-cultural values and norms, thus it is pedagogical and political (p. xv). Similarly, Thyssen and Grosvenor (2019) argued that because the senses mediate between the self and others, they are critical for understanding the functions and consequences of "embodied enculturation." Gershon delineated "sensuous curriculum" as a particular focus for curriculum studies, to bring specific attention to this intersection of the political and pedagogical that ocular-centric and textual approaches miss (p. xiii). In a special issue of *The Senses and Society,* Thyssen and Grosvenor gathered essays which, through analyses of touch, taste, and smell, demonstrated the moralizing effects of sensory learning and construction of belonging or otherness.

In *The Politics of Aesthetics,* Rancière (2006) put forth an understanding of aesthetics "as the system of *a priori* forms determining what presents itself to sense experience," which "simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience" (p. 13). This distribution is socio-culturally habituated, or learned, and can be disrupted. Disruptions are not usually welcome. The Responsive Classroom system encourages teachers to help students make graphic charts of what the classroom "feels like," "sounds like," "looks like" when

everyone is well behaved, to avoid such disturbances (Wilson, 2012). Still, "there is hope here," Highmore (2010) argued: "social aesthetics points to the mutability and dynamism of ethos and habitus as well as their conservatism" (p. 135). As Highmore suggested, a pedagogy of the senses is crucially related to Mauss's and Bourdieu's notion of habitus: "the learned disposition of the body that allows culture to feel like nature and to be 'passed on' from body to body" (Freeman, 2019, p. 5). The "sensory interface" of the body (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010) intercepts and intra-acts with the affective, material, relational world in ways that become rhythms and repetitions (habits) and which can be interrupted. Springgay (2011) put her hope in intentional acts of sensational pedagogies, reasoning that "a reflective bodily consciousness is required to dislodge bodily habits and norms, and the construction of Otherness" (p. 653). Grosz (2017) suggested this pedagogy is less conscious and intentional, than immanent to those curricular scenes, especially involving "the irregular and unpredictable disruptions to habit and expectation" which produce an "excess of sense" (p. 157). In *The Politics of Sensation*, Daniel Panagia (2009) explored the reconfiguration of the distribution of the sensible. Drawing on Rancière, Panagia defined the "sensible" as both "'what makes sense'" and "'what can be sensed'" (p. 3). Some continuity in the distribution of the sensible enables life to go on, while moments of collapse create an opening for something else to happen.

Berlant, Freeman, and Manning explored these moments of collapse or reconfiguration to the sensible. Freeman (2019) developed a theory of "sense-methods"—the body's way of being in time and keeping time with social groups, in a manner that reconfigured normative modes of bodily movement, perception, and sensation. Sense-methods—moving in excess to norms, moving insufficiently in relation to norms, and moving out of synch with social norms—"conceptualize social formation beyond and beside the linguistic, as an embodied and affective

process" and are "for being around otherwise: perceived, felt, heard" (p. 190). While Freeman explored how minor social groups formed alternatives to their historical sensorium; Berlant and Manning considered how individuals navigate disruptions to a broadly shared sensorium—a process of sense-making they called "intuition." When things "suddenly feel off," when "a sensed perturbation of world-shaping dimensions impels recasting the projected impact of small and large gestures, noticings, impulses, moments," the recalibration of one's response to the world is a matter of "chang[ing] one's intuition about it all" and "challeng[ing] the habituated processing of affective responses to what one encounters in the world" (Berlant, 2008, p. 5). This is what Seigworth and Gregg (2010) meant when they repeatedly referred to the "patho-logy" of the body meeting the pedagogy of the affective world.

Our senses—our capacities for sense-making—know more than formal curriculum gives them credit for, while constantly immersed in the curriculum of affective, animate contact zones. But, drawing on Marxist aesthetic theory, Berlant (2012) mused:

> Our senses are not yet theoreticians because they are bound up by the role, the map, the inherited fantasy, and the hum of worker bees who fertilize materially the life we are moving through. Then again, maybe we did not really want our senses to be theoreticians because then we would see ourselves as an effect of an exchange with the world, beholden to it, useful for it, rather than sovereign at the end of the day. (p. 31)

One effect, Berlant suggested in this passage, of the body's encounter with the affects of advanced capitalism is the dulling of the senses through labor, exhaustion, pleasure, and the promise of it all getting better. But when external forces—a pandemic—cause such ruptures to the daily sensorium of life and of schools, the senses *have* to become theoreticians, enmeshed in and becoming with the world.

Sensing Time

While aesthetics offers an analytic channel for the spatial manifestation of curricular affects, sensations offer material for the temporal analysis of curricular affects. In *Cruel Optimism,* Berlant (2011) argued, “the present is perceived, first, affectively” (p. 4). This affective perception of the present is “sensed,” and those sensations give rise to “a temporal genre whose conventions emerge from the personal and public filtering of the situations and events that are happening in an extended now” (p. 4). Sensations mediate the body’s experience of time’s duration and unfolding: the ‘feeling out’ of the shape or genre of the situation. While sensations are personal (you and I may perceive a situation in our body differently, given our social positions and physiological idiosyncrasies), the body’s intra-action with and interpretation of time are not entirely individual. Rather, the body’s mediation of affect is conditioned by social belonging and situated knowledge; temporal genres, as with aesthetic genres, cohere as such through collective, accumulated experiences of form. Not only does the body interpret and shape time, Elizabeth Freeman (2019) also argued that “temporality is a nonreproductive but nevertheless somatic and material, mode of sensory receptivity that collates bodies in relations of affinities across space and…even across historical period” (p. 8). Turning to Foucault, Freeman demonstrated how the penetration of the body by time—synchronized movements in prison, school, military, and factory settings throughout the 19th century—worked as a disciplinary technology, through which the state could produce compliant populations: workers, students, soldiers, prisoners. However, these normative ways of being in time could also be subverted as a means of resistance and of organizing other forms of belonging. Freeman’s theory of “sense-methods focuses on the embodiment of a relationality that does not always refer to or result in a stable social form but instead *moves* with and against, dominant timings and times” (p. 12).

Freeman pointed to the rhythmic dance and ecstatic movements of Shaker worship, so at odds with prevailing Protestant norms of bodily comportment and emphasis on the written word; miming death that was a rejection of liberal humanism, in African American folktales and performances documented in ex-slave narratives; and the embodiment of chronic time in Stein's "Melanctha" and Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" as resistance to the national obsession with human resource and productivity. Through these rejections of the biopolitics of "chrononormativity" (p. 147), such sense-methods imagined different forms of sociality.

Curricular chrononormativities are maintained in the linear, future-oriented nature of traditional curriculum design, epitomized by frameworks such as *Understanding by Design*, which advise teachers to begin 'with the end in mind,' determine what evidence of that desired learning looks like, and then plot the series of activities that will lead learners to the intended objective (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Reconceptualist and post-reconceptualist curriculum studies challenge this narrow conception of curricular time. Maxine Greene's words, "I am who I am not yet" individuates the affective presence of the future in the *now* (Pinar, 1998, p. 1). Greene's enigmatic declaration comes nearer to a Spinozist "not yet" of affect—attunement to immanent possibilities, in the here and now—than a constant deferral of what could be (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 3). Biesta and Säfström (2011) similarly called for an "atemporal" approach to education, situated "in the tension between 'what is' and 'what is not'" (p. 541). The former "loses its interest in an 'excess' that announces something new and unforeseen," while the latter loses education to "saddl[es] education with unattainable hopes"—both, Biesta and Säfström argued, have the effect of bracketing a responsibility for freedom in the present (p. 541). This is not to be ahistorical; rather, it is "to take history seriously" and to be "open to events, to the new and the unforeseen—rather than…an endless repetition of what already is

or…a march towards a predetermined future that may never arrive" (p. 541). Decolonial, posthuman, and queer curriculum studies also challenge dominant curriculum paradigms that drive toward a singular future with little regard for the past. Downey and Whitty (2019) described the dominance of settler experiences of time in curriculum and present an indigenous counter-temporality. Influenced by Donna Haraway, John Weaver (2019) and Peter Appelbaum (2019) experimented with imagining curriculum otherwise through speculative fictions; Truman (2019) examined the potential of speculative fabulations amid the situated knowledges of a ninth-grade English class. McCall (2021) drew on Saidiya Hartman's method of speculative history to consider the public pedagogy at work around a statue of Harriet Tubman. Taking an Afrofuturistic approach, Wozolek (2018) drew on the educational utopians envisioned in African American intellectual traditions to imagine what education might be. These "quantum entanglements" between past, present, and future (Barad, 2010), crucially work through the body, materials, and affects.

TheManifoldLab, led by Maggie MacLure, studied the relationship between sensations and the sense of time through a participatory art-production and curation process involving students in museum galleries. According to ManifoldLab (2020), this project, called *Remixing Thick Time,* "explores the thick layering of heterogeneous temporalities of shared experience" and was inspired by the sensory, atmospheric animations of William Kentridge's "The Refusal of Time" (2012). The researchers elaborated on the affective, sensational, and social dimensions of the sense of time centered in this project:

> Time can feel suspended, altered, slowed, quickened, and multiplied as we are affected by the particular atmosphere that an exhibition conjures. This ability to produce an atmosphere that thickens and moves outside of linear time is one of the strange and compelling powers of art. (n.p.)

ManifoldLab's insight into how art can provoke the experience of "heterogeneous temporalities" across so many bodies in the same room resonated with Manning's philosophy of art. For Manning (2016), the sense of time is central to an art as a "way of learning"—a practice, a process—rather than an object (p. 47). The force of intuition—a deeply affective, sensory form of knowing—operative in artful practices activates the future in the present, "invok[ing] the memory not of what was, but of what will be" (p. 47). Such an *untimely* curriculum might occur just in time (Pinar, 2012).

Curricular Subjectivities

In such sensory, hetero-temporal assemblages, curriculum does not involve static, singular subjects of students and teachers, and even curriculum designers, as traditionally conceived. Consistent with the theoretical framework presented so far, the human subjects involved in a curricular contact zone are as much made by that assemblage as they make it: an intra-active relationship (Barad, 2007). As if anticipating the Barad's processual ontology—and drawing similarly on Deleuze, Grosz, and Massumi—Ellsworth (2005) argued that the *"learning self"* does not pre-exist this curricular assemblage; rather, the "*learning self* is invented in and through its engagement with pedagogy's force" (p. 7, italics original). Biesta (2015) similarly saw subjectification, or the "emergence of human subjectivity," as a primary purpose of education (p. 18). While Ellsworth and Biesta explored an emergent, processual self, putting forth a sort of radical empiricism (Manning, 2016, p. 30), the subjectivity they held up as the purpose of education is still centered on the individual human. The bounds of the individual human are not as solid as they might appear: "affective encounters make us 'more than one,' enabling other social bodies, spaces, and things to extend into us and register in diverse, multisensory, and multitemporal ways" (Dernikos et al., 2020, p. 7). Affect, new materialist, and

posthuman theories emphasize an entangled relationality between the human self and other human and non-human beings.

The senses are, for Berlant (2011), a channel for affect's movement between bodies. As such, the senses contribute to an affective intelligence that can be analyzed by "following the course from what's singular—the subject's irreducible specificity—to the means by which the matter of the senses become general within a collectively lived situation" (p. 53). The experience of individual subjectivity matters—it is specific and unique—and is constantly shaping and shaped by the 'feel of the room,' inextricable from a larger contact zone of socio-historical forces, vital materials, feelings, intensities, and bodies (Ahmed, 2010a; Brennan, 2004). Freeman (2019) focused on how the body and senses experience and are moved by time. Arguing that the "temporalized invention of the subject…is simultaneously the dissolution of the subject" (p. 6), Freeman too blurred the line between an individual subject and its social, temporal context. For Manning (2016), temporality is the medium of art—a more-than-human plane through which events come to aesthetic and sensational form—and a matter of becoming-with and, Freeman would add, *beside* others in time. "Artfulness" is "the way the art of time makes itself felt" (p. 63). Contemplation, related to intuition and absorptive attention to an assemblage, is a way of tending to the emergence of experience in time. Manning elaborated on the consequences of this for subjectivity:

> Contemplation makes the artful felt. It does so in the event, in the uneasy balance between seeding a practice and becoming-with a practice. Here, in the midst of life-living, artfulness reminds us that the "I" is not where life begins and "you" is not what makes it art. Made up as it is of a thousand contemplations, the art of time reminds us that "we [must] speak of the self only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who says 'me'" (Deleuze 1978: 25). This is why artfulness is rarer than art. For artfulness depends on so many tendings, so many implicit collaborations between intuition and sympathy. And more than all else, it depends on the human getting out of the way. (p. 63)

What Manning (2016) turned from here is a singular human subject that stands outside of the ecology of experience; in other words, “neither the knower nor the known can be situated in advance of the occasion’s coming to be—both are immanent to the field’s composition” (p. 29). Subjectivity is based in multiplicity and immanence. Contemplation, intuition, sympathy—these are practices of study through which the inescapably embodied, conscious, situated human subject might attune to the experience of knowledge that escapes “the register of existing knower-known relations” (p. 31). Stewart (2020) described this nature of affective teaching as a “stretch[ing] of the conceptual skin between an inside self and whatever [is] taking place outside it, pushing and pulling the subject into contingent, morphing shape” (p. 33). Contemplation or intuition, for Stewart, is a “competence in the world,” a “readiness to be *in* something unfolding in the world but also in this room” (p. 33). Subjects are still human, but not only one particular kind of human, with a blustering belief in its singular agency, control, and locus of knowledge.

To charge curriculum with “the human getting out of the way” can be offensive to work so centered on individual and collective struggles, cares, dreams, and desires. What I take Manning to have referred to in the above passage is the sort of human that blocks who and what else subjects and worlds might become. I follow Braidotti (2013) and Snaza (2019), who, building on critical feminist, queer, Indigenous, and antiracist critiques of “Man as the only permissible mode of being human,” strove to channel “this critical energy to[ward] articulating new, nonhumanist ways of thinking about how we learn, together” (Snaza, 2019, p. 3). Man, here, is a diagram of social bodies, forces, technologies—from the prison industrial complex to microaggressions—that normalize who counts as superiorly human—a universalizing notion of Man as White, male, straight, able-bodied—with a necessarily dehumanizing logic. Meanwhile, the line between human and nonhuman blurs—the more-than-human conditions of subjectivity is

highlighted—with global pandemics, advanced capitalism, bio-genetic technologies, devastating climate events, and virtual metaverses. In response, Braidotti (2013) argued, "we need to devise new social, ethical and discursive schemes of subject formation to match the profound transformations we are undergoing. That means that we need to learn to think differently about… who and what we are actually in the process of becoming" (p. 12). Braidotti elaborated on a vision for a nomadic subjectivity, one which "proposes an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others, by removing the obstacle of self-centred individualism" (pp. 50-51): *the human getting out of the way.* Curriculum, as a contact zone of affective, material, sensation forces, is concerned with this nomadic, more-than-human subjectivity, which is not only situated in, but also becoming-with, the particulars of social identity, epistemological surround, and historical sensorium.

Curriculum Design

Curriculum studies is adept at being critical of formal curriculum, leaving design in a disparaged position. Design, after all, is typically a "humanist discipline" (Wakkary, 2020, p. 117). Yet, I hold to design—both out of a stubborn attachment to the objects of my field, entangled in the production of my own subjectivity (Snaza, 2019; Weigman, 2012), and out of wondering if there might be a mode of curriculum design fitting for a more-than-human world. These wonderings have led me to other nomadic thinker-creators, such as Loveless (2019) in her wanderings across disciplines and forms for "art at the end of the world"; Manning (2016) in her movements across art and philosophy to find forms for neurodiverse thinking; Escobar (2017) in his advocacy for the "pluriversal possibilities" of design based in principles of radical interdependence, justice, and collaboration; and Wakkary (2020) in his speculative approach to design for "more than human-centered worlds." This brought me to artists, activists, organizers,

and designers working outside of spaces typically recognized by curriculum and education, but who name curriculum and pedagogy as significant to their work, like Crean et al. of */Mirror/Echo/Tilt.* How such transdisciplinary, participatory works think 'curricularly' is the focus of the following chapters, but before concluding here, I want to discuss a definition of design that frames how I approached that question. "Nomadic practices," argued Wakkary (2020),

> view design as a multiplicity. This means that at any moment, a plurality of nomadic practices can call themselves design, or more accurately, a plurality of gatherings assembles around unique notions of design. These multiple gatherings do not compete over a single claim of the meaning of design. Rather, each is on its own path, pursuing a particular something of design, though open to intersections, divergences, contestations, or alliances. (p. 118)

In other words, "design" is not a static signifier; a nomadic design, like nomadic subjects, it is based in multiplicity, cohering in different moments through methods of attunement that scholars assembled here have called intuition (Berlant, 2011), mediation (Berlant, 2020), contemplation (Manning, 2016), or "a multiplicity of intentionalities" (Wakkary, 2020, p. 118). Further, Wakkary added that "Nomadic practices for design are a 'minor science'" (p. 125): nomadic practices deterritorialize the normative modes of design, in a collective fashion and with political ends.

Similarly to Wakkary, Manning (2016) took up Deleuze's concept of a minor literature to theorize the minor gesture. Manning considered the ways in which dance, sculpture, research-creation, forms of autistic perception, and other artful practices open experience to the minor gesture. As she inhabited those experiences, she explored the generative practices, politics, and modes of articulation of minor gestures, attempting to pursue without pinning down its "world-making potential" (p. 24). A minor gesture is deterritorializing; it "resist[s] formation long enough to allow us to see the potential of worlds in the making" (p. 15). The minor is also

collective—not the effect of an individual agent or actant (a student or teacher or designer), but a movement, intensity, or force made possible by and through the intra-actions of the larger assemblage, as endless variations on Tik Tok dances and memes could only come out of a collective visual, cultural, and embodied vocabulary. Drawing on Manning's earlier work, Springgay (2011) wrote that the minor force within an event "is a becoming, a process,…a kind of stuttering…it is unfamiliar and inventive" (p. 652). Through the minor force, Springgay demonstrated how participatory art walks—in this case, Diane Borsato's *Chinatown Foray*—enact an affective or a sensational pedagogy as they prompt participants to shift out of their habitual relations to their environments. In these conditions for emergence of subjects and politics in the curricular situation, "*something* that will perhaps matter is unfolding amid the usual activity of life" (Berlant, 2011, p. 5). Atmospheres are not static configurations; they are the moving and *something happening* (as slowly as the clock at the back of the room ticking, or as suddenly as a fight breaking out in the cafeteria) that makes the curriculum of such configurations apparent. "*Perturbation,*" Berlant (2010) pointed out, "is Deleuze's word for disturbances in the atmosphere that constitute situations whose shape can only be forged by continuous reaction and transversal movement" (p. 6, italics original). This disturbance "release[es] subjects from the normativity of intuition and mak[es] them available for alternative ordinaries" (p. 6). Perturbations, 'something unfolding,' 'a kind of stuttering': these suggest how a minor design might manifest.

Springgay (2017) also drew on Deleuze and Guattari's nomadic theories and experimental empiricism to approach research and pedagogy "as a process of experimentation rather than a construct" (p. 637). Such experimentation does not occur in a Lab separated from everyday life but is situated in and productive of the conditions of everyday life. A design

approach attuned to emergence in this way embraces an affirmative politics (Braidotti, 2013; Manning, 2016; Springgay, 2017). An affirmative politics “combines critique with creativity in the pursuit of alternative visions and projects” (Braiddotti, 2013, p. 54). Curriculum design driven by an affirmative politics would concern itself with the emergence of new forms of subjectivity, knowledge, and relations, and of new questions and problems and concepts. An affirmative politics, in Manning’s (2016) view, is “allied to study…and embraces the force of the *what else* at the heart of all speculative pragmatisms” (p. 15, italics original). If design is not a single thing but a “plurality of nomadic practices,” minor forces and affirmative ethics offer concepts for attuning to the emergence of design and heeding the politics of its directions.

Chapter 3

ON THE EDGES AND IN THE MIDDLE OF METHODS

> Data...is wondered, eaten, walked, loved, listened to, written, enacted, versed, produced, pictured, charted, drawn, and lived...data is everywhere, nowhere, vanishing, and taking on a strange and unexpected life on its own. Data is going into many directions at once and data is no longer in one place. (Koro-Ljungberg & MacLure, 2013, p. 222)

A Speculative Methodology

Reams have been written (and agonized and performed) over the challenges of doing post-qualitative research: of inventing methodologies and methods that follow from the onto-epistemological turn away from human-centered subjectivity and Cartesian rationality. This prompts many, including Lather (2016), Manning (2016), St. Pierre (2017), and Weaver and Snaza (2017), to reject the centrality of methods in qualitative research as inherently reifying anthropocentrism and illusions of mastery. Others, notably Springgay and Truman (2018), have argued that methods have always provided fertile ground for experimentation and are not inherently the problem. Rejecting instead "*the logic of procedure and extraction"* underlying traditional qualitative methods, they suggested that "research methods become a practice of being *inside* a research event…becoming entangled in relations…attuned to ethicopolitical matters and concerns" (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 204). The stakes shift from casting method as good or bad to what is being asked of method. St. Pierre et al. (2016) argued that "what the 'new' [of materialisms, of deleuzoguattarian theories] ushers in…is a re-imagining of what method might *do*, rather than what it *is* or *how to do* it" (p. 105). Shaped by scholarship which both normalizes the crisis over how to do research in the 'posts' and offers provocative

incitements to continue on creatively, I pick up with Vannini's (2015) manifesto for "getting things done" in research outside the paradigm of representation (broadly, more-than-human, new materialisms, and affect studies gathered here). Accordingly, I do not do away with methodologies or research strategies or methods. Instead, building on the onto-epistemological foundation (or rupture) of affect and new materialist studies, I outline a methodological orientation of uncertainty, curiosity, and experimentation. I then discuss the research ecology: the assemblage of events, strategies, methods, bodies, and things through which the research questions move, and data are generated (traditionally, though not entirely transitively, data *collection* and *analysis*). Finally, I reflect on the implications of this post-qualitative methodology.

Following Uncertainty

Uncertainty recurs as an orientating force in strains of post-qualitative methodology informed by new materialisms, affect studies, and the significance of embodiment and the senses in feminist, queer, and decolonial approaches to inquiry. In his introduction to *Nonrepresentational Research Methodologies,* Vannini (2015) spoke directly to the academic for whom the uncertainty induced by the slipperiness of such research has become paralyzing. Offering no "self-help manual" for this character, Vannini instead demonstrated the possibilities—playful and poetic, risk-taking and resonant—for doing nonrepresentational research from this place of "deep and fundamental doubts" (pp. 1, 2). MacLure (2013b), alluding to Brian Massumi, argued that "the price paid for the ruin caused—to epistemic certainty and the 'sedentary' achievement of a well-wrought coding scheme or an 'arborescent' analytic framework…is 'the privilege of a headache'" (p. 229). This headache might have been felt by the contributing authors to *New Curriculum History.* In the introduction, Baker (2009) described

the volume's authors as "finding purchase and continually slipping away from the strictures of the taken-for granted and of fixity" (p. ix). In rejecting the sure footing and grand narratives of the heroic researcher, Lather (2016) echoed Britzman in asking

> what is it to choose uncertainty in this place…to hold doubt and not knowing as seasoned knowledge where we do the work of embracing our discomforts, and mourning our losses, including 'the sublime' of our certainties in all their exhaustions and tired repetitions? (p. 127)

Uncertainty is not a whiny expression of angst (well, perhaps it is a bit of that for Vannini's anxious academic), but instead an affective force and epistemological and ethical site for making knowledge. Many channel this uncertainty into questions that provoke and create new questions and problems:

> How, then, does one do post qualitative inquiry? (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 604)

> What becomes of research in this fleeting scenario? (Springgay & Zaliwska, 2015, p. 144)

> How can research practices that are so concentrated on ineffability be politically committed, sustainable, moral, intelligible, relevant, and consequential? (Vannini, 2015, p. 16)

> How might we move from what needs to be opposed to what can be imagined out of what is already happening, embedded in an immanence of doing? (Lather, 2016, p. 129)

These questions focus on the *moving* and *doing* of research that is concerned with the opaque, ephemeral lifeworld of affects and vital matter. Uncertainty leaks—*en fuite*—from these questions, and in leaking, produces lines of flight—*ligne de fuite*—to other nodes, questions, and capacities in the research assemblage.

As an orienting force in this study, uncertainty pivoted me toward speculative methods. Uncertainty helped me to hold the overly determined discourse of critique and quick anthropocentric assumptions of curriculum inquiry at bay, without "idealizing…any program of better thought or reading" (Berlant, 2011, p. 124). Foregrounding uncertainty in the

methodological framework pushed me to embrace methods and data that seemed illegible and to stay with the doubt and discomfort of that slippage order to both consider worlds I have not yet imagined and allow utopian dreams to falter.

A Heightened and Dogged Curiosity

Still more researcher-bodies activated by the potential of the 'posts' channel this uncertainty into curiosity. St. Pierre et al. (2016) highlighted "an *ethical imperative to rethink the nature of being,*" which was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, "and a *heightened curiosity and accompanying experimentation"* as "enabling conditions" for new materialisms (p. 100, italics original). Although uncertainty might generate lines of flight, curiosity is not a flighty force. Referencing Foucault, St. Pierre et al. emphasized that this heightened curiosity can "refuse the existence we've been taught is real" and bear the weight of critique and critical work (p. 102). It is a curiosity that responds to Deleuze and Guattari's exhortation "to think the unthought and to imagine 'people that do not yet exist,' people who, at least, don't destroy their planet in their mastery projects" (p. 102). St. Pierre et al.'s *"heightened curiosity"* is deeply committed to the political project of imagining a different way of existing.

In this ethical task of telling different stories to make different worlds, Loveless (2019) also centered curiosity. "Attentive to what and whom we are driven to explore, and examining the complex web of relations that we inherit thereby," curiosity drives our research-questions and presents the possibility of inhabiting them ethically (p. 27). This curiosity is "intensive and extensive" (p. 27); it "ignites" and "erupts" (p. 47). Curiosity modulates capacities to act: to ask questions and do research. Uncertainty incites curiosity. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Loveless framed uncertainty as the *uncanny* or *unheimlich*: the sensation of suspension between knowing and not knowing, strange and familiar, at home and not at home. This sense of the

uncanny, of not being at home, might be the genre for the project at hand: not entirely situated in curriculum studies and not not-situated in curriculum studies; not fully situated in traditional spaces of schooling and not not-situated in relation to those spaces. Curiosity works as an affective force at the threshold between known and unknown.

At this point, we hear Loveless (2019) whisper Alice's familiar cry: "Curioser and curioser!" (p. 47). Curiosity is not an aimless, roving search but a *dogged* (invoking, as Loveless did, Haraway) inquiry into different worlds, driven by the sense of not being at home—the *unheimlich*, the uncanny, the onto-epistemological headache—in this one. With this orientation,

> we must investigate, with the curiosity of she-who-does-not-already-know, the material-semiotic entanglements, the 'worldliness' out of which each of us, at any given moment, emerges. Curiosity, here, emerges as key to the political capacity of stories to remake worlds. (p. 23)

Similarly, wonder, wrote MacLure, "is not necessarily a safe, comforting, or uncomplicatedly positive affect. It shades into curiosity, horror, fascination, disgust, and monstrosity" and, it is precisely the condition of liminality (uncanniness, in Loveless's terms) which "prevents wonder from being wholly contained or recuperated as knowledge, and thus affords an opening onto the new" (p. 229). Relational and embodied, material and virtual, curiosity—wonder—issues from unexpected places (p. 231).

Experimentation and Research-Creation

Among their "enabling conditions" for new materialist research, St. Pierre and Lather positioned experimentation as "accompanying" curiosity. That relation repeats as St. Pierre (2017) argued that "the too strange"—what Loveless called the curiosity-inciting-uncanny—is "the provocation, the knot, the world kicking back, the too much that demands experimentation" (p. 607). The relation between curiosity and experimentation becomes a refrain. Wonder, MacLure (2013b) wrote, notifies us of the data's invitation to experiment.

Vannini (2015) encouraged an "embrace [of] experimentation, to view the impossibility of empirical research as a creative opportunity (rather than a damning condition), to unsettle the systematicity of procedure, to reconfigure (rather than mimic) the lifeworld" (p. 15). An orientation of experimentation might be felt as movements and becoming, something that "cannot be measured, predicted, controlled, systematized, formalized" (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 604). Experiments, in the Deleuzian philosophy influencing many of the postqualitative, nonrepresentational researchers gathered here, are "practices that discover and dismantle assemblages, and which look for the lines of flight of individuals or groups, the dangers on these lines, and new combinations that will thwart predictions and allow the new to emerge" (Baugh, 2010, p. 95). More-than-human methodologies have experimented with concepts (Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017; Mazzei, 2017), writing and reading, again and again (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012; Snaza, 2019), 'inefficient' mappings and cartographies (Knight, 2016; Ulmer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2015), algorithms (Niccolini & Lesko, 2018), felting and paper making (Springgay, 2019; Springgay & Zaliwska, 2015; Truman & Springgay, 2015), and walking and movement (Springgay & Truman, 2018) to try to be in-and-with the research assemblage differently, to think within the research event, and to attune to more-than-human affects, relations, and forces. Experimentation with such tools "move[s] away from hierarchical classification or judgment" and instead "opens up to the possibility of something new to come" (Niccolini et al., 2019, p. 170).

Following curiosities, according to Loveless (2019), can lead to experimental ways of making knowledge through research-creation.[1] As a methodology, research-creation is an

[1] Research-creation emerged as a funding category for academic research in Canada in 2003, and since has provided a more robust framework for thinking of creative practices as generative of knowledge in themselves, not merely representing knowledge as arts-based educational research (ABER), a close cousin, might do. Manning and

ecology of practices or propositions that trouble humanist assumptions of representation and subjectivity, and instead incite thought and potential for becoming-otherwise (Springgay & Rotas, 2015, p. 568; Springgay & Zalwiska, 2015; Truman & Springgay, 2015, p. 161). Manning (2016) argued that in the hyphen, research-creation becomes something much more than either artistic creation or research:

> It generates forms of knowledge that are extralinguistic; it creates operative strategies for a mobile positioning that take these new forms of knowledge into account; it proposes concrete assemblages for rethinking the very question of what is at stake in pedagogy, in practice, in collective experimentation. (p. 27)

Influenced by Manning and the Senselab, Springgay and her collaborators approached both the events of classroom activity and of data analysis as research-creation (Springgay & Rotas, 2015, p. 568; Springgay & Zalwiska, 2015; Truman & Springgay, 2015, p. 161). Their research-creational project *The Pedagogical Impulse* explored the "intersections between social practice, knowledge production, pedagogy, and school" by inviting artists into schools for multi-year residencies (Springay & Rotas, p. 555). One residency, "Ask Me Chocolates," took place over 5 months with a sixth-grade class and two artists. Students explored the idea of trade through chocolate multiples of houses, burrs, grenades, dead bunnies, chips, and such that they traded for other goods and services in or beyond the site of school. Springgay and Rotas explored the ways in which these chocolate multiples take on an affective force and vitality, producing different ways of thinking about difference and social justice in relation to curricular concepts such as fair trade and child labor, that are typically taught through a neoliberal, Western position of distance and empathy, consumption and control (p. 562). The research is enfolded in the event of creating chocolate multiples, and in the events the chocolate multiples themselves stage. Furthermore, the

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the Senselab's work over the past decade have pushed the possibilities of research-creation as a nonrepresentational methodology.

artist residency in school is just one "node" in the research-creational project. Other nodes include traditional qualitative methods that attempt to feel the texture of the research ecology for "Ask Me Chocolates" and exercises in analysis—charting on paper and thinking with theory, but also paddling canoes and making paper—that became research-creational events of their own (p. 569). Loveless argued that research-creation, as a methodology and form of pedagogy, "tumbles outside" of disciplinary frameworks, "challenging practice/theory divides as they police what gets to count as a valid object and method" (p. 70). For example, Loveless described Beatriz da Costa's *Pigeonblog* as "part art-as-social practice/new genre public art, part academic intervention, part citizen science, and part activism" (p. 35). *Pigeonblog* involved developing DIY air-pollution sensing devices that pigeons would agree to fly, thereby sending air-quality information back to da Costa and her team, who then developed a visualization map of the area (p. 35). The project posed pigeons as collaborators and co-activists in producing local ecological knowledge. As a case of social practice art and citizen science, it engaged different publics in learning about engineering, biopolitics, and place, and "model[ed] a research-creational approach to multispecies ethics and pedagogy that speaks across academic and nonacademic divides" (p. 37). While wary of transitivity, the relationship between research-creation and the classroom-as-art (Springgay & Rotas, 2015) or pedagogy (Loveless, 2019) sets up a way of thinking about curriculum as an aesthetic mode of inquiry and post-qualitative methodology in its own right. Turning to precedent in research-creation, I pose the creation of curriculum *as* a research method. In this study, designing curriculum became a way of experimenting with *how* artful practices impacted participants and fostered attunement to more-than-human curricular contact zones.

Research Design

I approached my research questions with this orientation: uncertainty, curiosity, and experimentation. To review, the questions guiding this study included the following:

1. What understandings of curriculum do transdisciplinary art works and artful practices open up?
2. What do experiments with curricular practices and forms do to curriculum theorists, researchers, and designers?

A Laboratory for Curriculum Theory and Design

I explored these questions through a lab dedicated to curriculum theory and design (the Lab) at a research university in a large northeastern city of the United States. The Lab describes itself as "a place to experiment with ideas, approaches, and forms of curriculum," and proclaims an interest in the "messiness of curriculum [that] surrounds us." Lab participants are typically students, faculty, and alumni at the Lab's associated school of education. Many also identify as artists, creatives, activists, and researchers, and share commitments to social justice, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality, cultural identity, disability, land, and food. Lab meetings do not require membership or regular attendance; a half-dozen "Lab'ers" participated in nearly every meeting and outing, while up to two dozen people might drop in on any single meeting.

The Lab has three modalities for gathering and experimenting with curriculum. One involves participation in works of art or public pedagogy, such as museums, galleries, neighborhood walks, and public installations. Exploring what those events do as ecologies of curricular practices and how those practices might find their way, with a difference, in participants' own curricular projects was one core thread of this study. Another modality for gathering involved weekly meetings. These ranged in the amount of structure, but were designed

to generate conversations about participants' curricular contexts in relation to the given topic or theme. This study paid particular attention to the emergence of practices and conditions for these conversations. A third modality, which developed over the course of this study, involved the design of a curriculum influenced by those events and meetings.

I set out, planning this study, to be ready for the unexpected, the speculative middle, the potential forces welling within. Those pithy commitments did not prepare me for a global pandemic that continues as I complete this dissertation 2 years later. The day after this study was proposed and approved in March 2020, the university and city where it is situated shut down in-person operations and movement in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. As it became clear the pandemic would continue through the main year of data collection, 2020-2021, it also shaped the available arts-based events in which participants could participate. Audio-based works that took place outside and usually had options for listening at-home proliferated, such as Ellen Reid's *SOUNDWALK,* Kamau Ware's *Fighting Dark,* and Maya Lin's *Ghost Forest,* discussed in Chapter 4. These allowed participants to experience participatory artworks at a distance, asynchronously, and on site (outdoors) or within one's home. Weekly meetings were held on Zoom. This had the affordance of increasing participation: alumni who had moved out of the city after graduation could join online and students who dispersed from the city during the pandemic could continue their involvement. Because participants were not physically together, mailing materials also offered a different channel for connection and creation. These weekly meetings and year-long mailing projects are the focus of Chapter 5. Each of these conditions made particular lines of curricular theory and design possible and contributed to a collaborative curriculum design project by a subset of Lab participants, including myself. In many respects, this curriculum design project was research-creation, a collective inquiry into our experiences of

the Lab and their impact on our individual curriculum design processes and attachments. While I reflect later some of that process, much of it remains for future writing.

Entering Alongside Curriculum's Emergence

Throughout the process of curriculum inquiry here, my methodological concerns were not about how I was going to gather and extract data, but about how I was going to enter into curricular events and their reverberations; how I became and to what I became response-able as a researcher and curriculum maker; and how I rendered the experience so that readers might enter in alongside and make their own questions and meanings. Drawing on techniques for grappling with and being gripped by the events that "embrace the force of the *what else* at the heart of all speculative pragmatisms" (Manning, 2016, p. 15), I attuned to the immanence of curricular contact zones and experimented with a set of propositions for thinking-making-doing curriculum. I attempted to heed Manning's (2016) exhortation to "begin in the midst, where force has not yet turned to form…where the event is still welling, there is potential for new diagrams of life-living to be drawn" (p. 15). This study was an effort to generate ways of thinking about curricular forms from within, and what those (in)tensions do to the field of curriculum studies and to ourselves as researchers, educators, and professionals situated in that field as we collapse and blur its boundaries. That involved attending and attuning to the speculative middles of experimental, multimodal Lab events and meetings. Taking the stance that data do not pre-exist the event and are not 'out there' to 'be found,' Springgay and Truman's (2018) concept of the "speculative middle" is useful for approaching research that is always ongoing and which one is always already in the midst of:

> A speculative middle…is a thrust, a future provocation for thinking-making-doing…. Speculative middles, through processes such as walking, reading, and writing, emerge as agitations and as affective force.… In the speculative middle, which is not a place, but an event, (in)tensions, concerns, and gnawings continually emerge. As the agitations take

> shape, it is the (in)tensions that incite further action, which elicits additional propositions, and new speculative middles to emerge. (p. 207)

In the speculative middle, the issue is one of "tuning into," which "is not the same as to capture, or to document" (p. 209). Thus, "research methods become a practice of being *inside* a research event" (p. 204) and "an experimental site for *posing new questions as speculative middles (in) tensions*" (p. 208, italics original). Methods might include walking, photographing, interviewing, sketching, mapping, listing, writing, so long as they are not aimed at extracting and recording data but rather at thinking-making within the event. Rather than being planned in advance of the event, methods are immanent to the event: they attend, respond to, and pose problems and questions from within (p. 208). Heeding Springgay and Truman's argument for "methods beyond proceduralism," the point was not to experiment for experiment's sake—for the sake of the 'new'—but to stay close to the (in)tensions, questions, and problems that unfolded in the thinking-making-doing of the event.

In this orientation, it might be more productive to think of methods as propositions. Springgay (2016) described propositions as not about "guiding, facilitation, collaboration, or reflection" but "about a work's activation, what it does, what it incites a body to do" (p. 61). Through propositional methods, the emphasis is on "the techniques and conditions that lead to the creation of new problems, rather than promising an already-constituted field replete with form and content" (Manning, 2016, p. 15). Propositions are different from traditional research methods or a research design in that they are speculative and event-oriented (Truman & Springgay, 2016). Springgay and Truman drew on the idea of the score, in the style of Fluxus art, to incite movement improvisationally within walking methodologies. Score-inspired propositions sprinkled throughout their research article included "Follow lines, smells, the color red" (p. 203) and "Cross (m)any lines" (p. 206). Manning and Massumi (2014) used propositions such as

"design enabling conditions" and "creatively return to chaos" (p. 83) to "organize for emergence" (p. 90) for speculative eventing with the SenseLab. Propositions that organize for emergence are meant to help create the conditions for technique, "as an engagement with the modalities of expression a practice invents for itself" (p. 89). Propositions orient methods to how thought works itself out in-and-as action, attuning to the minor gesture as it edges toward articulation.

Over the course of the study, attunement to speculative middles looked like sharing photos, audio, and reflections over WhatsApp and Padlet; the long and slow process of creating by mailing physical materials that were their own propositions to participants; beginning Lab with prompts that juxtaposed emotion, matter, body, and space; and allowing a design process to unfold over Miro boards, collaborative writing in Google documents, recursive conversations, and curricular artefacts for group experimentation. It looked like listening to audio for over 400 hours while walking, cooking, writing, making, thinking; diagramming events and conversations and ideas across 20 feet of paper; reading, reading, and reading again; wearing, eating, and mailing data; and thinking with concepts. Throughout, it demanded an openness to participant interests, to the course of a dialogue that was more than the sum of its human interlocutors, and attunement to possibilities and constraints of experiencing art and designing together during a global health pandemic that so dramatically disrupted the mundane context for the "complicated conversation" of curriculum (Pinar, 2012). I often felt like I was jabbing into thin air as I tried to pinpoint what was happening, slipping into a fixation on *what it was about* and trying to comprehend *what it was doing*. In these moments, I tried to remind myself to wonder about the composition of air and the force of the jab.

Marbling as Minor Inquiry

Building on her work with thinking with theory as method, Mazzei (2017) developed a method of minor inquiry—"that which is provoked by a problem and transformed by the contour of a concept" (p. 675)—to think about the problem of a voice without a subject. Influenced by Deleuze's theory of a minor literature, Mazzei followed the movement of concepts as they create the conditions for minor inquiry, characterized by deterritorialization, political immediacy, and collective force (p. 677). In this study, I think with aesthetic and sensational concepts as a form of a minor inquiry that seeks to deterritorialize the major forms of curriculum, to consider the agency of human and more-than-human forces entangled in the curricular assemblage, and to think beyond the individual as the unit of inquiry.

Mapping and diagramming have become popular apparatuses for minor inquiry, concept as method, or thinking-with-data: post-qualitative's response to data analysis (Knight, 2016; Springgay & Rotas, 2015; Springgay & Zaliwska, 2015; Ulmer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2015). Wozolek (2020) took a granular approach to tracing affects through an assemblage through a methodology of pathology. Mazzei (2017) used the metaphor of mapping to describe the movements and contour of concepts in her efforts to deterritorialize voice in qualitative educational research. As Springgay and her co-authors did with diagramming, and Snaza (2019) did with scoping and scaling, I proposed marbling as a mode of minor inquiry that better suits the unruly vitality of thought to see what other stories these forms might tell. I played with marbling as "a way of paying attention to the edginess of data…understand[ing] data as living matter that is abstract and always in movement" and being in "a relational co-emergence of matter and thought that enables new potentialities to emerge" (Springgay & Truman, 2018, p. 143).

As sounds are the effect of vibrations moving through the air, the colored patterns of marbling are the effect of pigments moving through another medium. Pigments intra-act, dispersing from and clinging to one another, as they float on a jelly-like bath, before they are lifted by mordanted material (generally fabric or paper). The human hand adds pigments and can direct some movement, but much is beyond even the marbler's control. The first few pigments dropped into the bath quickly spread out over the surface of the bath. Another concept is dropped in and pushes the first around. Another concept is dropped in, and those first two slide and slip between these new neighbors. It can go on, and on, and on. A tool dragged through these amoebic blobs creates tails and patterns as the concepts cohere and come into contact with each other. This too can go on, and on, and on. Mordanted material is laid on the pigments. The pigments instantly adhere, and the lifted material contains an immediate impression of the pigments at that unique slice of space-time. The product of marbling may be visual, but the process is sensational, durational, and material. Marbling is not only a metaphor for analysis, but also a material practice, taken up to think with curricular concepts in Chapter 5. Scraps of marbled fabric from a workshop I took in 2019 enter into the materiality and creative force of a box of curricular propositions.

How might marbling look different from mapping, in practice? Mapping, even creative, nonliteral, 'inefficient' mappings (Knight, 2016; Ulmer & Koro-Ljungberg, 2015) and diagrams aligned with Deleuze's concept of an abstract machine, usually involve humans arranging and rearranging things in their solid state. Mapping connotes a greater degree of human control, while marbling better connotes the material process of chemical attraction and repulsion, that, as much as a human hand might try to manipulate it, insistently elides control. With marbling comes terms like viscosity, skittering, and errancy. As I poke and prod at the pigments floating

on the water bath, what draws near? What slides away? As I add new elements, how do the current elements contract and squeeze together to make room for them? Even after the fabric is laid and lifted, a haunting of the mixture is left, sinking to the bottom and creating a ghostly image on the next print. What stories does the swirling pool of the marbling vat tell?

Marbling relies on the available pigments, from a potentially limitless array of possibilities. As Wozolek's (2020) method of pathology is selective about the samples involved to examine how affects move through an assemblage, and Massumi's (2002) "exemplary method" provides a starting point for tracing the aesthetic transmission of affect, I did make selections in which scenes and data to include. Forms that exemplary method might take include cultural poesis (Stewart 2005), genre analysis—which would be a method for analyzing the historical account itself as an aesthetic object (Berlant, 2011), and following refrains (Bertelson & Murphie, 2010; Stewart, 2010). In their exploration of Guattari's ethico-aesthetic paradigm, Bertelson and Murphie (2010) positioned the refrain as "an aesthetic practice of duration, repetition, and difference engaging with the affective world" (p. 156). Refrain, like rhythm, indexes "affective peaks" (Knudsen & Stage, 2015, p. 8); other ways of attending to affective hotspots could involve attending to data that "glow" (MacLure, 2013b); are "sticky" (Ahmed, 2004); or "shimmer" (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 11). Marbling may just be another way of describing an experience of reading, reading, and reading some more (Mazzei, 2017; St. Pierre, 2016). But, as Snaza (2019) wrote of his methodological approach to an animate literature,

> to the extent that there is a method here beyond 'scoping and scaling,' it is to constantly be suspicious of attempts to close and foreclose the meaning of [that stodgy word, "curriculum"]. If at any time those start to seem settled, a new shift in focus and framing should render any solidity blurry or porous. (pp. 22-23)

Just when things seem settled, marbling causes them to slip and slide, "shift[ing] focus and framing…render[ing] any solidity blurry or porous." In this sense, marbling as analysis involves

generating an “inventory of shimmers” as a “matter of accounting for the progressive accentuation of intensities, their incremental shimmer: the stretching of a process underway, not position taken” (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010, p. 11). It might involve panning out or zooming in, responding to what glows and shimmers, and troubling the patterns that settle.

Writing Entanglements

Post-qualitative research aims not to “faithfully describe” or represent findings but to “generate possibilities of encounter” and render research in a manner that entangles the reader in its relations (Vannini, 2015, p. 15). A key challenge presented by the minor gesture for Manning (2016) was how to articulate it—particularly its affective operations—in language, without flattening it (p. 24). Writing in genres such as the hundreds (Berlant & Stewart, 2019), the score (Springgay & Truman, 2018), and the manifesto (Loveless, 2019) might fold the reader into further reverberations (Vannini, 2015, p. 12). Inspired by Braidotti’s “post-personal” writing style for *Metamorphoses,* Jackson and Mazzei (2012), wrote—and thought—with theory “in such a way as to not talk to the reader about what sense we made of the data, but to try to bring the reader into the threshold with us” (p. 138). Snaza (2019) structured *Animate Literacies* according to a “pedagogical desire…to produce bewilderment in the reader”: to have the book *do* what it is *about* (pp. 8, 10). Berlant and Stewart (2019) rendered scenes in scores of ‘hundreds’ that shimmer with affective vitality. Springgay and Truman (2018) insisted “that methods are generated both as a means to produce, create, and materialize knowledge *and* practice of dispersal, collective sharing, and activation of knowledge *at the same time*” (p. 211). They pointed to walking as a methodology, method, and event of sharing knowledge; to the *WalkingLab* website’s ways of simultaneously sharing and doing research; and to the use of “live writing” for producing and communicating knowledge *in situ* at an event on sharing

methodologies of social practice (p. 212). Their article *about* methods included provocations to the reader to *perform* "methods beyond proceduralism." In short, the event of method is both the production and the sharing of knowledge. A subsequent sharing, in the traditional form of a dissertation, journal article, or academic volume, might seek to generate further speculative middles, as well as to communicate, practically, the ethical problems and questions raised by the event. In the following chapters, I experiment with a composite second-person subject and the marbling of affective scenes and theory to trace and enliven the movements and doings of curricular contact zones.

An Affirmative Ethics

Given the orientation of this research, the issue of researcher reflexivity shifts to *how I become* and *to what I am made response-able* in entangling myself in curricular happenings and processes. Here, the issue is less about what "my" research "saves" than about how I—as part of the curricular assemblage, and the assemblage of the research project—find possibilities for change and creation. An ethics of affirmation considers "what we are capable of becoming" (Braidotti, 2018, np) and asks "*what else*?" might be capable of emerging (Manning, 2016, p. 202). Braidotti (2018) stressed the importance, for an affirmative ethics, of "thinking differently, which means experimenting with nonlinearity, zig-zag thinking, more associative thinking, transdisciplinarity" while "holding onto the social" (np). Therefore, Lab engaged with aesthetics and sensations, following the strategies artists used in the first two years of the Coronavirus pandemic to combat isolation, agitate for racial justice, and galvanize action on the ecological crisis. And as Lab met weekly, its course was not pre-set, but experimental, in the sense of an affirmative ethics. Such experimentation is "speculative in the sense that the process remains open to the more-than, and pragmatic in the sense that it is completely invested in its 'something

doing'" (Manning, 2016, p. 33). This meant orienting Lab toward a 'yes, let us see what happens and where we might go together.' Let's see how this might make a difference in your practice, in my practice, and in what we might create together.

Chapter 4

AURAL INTERFERENCE AND THE AMBIENT CURRICULUM

Crescendo
A crescendo builds up slowly, often under a set rhythm or music.
I'd say this year is definitely building up, getting louder—
from the World War III threats in January to the pandemic now,
it's definitely escalating. With crescendos, we tend to overlook
the song itself, which is why the year passed so quickly.
The set rhythm in the background of a crescendo
keeps it controlled, and I'd like to believe that something is
keeping all of us hopeful during these difficult times.

-Reader submission to *The Washington Post*, Dec 2020
(Goren et al., 2020)

Scenes from *SOUNDWALK*, Part 1

It is 5 p.m. on a Thursday in October, still light enough in the early fall for a walk—the only activity, except for groceries and the periodic protest, for which you permit yourself to leave the apartment in the fall of 2020. As you approach Central Park from the east side, the soft whistle of wind instruments and chimes lures you further in, as the honks of traffic recede. String instruments contribute their thrum, nearly masking the ever-present rumble of buses now behind you. You stand there for a moment, on the threshold of the park. The dissonance between these orchestral sounds and the unceasing, unrelenting blare of ambulance sirens stills you. As you continue your walk, you take a left instead of your usual right. You cannot say what caused you to veer this way: perhaps it is the way the sun glints over the water or the rustling in the trees or the lilting tones of a flute. You glance down at your phone. The GPS marker on an aerial map of the park shows you at the edge of a pulsing pink circle, and you wonder what the lighter crescent

beyond this one might proffer. The sounds skip ahead. You find your chest expands with crisp autumn air, your shoulders rise, your feet spring more with each step. Your breath puffs out a bit in the cold air ahead of you. You walk forward feeling a sense of excited anticipation, of curiosity and wonder that you had forgotten in the exhausting months of teaching online amid your school's rush to return to school, the nauseating pit of election anxiety, the grief and anger at relatives who send articles filled with falsehoods, the sight of the makeshift hospital on the east field. You will re-enter that so-called 'new normal,' but for now, you are here. Later, you describe the feeling as "solace."

Nearly a month later, on a warm weekend in November, you are crossing back through the park from the northwest side: a familiar and pleasant path from the university to your apartment. If you had plugged into that same app and put on your headphones, you might have heard a jazzy trumpet sound, a nod to the Frederick Douglass sculpture at the traffic circle by this intersection. You deliberately leave your headphones in your bag; you do not even recall the app with the music that changed as you walked through the park a month ago. Instead, you are caught up listening to the drivers tooting their horns in a call and response with passersby on the sidewalk, an exuberance that cannot be contained at the election's final call as the Saturday celebrations in the city spill over to Sunday.[1] You stride through the park, just one more body amid the crowds that have assembled to revel in the news, in the unseasonably warm air, in what might be the last chance to gather in a group with family and friends outdoors for a volleyball game, a birthday party, a high school photoshoot, until winter passes, and, with it, they are hoping, the rancor of this political climate and the devastation wrought by another wave of the

1 Celebrations over the 2020 election results continued through the weekend in most of Manhattan and Brooklyn. See Hartmann (2020, November 7), "Watch: New York City Erupts in Celebration After Race Is Called for Biden."

pandemic. The crowds are oblivious to the composed soundscape, having created their own, and you have forgotten it too, every cell of your skin soaking in the chance to join them.

In the first walk, you sought a feeling that things might be okay, if not better; that something else might still be possible. The coziness cast by the twinkling lights that you hung in your apartment could not dispel the pressing sense of doom. Lauren Berlant (2011) observed that "amidst all of the chaos, crisis, and injustice in front of us"—and that is what it was in front of us constantly: the wait for a verdict on Breonna Taylor's case, and the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and the morgues at Mount Sinai Hospital, and the 2020 election debate coverage that your fourth grade students insisted on tuning into during lunch—"the desire for alternative filters that produce the sense—if not the scene—of a more livable and intimate sociality is another name for the desire for the political" (p. 227). The orchestral sounds you accessed through an app called *SOUNDWALK* provided an alternative filter to the shouts of outraged headlines and the despairing, nearly eerie silence of online teaching. The music in your earbuds and the trees lining the empty paths of the park created an intimate, if solitary, experience. A performance for one, it still produced "*the sense* of a more livable and intimate sociality" and made it possible to conceive of occupying common public spaces with others: to desire the political again. You called your mom as you returned home. Conversations with family on the other end of the political spectrum had been difficult, but you said, "Mom, you have to visit when this is all over and experience this, you'd love it." When you passed through the park a few weeks later, it was the soundscape of people gathering in groups and celebrating, the soundscape of a "*scene* of a more livable and intimate sociality" that fed and fulfilled (at least in that moment) a desire for the political.

Alternative Filters and a "New Ordinary Created by Crisis"

Writing in the wake of the AIDS pandemic; 9/11, which precipitated the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the then-ongoing Iraq War and the War on Afghanistan; and the Great Recession of 2008,[2] Berlant (2011) observed a "new ordinary created by crisis." This was the context for their essay "On the Desire for the Political" in *Cruel Optimism,* an analysis of how an individual and a body politic might maintain a desire for the political while detaching from a relationship of cruel optimism to politics as such. In 2020, a similar "new ordinary created by [the COVID-19] crisis," one described as exhausting, lost, chaotic, relentless, surreal, stifling, suffocating, and, expressively, a "dumpster fire" (Goren et al., 2020), becomes the context for questions on maintaining a desire for the curricular, while navigating relations of cruel optimism to normative scenes of schooling.

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> *The contemporary filtered or mediated political sphere in the United States transmits news 24/7 from a new ordinary created by crisis, in which life seems reduced to discussions about tactics for survival and who is to blame. (Berlant, 2011, p. 225)*

In the fall of 2020, discussions at the faculty meeting turned to the tens of thousands of students: in particular, high schoolers who were not attending virtual classes, whom teachers and school leaders could not contact. You felt the familiar prickle of indignation that threatened to turn into resignation behind your eyes and in the back of your throat; the weariness in the tightening of your chest and neck. Amid reports of the inequitable distribution of internet service and laptops, and students trying to take class from their phone while picking up extra jobs to

[2] Berlant did not specifically include the 2002 passage of No Child Left Behind, but that context for the political era she wrote about is relevant for my project here: NCLB authorized an era of accountability shaping the grammar of schools 20 years later.

support rent when a parent has been laid off, headlines warning of 'learning loss' stack up.[3] Aren't they learning something else? you wonder. Where do we hear about that? A sub-committee forms around the issue, and you sign up.

> *The filter tells you that the public has entered a historical situation whose contours it does not know. It impresses itself upon mass consciousness as an epochal crisis, unfolding like a disaster film made up of human-interest stories and stories about institutions that have lost their way. (Berlant, 2011, p. 225)*

Your school is set on returning to in-person teaching. It is safe, they say, though you have never felt more unsafe and fearful for your more vulnerable students and their family members. "No, you're not listening!" you want to shout. If they heard, they gave no indication; you have "never felt more gaslit." You find yourself in the classroom some weeks later, crestfallen at the desks in rows with plexiglass between them. You swore you would not be this teacher with desks in rows, you mutter to yourself, as you fiddle with wires and mics. It is crushing when your fourth graders joining virtually tell you to mute them so they can better hear you. It is crushing to be teaching to silent screens for months, only to see bodies in person and then be required to enforce silence because to shout and sing is to increase the risk of spreading a deadly disease.

> *It is a moment on the verge of a post-normative phase, in which fantasmatic clarities about the conditions for enduring collectively, historical continuity, and infrastructural stability have melted away, along with predictable relations between event and effect. (Berlant, 2011, p. 225)*

At a meeting in late August, school leaders asked how they could support their teachers who were also taking care of their own children—managing infants, toddlers, and school-aged kids with their own virtual schedules—while continuing to care for their students. You appreciated the recognition of the additional care-work demanded of you. As you recall this

[3] A Proquest search yielded 1,376 English-language articles mentioning "learning loss" in magazines, newspapers, blogs, podcasts, and websites from January 1, 2020 to December 30, 2020, up from 222 articles the previous year.

conversation in October, you realize that you never heard anything further from school leaders on the action items you and your colleagues brainstormed. You are grateful for extended family who care for your infant a few hours each day so that you, in turn, can do some of the million things on your teaching check-list—or, as administration would have it, sit through another professional development session on safety procedures and constantly changing plans for a return to in-person teaching.

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Ambient Curriculum

This “new crisis ordinary,” wrote Berlant (2011), “is engendering secular forms of something like ‘ambient citizenship’—politics as a scene in which the drama of the distribution of affect/noise meets up with scenarios of *movement*” (p. 230, italics original). As an amorphous contact zone, an affective atmosphere produced by noise and movement, ambient citizenship draws our attention to “the way the political suffuses the ordinary.” Here, I want to extend Berlant’s argument into an exploration of ambient curriculum, to get at the way *the curricular* suffuses the ordinary. Curriculum, of course, is always already political.

In many ways, naming the ‘ambient curriculum’ is not a new argument; the Reconceptualists opened up ways of understanding the curricular in our everyday actions and culture through theorizing the informal, hidden, and null curricula. Janet Miller and Ted Aoki brought sound to their theorizing of curriculum beyond the formal. Miller (2005) understood silence as the ambient noise of oppression; something to be interrupted by voice. Aoki (1991) advocated for attention to the sonic, to combat Western ocular-centrism and open the field to different ways that curriculum circulates. The concept of an ambient curriculum builds on critical attention to curricular affects and atmospheres, with appreciation for how Dernikos et al.’s

(2020) concept of the “affective scratch” introduces a sonic metaphor of interruption—the nails on chalkboard feeling, the groove of a vinyl disc—that brings what I call ambient curriculum into relief.

Pinar’s (1994[1975]) *currere* turns to *ambire*, in Berlant’s formulation: a movement around, a gathering, a surround, a contact zone, a gathering of ‘scratches.’ Ambient curriculum helps to name how, when educational leaders raise alarms over “learning loss,” they miss the way that students are already engaged in curricula *all around them*: at home, on social media, on the news, in conversations with friends, at workplaces, on the bus, in the skatepark, in their bedroom. Scholarship in public pedagogy also advances a critical understanding of how we learn constantly from our surrounding environment, materials, media, and social relations (Sandlin et al., 2010). Ambient curriculum accumulates in the ordinary of headlines and memes; school announcements and Facebook posts; the way undergraduates take up space and airwaves on campus (or not) and the way home feels like a safe place to be oneself (or not). Ambient curriculum is there in the too-warm December day and other affective weather patterns (Manning, 2016); and it is there in the tension in the streets when police cars cruise by or residents spill out of apartments to join a protest. Ambient curriculum can feel like dissonance or consonance or simply ‘abeyance’: the lulls, hmms, sighs in a conversation (Berlant, 2011, p. 230). As “ambient citizenship registers the normative distinctions in terms of who has the formal and informal rights to take up soundspace” (p. 231), ambient curriculum too registers the intersection of sound, movement, power, and *knowledge.*

Curricular Conversations

What kinds of conversations can we have about curriculum in the midst of this crisis ordinary? The professional development session your school organized in preparation for returning to teach in person did not address curriculum (or rather, it addressed an informal curriculum about fear and safety and accountability). It is your first year teaching, and you find yourself "plopped into the middle of a unit on colonial America," in the middle of a pandemic, in the middle of a(n ambient) curriculum on settler colonialism in America, without the power to challenge the more tenured teacher; and you are just trying not to do harm. You have been designing curriculum for the informal spaces of kitchen and gardens for years; even now, as school happens at home, those spaces still feel undervalued as sites of learning. In a Lab meeting, you gave voice to this feeling:

> It's so hard because there's so little space for it. Everything takes up so much space, and the thought of even bringing up curriculum—how do you even do it when kids are bouncing between remote learning and in-class learning, and parents are trying to figure out how to still go to work, there are just so many moving parts and it feels like we're just in a moment where curriculum is being pushed out from the discussion?

Then, a year later in 2021, school boards become sites of death threats, vitriol, pleads for reason, and attacks on the other side as totally irrational beings, endangering child and country alike.[4] The airwaves fill with the sorts of shouts and shoves that indicate the room—your body—is heating up. Teacher morale hits record lows, with more and more teachers feeling exhausted, anxious, burned out, and wary of returning for another year.[5]

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[4] The sound and aural ambience of these school board meetings were especially well conveyed through audio news sources, such as *The Daily* podcast: Barbaro, M., Cheung, J., & Krupke, E. (2021, November 16). "The School Board Wars, Part 1." *The Daily* (Audio podcast)]. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/16/podcasts/the-daily/school-boards-mask-mandates-crt-bucks-county.html

[5] See, for example, Will (2021), "As teacher morale hits a new low, schools look for ways to give breaks, restoration"; and Cardoza (2021) "'We need to be nurtured too': Many teachers say they've reached a breaking point."

This was the impasse we faced: trying both to maintain hope in the potential of repairing something whose very promise worked against better worlds we might imagine and to detach from it sufficiently to realize those other worlds (Berlant, 2011). How does one maintain a desire for the curricular when everyone is worn out and trying to survive? Curious about how to sustain an attachment to the political in a similar situation, Berlant took three pieces of sound art as "cases in which the body politic in the politically depressive position tries to break the double-bind of cruel optimism, *not* reentering the normative public sphere while seeking a way, nonetheless, to maintain its desire for the political" (p. 230). Berlant argued that in their use of noise, or the negation of noise, these works "literally, by changing the sensorial experience of immediate things in the world…have interfered with that pattern of treading water in the impasse" (p. 249). This is not to say that all sound art "interferes with the feedback loop whose continuity is at the core of whatever normativity has found traction" and secures an alternative genre of being in the world (p. 249). However, it is worth exploring how these artful practices *think curricularly.* Berlant's analysis of sonic strategies in cases of contemporary art, in a historical present marked by ongoing crisis and the upending of any sense of 'normal,' has remarkable resonance with experiencing Ellen Reid's *SOUNDWALK,* and as I discuss later, Kamau Ware's *Fighting Dark* and Maya Lin's *Ghost Forest,* during a global pandemic, in the midst of the United States's political turmoil and the chaos of schooling and being a student/parent/teacher in New York City, and the effort to keep going on in the midst of it all: to find modes for enduring and for resisting returns to a normal that was already not working.

Scenes from *SOUNDWALK*, Part 2

While waiting to cross a busy intersection, you untangle your headphones and open an app on your phone. You note the faint sounds of music streaming through your headphones, anticipation rising with each step closer to the park through the 90th Street Gates. It is a warm day, and the whole city seems to be outside, descending on the park. You stride to the reservoir and snap a photo of the iconic San Remo—the Beaux-Arts building with the two towers standing sentry on the Upper West Side—reflected in the glassy water. You wander along the edge and take another photograph, now of the ochre brush against the grey-blue reservoir water. You make note of how the music encourages you to "sloooow downnnn," seeing details like these golden leaves, and the graffiti a little further down the path, that you might not have noticed otherwise.

Outside of the frame: locals bursting out of their apartments; tourists walking around dazed; a colleague you are seeing for the first time in person in months.

You enter from Columbus Circle, hearing upbeat brassy notes with a strong percussion, interrupted occasionally by poetry read by youth. It seems to fit the energy of the people milling around. It is your first time visiting the park since before the pandemic began, and the bustle of people and vendors feels unchanged from that time. You want to return at a quieter hour to experience the more serene, secret pockets of music floating through the park. As you wander down the main road and past the Great Meadow, the music transitions to a more plaintive piece featuring violins and flutes.

You stroll over to the park from the Upper West Side, a walk you make often with your science students at the school a few blocks away. The sun feels good on your face. This is just the reason you needed to leave the apartment after an especially stressful week. You adjust your earbuds. The orchestral sounds are different from your usual choice of K-pop to accompany your jogs through the park. You do not have the words to describe these symphonic notes, but you can describe their effect on you. You describe how you slow down and start to notice the particular color of the leaves and wonder: Why are the leaves just that shape and just that yellow? It occurs to you that you hardly understand nature at all, and you enter a technicolor trance. You have spent two hours in the park. You hear a cello and realize it is not coming from your earbuds, but from a bustler under the bridge.

You look through the auburn and green leaves of the trees—still vivid at dusk—to a body of water glinting in the gloaming light. "The music encourages a hyper attentiveness," you muse, as you notice the moment when the lamps lining the main drive of the park turn on.

***SOUNDWALK*, Sound Art, and Space**

SOUNDWALK is a GPS-enabled piece of sound art composed by Ellen Reid and performed by the New York Philharmonic, the Young People's Chorus of New York City, and the jazz ensemble Poole and the Gang. The New York Philharmonic commissioned the piece with the aim of producing a socially distanced way of experiencing art during the Coronavirus pandemic. Listeners download the *SOUNDWALK* app for free, connect their headphones, and upon entering the park at any point will begin to hear music. The entire park is covered by soundcells (geographic circles of various sizes within the park) and specific scores are activated in each cell. As the listener moves from one cell to another, the current score fades and a new score begins to play. Listeners 'compose' their own experience as they move through the park; each unique walk will result in a unique listening experience. Journalists who have covered *SOUNDWALK* reported that the sounds offer solace, escape, comfort, pleasure: "zen" as Liang put it (Andor Brodeur, 2020; Liang, 2020; Lunden, 2020; Norris, 2020).

In interviews, Ellen Reid explained that she composed a variety of themes to reflect specific elements of the park: a theme inspired by water is activated by soundcells covering water elements of the park, for example (Andor Brodeur, 2020). Other scores are specific to historical and contemporary events in the park. The soundcell covering Seneca Village, a historically Black, free, and land-owning community displaced by the city during the park's construction in the 1850s, includes a poem read by the Young People's Chorus reflecting on the site's history: "When did it become a landmark in a park that marked its destruction?… So sit on what might have been a steeple. There's so much we aren't seeing" (Reid, 2020). In the Ramble, a heavily wooded 36-acre area of winding trails and refuge for human and nonhuman city-dwellers alike, the orchestra's sounds mimic those of the birds that Christian Cooper, a Black

birdwatcher, saw on the day Amy Cooper, a White woman walking her dog, called the police on him: a racial profiling situation that went viral during the summer of 2020 (Lunden, 2020). A listener can experience the *SOUNDWALK* aware of these themes, or not; they might stumble upon a poetry reading or an unusual series of sounds and perhaps feel compelled to follow up on what they have heard, or not. It depends on how the music moves them.

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Sounding neither a DIY aesthetic nor avant-garde experimentalism nor 'sonic activism'—as Berlant's cases do—*SOUNDWALK* instead has the cosmopolitan sophistication of fine art. The New York Philharmonic selected Ellen Reid, a Pulitzer-Prize winning composer and one of 19 female composers selected for the New York Philharmonic's 'Project 19' commemorating the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment (Norris, 2020). While free of charge, few people seem to be aware of the project. Someone might learn about it from the mailing list for the New York Philharmonic or Friends of Central Park Conservancy; or local arts and culture media such as NPR's WNYC or *The New York Times* Arts section. Even then, you would have to have the means and proximity, as well as the privilege of time away from work and good health during a pandemic to visit. On two separate occasions, I brought a class of my own students and teaching colleagues to *SOUNDWALK*; both groups critiqued the *SOUNDWALK*'s accessibility to audiences beyond those who live nearby and wished the selected composer reflected any of the numerous diverse communities surrounding the park.

While Reid's oeuvre includes more experimental elements, *SOUNDWALK* is largely based in the sound canon of Western art, with references to African American jazz traditions and the innocent voices of children performing precocious poems that critique the park's racist and imperialist histories. These may all be read as a politics of aesthetic moralism: an "ethico-

affective 'good'" or wholesome experience designed to counter the maladies of social isolation and antagonism (Thompson, 2017). There is also *SOUNDWALK's* setting in Central Park, bordered on all sides by affluent communities (yes, Central Park North too, with the gentrification of 'Soha' as real estate hawks market South Harlem). Truman and Shannon (2018) critiqued the construction of Nature and nation through the British landscape and walking tradition in their sonic walking engagements of a footpath running between Scotland and England. The legacy of Britain's relationship to land permeates Central Park as well; Central Park's landscape designer, Frederick Olmsted, was inspired by England's Birkenhead Park and partnered with English architect Calvert Vaux in the plans for the park (Rettig, 1981). While Truman and Shannon's sonic engagement with Britain's landscape explicitly queers its heteronormative whiteness, *SOUNDWALK* does not appear to do that. And so, one could argue that *SOUNDWALK* is just a pastoral panacea for the privileged during a pandemic.

These critiques are important but are made in the abstract, not attending to what happens to people and their intra-actions with their material, affective environment when they do spend intentional time with *SOUNDWALK*. I want instead to engage LaBelle's (2015) definition of "sound art as a field of practices that may engage levels of sociality through understanding not only the harmonies but also the dissonances between place and self, and their interaction" (p. xviii). I consider the broader relevance of *SOUNDWALK's* artful practices in relation to knowledge and put *SOUNDWALK* in dialogue with other works of art using sound as a pedagogical tool in 2020. Participants in the Curriculum Lab noted how listening to *SOUNDWALK* affected their other senses: a hyper-awareness to color, shape, and light; a proprioceptive shift in speed and awareness of surroundings; an attunement to memory and emotion. We became curious about sound and followed it throughout the 2020 year. What

happens when we listen to other kinds of sound and soundscapes? How do they work curricularly and affect our relationship to curriculum?

Sounds of a Curriculum Lab

In October 2020, Lab participants were invited to bring a sound they wished to make in response to the current state of the pandemic and politics with their classes. We submitted screams and sentimentality. We listened to the primal cry that a woman in a crowd emits when she hears Trump declared the winner of the 2016 election (On Demand News, 2017). We played on repeat the "Keep Going Song" by the Bengsons, a quirky and heartfelt balladic benediction for endurance: itself an affective genre for relating to 2020.

One conversation on sound meandered to the Black Liberation March, a silent protest—gesturing to the 1917 Silent Parade organized by the NAACP—against the killing of Black trans lives that took place in Brooklyn in June of 2020. An estimated 15,000 people, dressed in white, turned out for the event. Marchers erupted into spontaneous call-and-response chants, which were met by the organizers' shouts that this was a silent protest. If, as Berlant argued, "all politically performative acts of vocal negation are pedagogical" (p. 231), what kind of sonic curricula are happening when participants reject that pedagogy? How does that pedagogically performative act of vocal negation exceed the human, in its co-composition of ambient curriculum?

Another participant recalled being at a backyard gathering to watch the presidential debates when water sprinklers embedded in the lawn automatically turned on. She hardly realized her own reaction, but the host noticed her jump and asked if she had been at protests over the summer. Her host explained that another guest reacted similarly because the hiss of the sprinklers recalled the sound of tear gas being fired. She then understood why her body had

tensed and curled up in what she said was an otherwise peaceful, familiar, and safe environment. We wondered about the other impacts of sound curricula; a knowledge stored more in the body than in the mind (Gershon, 2017).

By this point, we had also developed a practice of staying unmuted during our Zoom meetings. This practice was intended to ease the barrier of turning off the mute button when one wanted to speak and to mimic the crosstalk and dynamics of in-person conversations more closely: digital features could bear the agentic load of a conversation as well. It also had the effect of letting in ambient sounds. Apartments in tall buildings on a windy day groan like the hull of a ship; papers near the mic rustle. There is the snap of a carrot someone snacks on, cats meowing in the background, and the softer symphony of sighs and throat clearings and gulps of water. As Gershon (2017) pointed out, schools have always been spaces made up of noise. While classrooms typically dedicate a great deal of effort to controlling student-produced sounds, the sounds of school bells make their way onto the street and the sounds of traffic infuse a classroom.

Then a sound distinguishes itself as not-background noise: the sigh that binds a group together; the creaking of the apartment that sparks a moment of fantasy and pleasure; the snap of a carrot that causes a giggle. The guttural scream that goes on longer than it seems possible—the 'nooooooooooo!' that peals out from the stunned-but-not-silent crowd; the hiss of a sprinkler that causes you to jump.

Scenes from *Fighting Dark*

Let us go on another walk. This time, it takes place during a cold and grey March—the lingering effects of a bone-chilling winter, marked by second and third peaks of a pandemic. We begin in downtown Manhattan, at City Hall. You might also be listening to this walk from a

studio in California, a park in North Carolina, an apartment in the Bronx, or a classroom in Brooklyn, transported to the scene through black-and-white photographs that are not so different from this grey winter day.

We press ‘Play’ and hear cars honking and accelerating. People chatter around you. You are standing at the corner of the intersection of 5th Avenue and 43rd St, where the Colored Orphan Asylum once stood and the site where the 1863 Race Riots began in New York City. Kamau Ware’s (2020) voice comes on and, with the steady intonation of an audiobook reader, takes us back to “Monday 4 p.m., July 13” when the

> Colored Orphan Asylum was ransacked, looted, and torched by rioters. Over 200 Black children escaped unharmed and took shelter in the 20th Precinct at 352 West 35th Street, where they would remain under protection until Thursday, the 16th…. It was an attack on the very presence of Black New Yorkers.

What began as a protest of the Civil War draft grew into a race riot in a city whose political and financial leaders sided with the South and whose White working classes resented being drafted to fight for the freedom of Black communities. They attacked restaurants employing Black waiters. When the rioters physically beat the police, there was no force left to stop them. Emboldened by the lack of resistance, the mob of rioters grew. Over and over again, White mobs attacked, murdered, and left Black people to die in the most horrific ways. There were no arrests. Police reports only officially recorded 12 deaths, but Black reporters such as Junius C. Morel witnessed hundreds of deaths.

Next, there is the sound of bubbling water. You are at the fountain at the entrance to Bryant Park, named after the poet and abolitionist whose views were unpopular among White people in New York at the time. Kamau Ware noted that the Black community in Seneca Village, some forty blocks north in today’s Central Park, where a member of the Young People’s

Chorus reads a poem in Ellen Reid's *SOUNDWALK,* had been evicted by Mayor Fernando Wood 6 years prior to the riots.

Now, you are at Jacob Wrey Mould Fountain in City Hall Park and hear distant buses, a sound that continues at the statue of abolitionist and newspaper publisher Horace Greeley, on the other side of City Hall Park. After stops at the African Burial Ground and the Thurgood Marshall Courthouse, we change boroughs. Birds chirp and tweet at the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial Arch at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn. Look around you, these sounds seem to beckon. There are buses and birds, yes, and now you are going to hear this other history, just as present as those buses and birds. Can you sense that history here too?

One of Ware's companions says, "There's history all around us, and you can't put into words, you just feel it" (Ware, 2020). But you are not walking with Ware, in the flesh. We are in a pandemic. You are listening to this audio walk through headphones and register anger, frustration, and grief. You had come to listen with a friend. You did not discuss what you were hearing with each other—what was there to say in the immediacy of it?—but the companionship felt comforting as you both sat on a bench in silence. "I didn't know [this history], and I thought I knew [this place, New York]," you said again and again in different ways.

For Tavia Nyong'o (2018), 'theories of the ordinary and the everyday" are "the texture out of which eventfulness of fabulation arises" (p. 5). His interest lies in "that nondescript character, that quality of *in media res*, and attends especially to those moments and locations where a change in the surround that is blackness seems to come out of nowhere" (p. 5). Kamau Ware is reporting fact, not fabulation. But his aesthetic strategy similarly employs the "surround that is blackness," drawing attention to folds in the ordinary and everyday: folds that are also horrific histories and remarkable resilience. Ware employs sounds—ordinary and everyday

background noise, as well as the even-keeled tone of the reporter—to create that surround and texture, a portal between past and present, and the potential for different futures.

Because images are so often falsely rendered as silent, Tina Campt (2018) used sound metaphors—as Gershon (2017) called curriculum studies to do—such as frequency and register to open up different ways of thinking about the visual. Drawing on musicologist Matthew Morrison, Campt explained that vibrations create frequencies, and frequencies are picked up by the ear as sounds. As in physics, lower frequencies mean lower rates of repetition, or cycles, and higher frequencies mean higher rates of repetition. Frequencies are not new to commonplace curriculum design. Take the cycles of tests, the regular repetition of 'back to the basics' lessons on ratios, the daily rituals of morning meetings and lunch time transitions and packing up at the end of the day. But how frequently is the history of the 1863 Race Riots heard? Did we get 'back to the basics' of who we are? Curricular frequency can also mean the speed of vibration responsible for how knowledge hits your body. Frequency is a property of the sound, but register is the socio-cultural interpretation of that vibration: how your particular body feels the impact of knowledge. How does this audio register? Does it register as exhaustion, as anger, as overwhelm, as a call to action or confirmation of what you did indeed already know? Do you relate to this space differently—to that figure in the arch, to the bench, to the traffic on the street, and the people milling around?

Ware was commissioned by The Shed to create this audio walk in dialogue with an exhibition of Howardena Pindell's work, which includes a film recounting the lynchings of the 20th century. There are no arrests. Ware wants this audio tour to do for the 1863 race riots what the 2019 adaptation of the graphic novel *Watchmen* into an HBO series did for the 1921 race massacre on Black Wall Street: make it common knowledge and galvanize change. The

pandemic made individually accessed sound experiences more desirable, and a more practical way of sharing aesthetic and educational experiences. But to access these sound experiences requires knowledge that such art exists, and a desire to have those experiences. Berlant (2011) noted that "in liberal societies, freedom includes freedom from the obligation to pay attention to much, whether personal or political—no-one is obliged to be conscious or socially active in their modes and scenes of belonging" (p. 227). A closed-ness to new forms of knowledge can still satisfy a *desire* for knowledge; without new and contradictory information coming on, one can feel that one knows all one needs to know and belong to the social worlds identified with that knowledge.

Scenes from *Ghost Forest*

You are in Madison Square Park. There is a cluster of tall, silvery Atlantic white cedars in a clearing, amid the elms, oaks, and ginkgo trees with their partly bare branches and rusty leaves. There are picnic blankets strewn with toys and strollers which mark the borders between play zones. Toddlers shriek with joy and late-afternoon exhaustion. The air fills with the chatter of nannies, parents, professionals and college students. A few individuals sit alone at the base of a tree, with headphones, a book, or a laptop. You take a seat at the base of one tree, trying to make yourself comfortable at the hard right angle that this straight tree trunk makes with the dirt ground. A sound piece accompanies this installation too. You listen to bird calls and wolf howls, and the names of these species in common English, scientific terminology, and the Unami and Munsee languages of the Lenape people. The sounds of these extinct species piped in through your earbuds feel jarring.[6] They seem out of place, amid the buzz of human sociality in this golden hour, that settles into a hum as toddlers drift home and older humans take their turn to

[6] Played through my computer speakers at home, the sounds of extinct birds aroused my cats from their sleep.

rest at the end of a work day. Their interference with that thrum reminds you that this scene of Manhattan sociality is one of

> exuberant attachments [that] keep ticking not the time bomb they might be but like a white noise machine that provides assurance that what seems like static really is, after all, a rhythm people can enter into while they're dithering, tottering, bargaining, testing, or otherwise being worn out by the promises that they have attached to in this world. (Berlant, 2010, pp. 97-98)

Even in their dissonance, "sounds, when they hit living things from trees to babies, are, inescapably and always, forms of embodied knowledge" (Gershon, 2017, p. 26). The sounds of the living, even if deeply invested in a relationship of cruel optimism to the world, lure you away from the sounds of the dead.

These corpse trees absorb vibrations, but no longer communicate with each other. They do become the back of a chair to lean on; a tower to hide behind; and, after the installation comes down, boats built by teenagers in the Bronx (Gibbons, 2021). That is the aesthetic yield of the cedar tree. Meanwhile, the force of the sounds of children and extinct species moves you into the force of the event: to create a fold in the day for something unexpected to happen, to stay longer than you should have, to spontaneously hug a living tree next to the corpse-tree and feel its 'livingness.' Erin Manning (2016) would call this unscripted sociality—allowing yourself to be moved by the force of the event—a "culture of affirmation" (p. 216). A culture of affirmation expresses itself socially and sonically:

> In a culture of affirmation there are screams, there are squeaks, and moans. There is the unmitigated noise of ecologies under destruction, the silence of missing bees, the pounding heat of too many sidewalks. There is also love, and laughter. (p. 211)

The very ambience *Ghost Forest* created through the physical invitation of the tall trees to gather—a scene of sound and movement made up of laughter and cries and chatter, as well as

quieter keyboard clacking or book pages turning—made it difficult to hear the "noise of ecologies under destruction, the silence of missing [species]" (p. 211).

Aural Interference

It is the "minor gesture within frames of everyday life"—the scene of ambient curriculum—that "creates the conditions not for slowness exactly, but for the opening of the everyday to degrees and shares of experience that resist formation long enough to allow us to see the potential of worlds in the making" (Manning, 2016, p. 15). Moreover, Berlant (2011) argued, "it is minor work of political depression that both demonstrates a widespread sense of futility about slowing the mounting crisis of ordinary life in the present, and still, makes a world from political affect in which practices of politics might be invented that do not yet exist" (pp. 228-229). The depressive position: that no one wants to hear the curricular conversation; that the dominant curricular conversations (debates over critical race theory, 'back to basics' (again), learning loss) make it nearly impossible to draw attention to other scenes of study; that our attachment to curriculum gets in the way of recognizing other forms of knowledge and worlds where different curricular practices might exist. The aural strategies that *SOUNDWALK, Fighting Dark,* and *Ghost Forest* employ to interfere with ambient curriculum offer a 'minor' mode of curricular practice, creating the potential for something else to resonate (which, as Gershon [2017] pointed out in the technical understanding of resonance, can also produce dissonance).

Typically, sound—and ambience—is taken as an inherently social experience. It impacts people together in a concert hall, on a live walking tour, through speakers installed in a park, as they pass a room or street, whether they intended to hear a particular sound or not. In his

introduction to *Background noise: Perspectives on sound art* titled “Auditory Relations,” LaBelle (2015) put it more poetically:

> Sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational: it emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates, and agitates; it leaves a body and enters others; it binds and unhinges, harmonizes and traumatizes; it sends the body moving, the mind dreaming, the air oscillating. (p. xi)

That individuals share the experience of vibrations moving through all bodies at the same time (if not interpreted in the same way by each body) causes some to argue that sound produces a ‘visceral immediacy,’ an affective bonding over a shared sensorium (Berlant, 2011, p. 231; LaBelle, 2015). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and technological affordances, *SOUNDWALK*, *Fighting Dark*, and *Ghost Forest* were designed to be accessed digitally and listened to individually through headphones; they are not physically shared social experiences. While each of these works is site-specific, the sound does not participate materially with space as it would if it were performed live or transmitted through public speakers. It is not boundless, bouncing off every “tree and baby” (Gershon, 2017, p. 26), but transmitted directly to individual ears through headphones. Participants are literally not listening to the same thing (LaBelle, 2015, p. xiii), and so opportunities to mishear each other, over and above mishearing the sound itself, abound (Gershon, 2017, p. 196).

While deeper, more careful listening is often held up as the ideal of what *sound* curriculum might achieve (Gershon, 2017), scholarship in the field of sound studies has done much to disrupt normative, White, settler modes of listening (Hagood, 2019; Robinson, 2020; Stoever, 2016; Thompson, 2017). Stoever (2016) named the *“listening ear:”* the aural analog to the White gaze, as “that which normalizes the aural tastes and standards of white elite masculinity as the singular way to interpret sonic information” (p. 13). Building on violent mishearings of Indigenous sounds (song as legal text, for example), Robinson (2020) called

settlers' rapacious greed for assimilable sound "hungry listening" and urged a retraining of the "listening ear." Each of these scholars argued for reinterpretations of sonic information; for the kind of aural interference with normative noise that creates a "scratch" (Dernikos et al., 2020) or goes against "the groove" (Weheliye, 2005) of dominant hearings. No one who participated in *SOUNDWALK* claimed to have become a better (more empathetic, more open-minded, more astute) *listener* in the normative sense. Instead, Black Paint members claimed to be more open to having their own entrained patterns of moving through and mishearing sonic atmospheres interrupted; to being emotionally affected by sound; or to becoming hyper-attentive to the movement of other bodies in space (such as light, live music, clusters of people, animals, leaves). While the strategies of *SOUNDWALK, Fighting Dark,* and *Ghost Forest* are sonic, the curricular aims are not necessarily better listening, but an attunement to more-than-human curricular contact zones (Stewart, 2007): weather patterns (Manning, 2016), racial trauma, and ecological crisis.

Studying artists like Gillian Wearing and John Cage, whose choreography and compositions, respectively, frame sounds of public spaces as aesthetic, Brandon LaBelle (2015) argued that the "ultimate contribution of sound art [is] to make audible the very promise of noise to deliver the unknowable" (p. xviii). Or, as Manning (2016) put it, "[a culture of affirmation]'s noises are not so easily parsed as positive or negative, not so easily positioned or understood" (p. 211). It is not so easy to put into words what you know; the ambient curriculum's 'promise to deliver the unknowable' is a sensory pedagogy (Ellsworth, 2005; Stoller, 1997). That is not to say you cannot put your finger on what you know, but rather that curriculum circulates in ways far more complicated and multidimensional than distinctions we currently have for curriculum

would suggest.[7] The aural interference created by the scores of *SOUNDWALK* and the narration of race riots in *Fighting Dark* and the howls of extinct wolves in *Ghost Forest*; by protest strategies and sounds, by the practice of unmuting on Zoom to let partners' voices and cats' meows and street traffic into a shared virtual space, bring ambient curriculum into relief for a moment. Each of these pieces—*SOUNDWALK, Fighting Dark, Ghost Forest*—attunes us to curricular contact zones through the production of dissonance: that the mood conveyed by the work of art—from joy and fantasy to somberness and grief—contrasts with the scenes of everyday life around you. They interrupt the ambience of a scene and, in so doing, shift one's orientation to knowledge. The effect of *SOUNDWALK* was to change the listener's orientation to their surroundings: a slowing down of one's movements and a dilated sense of perception, as if suspended in space and time. For *SOUNDWALK* participants, this modality of movement—suspension, dissolution, an errant habitation—began to dislodge the stuckness of going on amid it all.

Scenes from *SOUNDWALK,* Part 3

I returned to *SOUNDWALK* three times: that warm Sunday in November, 2020, right after the election had been called for Biden; a crisp January in 2021, taking the 'slow-cut' to an errand in Midtown; and a swelteringly humid Friday in July, 2021, with a group of students.

In November, I experienced *SOUNDWALK* with Lab through asynchronous engagement on WhatsApp as well as with a friend I was meeting at the park later in the day. The first time I listened, I wanted to absorb as much of *SOUNDWALK* as I could. With the app playing in my earbuds, I ran a whole loop through the park early in the morning, in anticipation of the Lab's

[7] Listen, for example, to Hortense Spillers's rumination on knowing as a 'way of putting a finger on the ambient curriculum' in Arthur Jafa's *Dreams Are Colder Than Death* and Jafa's latest film, *AGHDRA*, for more complicated categories of curriculum.

engagement throughout the day. I wandered off my usual route near the Delacorte Theater and Bellevue Castle. The sounds changed; I could not describe exactly how: something plaintive, something piercing. Whistling sounds drew me into the Ramble, a thicket of winding trails that almost trick you into thinking you are no longer in a city. I loped down to the lake, cutting through the middle of the south end of the park at Poet's Walk. I paused at the Christopher Columbus statue, listening to a poem read by a young person, critiquing his presence here. I jogged back up the East Drive, noting again the whistling sounds near the Ramble. Mostly, though, I heard a similar score, on repeat, as I fell into a cadence with other early runners along the main drive through the park. I exited back at the north end. In my drive for mastery, for coverage, for deeper insight, I was not sure what I had gained. What did this have to tell me about curriculum?

I returned that afternoon, after some chatter on the Lab's WhatsApp group from other participants who were visiting *SOUNDWALK*. I walked down the east side, past the Harlem Meer and through the gardens. I noticed how crowded the park was, teeming with bodies: how strange, how unusual a scene, and how noisy, how different from the scores I tried to listen to, the scores that wanted so much to soothe, indeed had soothed me in the early morning's still air. Were all these people missing something? 'There's this incredible music all around!' I wanted to shout, 'Listen!' Or was I missing something?

I continued on my way, walking along the Harlem Meer and through the Conservatory and English Gardens. I stumbled upon more spoken word pieces. Words signaled something to write down, something clearly critical and critique-able. I met a friend at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on the east side of the park. I attempted to share *SOUNDWALK* with her as we began our walk through the park. The sounds coming out from my headphones that I held up

between us felt tinny:[8] pathetic little waves, crushed by the exuberance of bodies gathering, the euphoria fed by the weather, the rare breath of better political news. As we walked back, north again on the West Drive, I tried to share the Seneca Village sound-cell as well. It did not have the same effect that it had on me earlier that morning when the park was imbued with the stillness of dew and haze. We moved on. Dusk fell, and it was dark as we emerged on Frederick Douglass Circle. The boulevard's restaurants were overflowing with revelers celebrating the 2020 election results; a culture of affirmation momentarily flung together by the force of negation. We slipped into a bench for two, ordered glasses of wine, and joined them: our own sound-cell contributing to the cacophony.

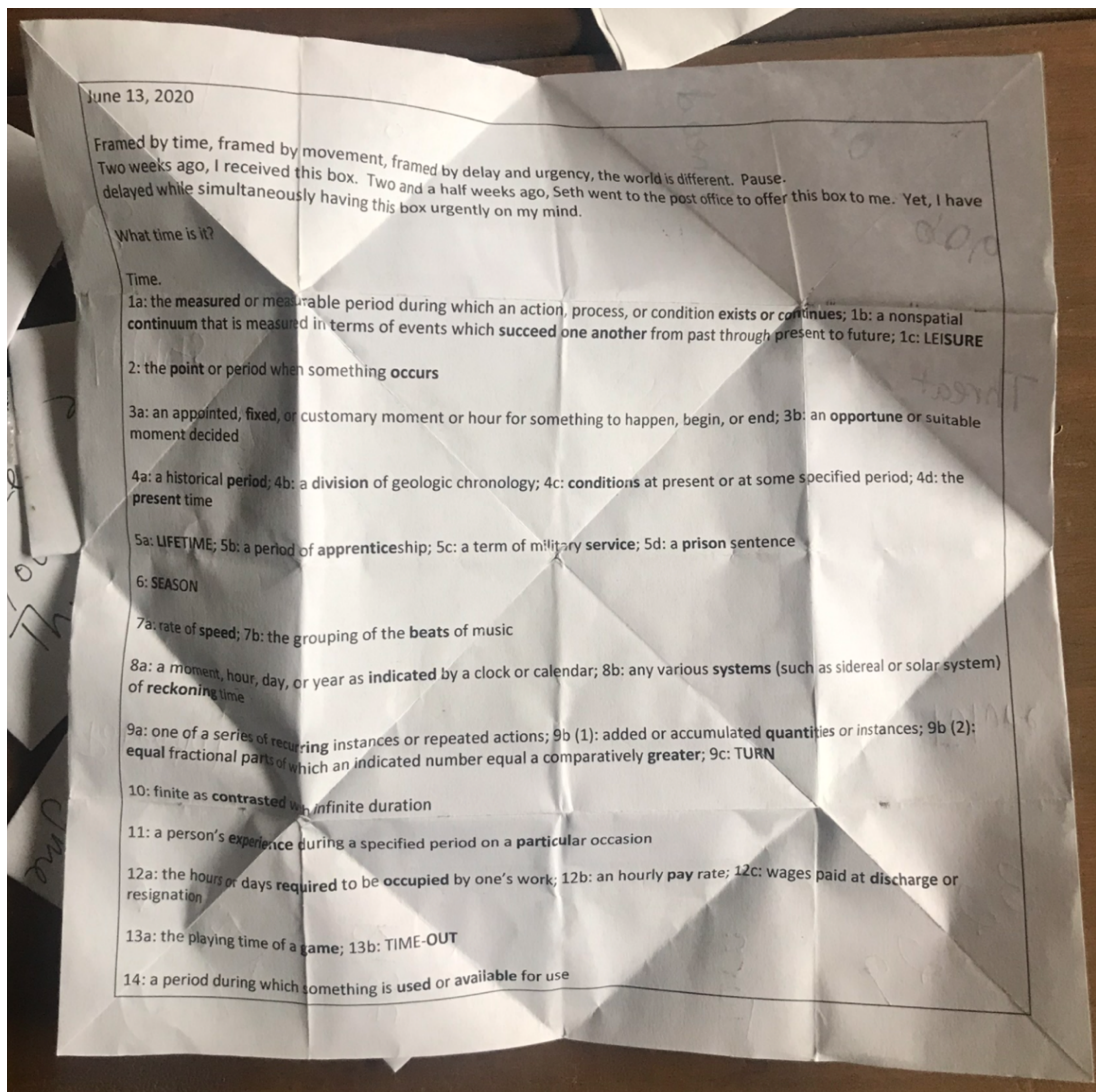
Ambient [curriculum] is a complicated thing, a mode of belonging, really…
(Berlant, 2011, p. 230)

[8] Gershon (2017) can go into far greater and more technical detail than I can about the significance of good audio equipment.

Chapter 5

MARKING TIME, MAKING TIME: CURRICULAR TEMPORALITIES

June 13, 2020
Framed by time, framed by movement, the world is different. Pause.
Two weeks ago, I received this box. Two and a half weeks ago,
Seth went to the post office to offer this box to me. Yet, I have delayed
while simultaneously having this box urgently on my mind.
What time is it?
-Jamie Uva



June 13, 2020

Framed by time, framed by movement, framed by delay and urgency, the world is different. Pause. Two weeks ago, I received this box. Two and a half weeks ago, Seth went to the post office to offer this box to me. Yet, I have delayed while simultaneously having this box urgently on my mind.

What time is it?

Time.

1a: the measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues; 1b: a nonspatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past through present to future; 1c: LEISURE

2: the point or period when something occurs

3a: an appointed, fixed, or customary moment or hour for something to happen, begin, or end; 3b: an opportune or suitable moment decided

4a: a historical period; 4b: a division of geologic chronology; 4c: conditions at present or at some specified period; 4d: the present time

5a: LIFETIME; 5b: a period of apprenticeship; 5c: a term of military service; 5d: a prison sentence

6: SEASON

7a: rate of speed; 7b: the grouping of the beats of music

8a: a moment, hour, day, or year as indicated by a clock or calendar; 8b: any various systems (such as sidereal or solar system) of reckoning time

9a: one of a series of recurring instances or repeated actions; 9b (1): added or accumulated quantities or instances; 9b (2): equal fractional parts of which an indicated number equal a comparatively greater; 9c: TURN

10: finite as contrasted with infinite duration

11: a person's experience during a specified period on a particular occasion

12a: the hours or days required to be occupied by one's work; 12b: an hourly pay rate; 12c: wages paid at discharge or resignation

13a: the playing time of a game; 13b: TIME-OUT

14: a period during which something is used or available for use

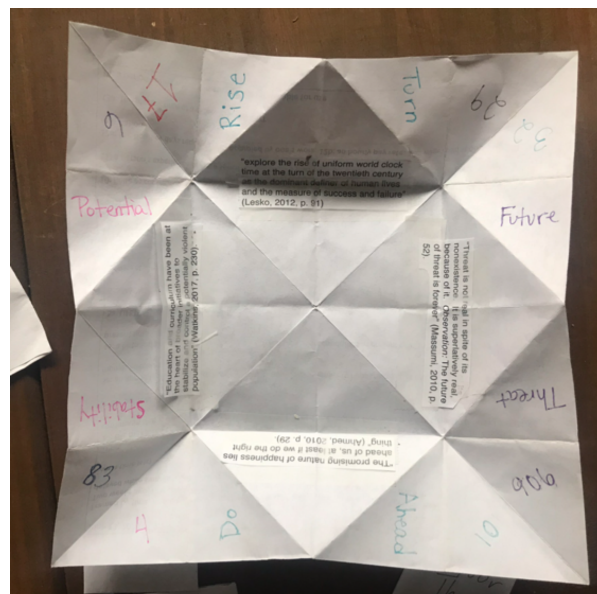
"Take Your Thyme"

It is late May, a few months after you moved back home to the Bay Area, to help care for family members. You sit at your dining room table, across from your mom, and are making her laugh about your younger brother's antics, while you cut up squares of paper and carefully tip jars of fresh chile powder, making a tidy brick red mound on each square. You gathered these different varieties of chile powder on a trip to New Mexico a few years ago, and the smells stir memories of that place—dusty red hills like these piles of chile powder—and time, with "a home you never lived and people you never met and stories that aren't yours." You fold the paper and tape the packets of chile powder shut. You compose a letter about gathering at the kitchen table like this, describing your mother's accumulated plates and your own collected spices, and close with an invitation to draw together at *your* table. *Gather: come together, assemble, accumulate, bring together, take in from scattered places, pick up from the surface, collect as a harvest, draw together or toward oneself.* You assemble a stack of postcards, paste a definition of gathering to each postcard, and request the future recipients of this offering to mail a postcard on to someone else. You loosely bind the stack of postcards and packets of chile powder with cooking twine and gently place it in a box.

The box arrives in New York a few days later. You unpack it in your apartment, amid your own moving boxes. You read the letter on gathering and twirl a spice packet between your fingers. There is not much left in the pantry: some ground chicken, tomatoes. You mash the spices with the ground chicken in a bowl and send a photo of the burgers browning in a frying pan to the group chat. You return to the definition of gathering. You have gathered your life in New York into boxes and labeled each one. You collage flyers from the moving company and definitions of movement to a spare piece of cardboard, layering them with your own musings on

movement. *Movement; the act of moving; tendency; unit of music; a perpetual-motion machine—what kind of machine is curriculum?* You tuck this collage into the box and mail it on. You and your partner wrangle the cat into the car and drive to Detroit while the box travels one borough over to Brooklyn.

The box has sat in your apartment for 2 weeks before you open it. It feels surprisingly light, with only two offerings tucked in. It seems hungry, urging you to respond, though you delay making your offering. A scene repeats itself: you cut squares of paper and carefully tip a jar of thyme onto each. You fold the squares into small pouches, brushing in the dried green leaves that want to drift every which way, and tape the packets shut. You write "take your thyme" on the back of the packets. Time, a thing taken, as if what is yours cannot also be *yours* and *yours*. Time: the period during which you keep the box to yourself, illicitly possessive of it. Time: the stretch through which a thought, an idea, percolates in the background and comes to form while other things are happening. You type up a letter collecting these brief musings and longer definitions and print it out. You trim the printed letter into a square. Vestiges of muscle memory animate your fingers: taking a square, folding it in half diagonally, and diagonally again unfolding, refolding, making little pleats, and then: a fortune teller. You slide your index finger and thumb into the corners and kiss them together, counting: in, 1; out, 2; in, 3; out, 4. You flatten the paper and mark the various boxes with numbers, phrases, and quotes: Ahmed, Massumi, Lesko, Watkins.



17 (in, out, in, out, in, out,… in) // Do (fold flap up) // "the promising nature of happiness lies ahead of us; at least if we do the right thing" (Ahmed, 2010a, p. 29).

Nearly a month after it left the West Coast, the box boards a plane and arrives back in California. You open the box, your fingers trailing the postcards, the twine, the taped collage, the paper fortune-teller. You have been making zines, and your first inclination is to cut out images from teen magazines and a sex-ed textbook from the 1980s, which you found in a stack of your grandfather's belongings. You place the cuttings in a plastic bag and add it to the box. You have added, and now you *cull-as-in-gather* from the offerings. You mix the thyme and chile with some spices and herbs of your own, *collect-as-in-gather* some blue fabric, and stitch the scraps into an amulet. You have been reading about ancient Judaic amuletic practices and making amulets, trying to *come together-as-in-gather* with your ancestors. You describe these amuletic practices and invite the recipient to wear the amulet as protection against COVID, against police terror, against whatever it is *you need from curriculum now*. You gently repack the box and send it on to Pennsylvania.

It is that formless middle-of-summer, between-semesters time, and you sift through magazine cuttings and comb through your own stack, taking selections from *Bitch* and *The New Yorker*. You fiddle with the fortune-teller, and roam through your own stacks of books for something that conveys the *thisness* of the period. You retrieve a black Moleskine journal and tape a passage from Katie Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* to its cover. You paste small brown envelopes on each side of the journal's pages, labeling the pages on the left "LOST" and the pages on the right "FOUND." You slide small items into the envelopes: a no-longer needed NYC subway card, a screen shot of Google Maps with the contours of a new neighborhood, a page of recommendations for podcasts that take a speculative approach to retelling history, and a

requiem for George Floyd from *The New Yorker*. The rest of the envelopes you leave empty, with an invitation: *use the envelopes to store our losses and findings of the moment—documents, objects, tracings, ideas, musings, fantasies, art, feelings, dates, worries, compulsions, fears, questions, habits, stories, encounters, concepts, dreams, convictions, frustrations, joys, loves, pleasures, textures, pleas, hopes, goals, irritations, bodies, knowledge, & opportunities.* As you repack the box, you press down gently on the Box's swelling contents, and tape over previous labels and peeling corrugation.

The box returns to New York in July. You let it sit in the entry way for a few days, waiting for time worthy of opening it. When you do open it, the sun slants through the window and the cats circle the scene. You cut through many layers of tape, and the box bursts open. Scents of thyme and cayenne tickle your nose; crinkled paper and dried flowers meet fingers that had become COVID-wary of touch. You lift out a stack of postcards, a bag of magazine cut-outs, an amulet, a collaged piece of cardboard, a thick notebook. You sit in the middle, surrounding yourself with materials, poring through them, wondering. That night, you sprinkle some chile powder over peppers sizzling in a pan. A few mornings later, you wear the amulet for a walk through the park.

*

Time	*4c. conditions at present or at some specified period, usually used in plural //* times *are hard; 4d. the present time // issues of the* time[1]
OCTOBER 7, 2020	CITY HALL SILENT ON DETAILS OF NEW SCHOOL CLOSURES AS CLOCK TICKS DOWN TO DEADLINE[2]

*

What Do You Need from Curriculum Now?

The Lab began meeting weekly on Zoom, from April through May of 2020. These were the initial days that became weeks and months of the pandemic. Time was marked by staying put, moving back with family, or driving across the country; sending zines to friends and taking walks in the park; caring for babies, parents, friends, siblings, partners, selves. Considering what participants might desire and need from conversations and experiences in the Lab gave way to a question that would continue to orient our work for the next year.

What do you need from curriculum now? In Lab meetings over the spring of 2020, Lab'ers talked about the ways students' bodies were experiencing the long days at home, and the ways teachers' bodies were adjusting to sitting in front of Zoom instead of making laps around a classroom. We bemoaned the expectations in mainstream talk—from policymakers, school leaders, parents, and so many others—for the formal curriculum to continue, for "business as usual" to go on. We shared projects and dreams of educators and activists in our own networks.

What do you need from curriculum now? Lab'ers posted poems, doodles, resources, and virtual events to Padlet. Someone posted Muriel Rukeyser's "Poem (I lived in the first century of world wars)"; it was somberly prescient in how it conveyed the surreality of the scene in which

[1] All definitions of 'time' come from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/time.
[2] All headlines are from *The Gothamist,* https://gothamist.com

we found ourselves living. Another shared a piece of childhood art found while cleaning their parents' basement. There is a ring of colorful paint circles on one side, arranged like a flower. On the opposite corner is a single black hole. They titled it "Isolation." Others posted resources, many boosting the promise of *care*. The Brooklyn Museum offered a workshop for educators, inviting participants to make altars consisting of objects used to care for oneself or others; the Tenement Museum expanded its *Your Story, Our Story* project with a special invitation to submit stories of objects of care; Duke University Press released a "Care in Uncertain Times" syllabus. Somehow, this virtual bulletin board might contain a secret key, a way of sifting and sorting through the crisis of the present.

What do you need from curriculum now? As the Spring 2020 semester ended, several participants voiced a wish to continue these conversations while also wanting a reprieve from Zoom. A few commented on their own involvement in postcard, recipe, and zine exchanges. A blend of nostalgia and want for physical connection made the prospect of receiving mail appealing. There was a desire for something tactile, a physical product. This led to the idea for a "Box of Curricular Offerings" that would travel to each participant. We devised a set of rules for the Box: each recipient would record their possession of the box by sending a photo to a dedicated WhatsApp group; add an offering that responded to the current contents; and mail the box on to someone else on the list, in any order. The curricular offerings were initially imagined as an engagement with a set of "frames," or loose dialectics that had surfaced in previous conversations such as:

gathering / scattering

imagination and speculation / return to normal

failed state / dream state

disruption / possibility

home / school

finding / losing

For the next 2 years, a growing murmuration of curricular propositions tumbled through USPS package rooms and sat patiently in its hosts' homes. It filled with spices, magazine clippings, found objects, postcards, material indexes, and addendums. It filled with mementos from new homes; messages about loved ones with COVID; poems and podcast recommendations that spoke to processing individual and collective trauma from the Coronavirus pandemic and police violence. It filled with sensory experiences: dried flowers, chile powder, an amulet worn against the chest. It filled with invitations to send a letter, to make a meal, to collage, to add and take away and use and generate.

What do you need from curriculum now? We did not define curriculum, as applicable to the Box, in advance. It would be curricular because of the unanticipated ways in which we—and the materials and individual contexts for receiving the Box—would provoke each other's manner of making sense of this time.

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Time *11. a person's experience during a specified period…*

NOVEMBER 19, 2020 FRUSTRATED BUT NOT SURPRISED: WEARY PARENTS GRAPPLE WITH CITYWIDE CLOSURE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Sensing Curricular Time

I turn again to Lauren Berlant (2011), whose astute observations into a historical present resonate so closely with the ruptures that the pandemic wrought to familiar forms of life and learning in 2020-2021. Berlant argued that amid such disruptions, "mak[ing] reliable sense of life" is the affective work of "intuition as [a] process of dynamic, sensual data-gathering" (p. 52). Drawing on Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory,* Berlant framed intuition as a senses-based method of forming knowledge about one's relationship to and ways of belonging in time. Through 'sensual data-gathering,' which is intuition at work, the body comes to feel—and shape—the contours of its temporal context. For Berlant, that temporal context is the historical present, a disrupted time during which the body finds new genres for living: ***What do you need from curriculum now?***

As Berlant did, Manning (2016) "follow[s] Bergson" in "turn[ing] to intuition, and its manner of making time" (p. 14). "Intuition," wrote Manning, "is the relational movement through which the present begins to coexist with its futurity, with the quality of manner of the not-yet that lurks at the edges of experience" (p. 47). Bergson's notion of intuition and experience allowed Manning to develop an understanding of art not as an object but as process of learning and creating a "memory of the future." Intuition is the process of feeling for forms of continuity and difference, and what might yet come into being—the minor gesture—within the

elasticity of experience. If the work of intuition is to make and make sense of its temporal context, for Manning, that context is a "memory of the future" (p. 47), "the feeling-forth of future potential" (p. 47), the "not-yet" in experience (p. 46): ***What else could curriculum do or become?***

While Elizabeth Freeman (2019) did not use the term *intuition* or draw directly on Bergson as Manning and Berlant did, her theory of sense-methods complements Berlant's and Manning's models of intuition as an affective, sensory relationship to time and fills a gap in understanding the relationship between individual and collective experiences of time. Freeman's "theory of sense-methods focuses on the embodiment of a relationality that does not always refer to or result in a stable social form but instead moves with and against dominant timings and times" (p 12). Through sense-methods, time is felt, textured, rhythmed, gestured on a scale greater than the individual and smaller than the total population, such as a minor religious group or marginalized social populations, in ways that "may produce a small-scale collective consciousness" (p. 8). Freeman's analysis of social relations constructed through temporal encounters in the 19th century (in cases ranging from miming death in minstrelsy and BLM protests to refusing to move forward in time as a subversion of public health campaigns) "foreground[s] time itself as a visceral, haptic, proprioceptive mode of apprehension—a way of feeling and organizing the world through and with the individual body, often in concert with other bodies" (p. 8). Berlant might call these temporal modes of apprehension "genres:" as in, 'this is how the story goes,' or 'this is the line that comes next'. When those ways of feeling and organizing the world are disrupted, intuition probes for new genres. As Freeman demonstrated, that temporal work of intuition is social and sensory.

Berlant's and Manning's Bergsonian intuition and Freeman's sense-methods contribute to a theory of the sensory, affective work of the body feeling time, and are salient for understanding the curricular work of the Box, described earlier, and other practices of the Lab during the Coronavirus pandemic. Intuition organizes affective responses to the world, making them haptic, felt, touched: whether as the tug of ancient ritual in a tumultuous present; the way you tip just 'this much' seasoning into a dish without really thinking about it because you have done it so many times before; or movements animated by muscle memory, such as fingers and a flat piece of paper dancing just so to conjure and animate a fortune-teller. Memory makes the next movement, which is the future, but that does not mean the next movement is a given or an exact repetition. Berlant (2011) suggested that intuition is "trained," "educat[ed]," and "learned"; in moments of temporal rupture, it might be un-learned and re-trained (p. 52). Freeman (2019) also suggested that "we have forgotten, or never learned, how to see" knowledge that lives in the flesh and rhythms of the body (p. 8). I explored how curriculum might prioritize such knowledge by considering how we marked and made time in ways counter to the dominant timelines of the pandemic and educational development. According to the Merriam-Webster definition copied on the fortune-teller in the Box, that *made*-time might take the form of duration, an occasion, a period, an experience during an occasion or period, an age, an issue, a sentence, a term, a turn, a season, a series, an instance in a series, a system, accumulated or equal parts, speed, or rhythm. The profusion of definitions for time itself speaks to the myriad ways of sensing time. As Manning (2016) reminded us, "the art of time is not about definitions so much as about sensations, about the affective force of the making of time" (p. 49). The significance of intuition, or of sense-methods, is that it makes felt an affective, relational experience of temporality that is

neither the uniform clock time, which orders so much of formal curricular documents nor the linear arc of progress that prevailed in public health discourses.

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Time	*8a. a moment, hour, day, or year as indicated by a clock or calendar; 8b. any various systems of reckoning time*
DECEMBER 6, 2020	PARENTS PLEAD FOR CONSISTENCY AS SOME NYC STUDENTS HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL. AGAIN. FOR NOW.

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"Knowing and uncertain intuitionism"

In a historical present—when crisis interrupts the ordinary, Berlant (2011) observed that

> a shift between knowing and uncertain intuitionism enables us to think about being in history as a densely corporeal, experientially felt thing whose demands on survival skills map not the whole world in one moment but a way to think about the history of sensualized epistemologies in the atmosphere of a particular moment now (aesthetically) suspended in time. (p. 64)

We witness this shift between "knowing and uncertain intuitionism" (p. 64) in the proliferation of curricular materials to manage or confront uncertainty posted to the Lab's Padlet in 2020: from University of Pennsylvania's *Planning for Uncertainty: An Educator's Guide to Navigating the COVID-19 Era* (The Project for Mental Health, 2020) to Duke University Press's (2020) *Care in Uncertain Times Syllabus.* These formal curriculum projects demonstrate a shared sense of not-knowing what was happening or what would happen, which organizations responded to with efforts to create a semblance of control or practices of care. The Box, in the precarious summer of 2020 when we did not know if we would return to schools or what that return might look like, evinced our efforts to make sense of "being in history" (p. 64). The materials that participants gathered—that the Box, with a particular thing-power, gathered—gave tangible form

to and made “densely corporeal, experientially felt” (p. 64) the emotions and inchoate intensities of the historical present: sudden thrusts to online learning; constantly changing plans for returning to school; protests of police killings of Black, brown, and trans people; wildfires and climate disasters; a wait for vaccines and cures. Chile powder and thyme, an amulet and a fortune-teller, envelopes to contain the lost and found, moving materials and magazine cut-outs—these indexed ways of being in history, an ontology whereby survival is a matter of tapping into “the history of sensualized epistemologies in the atmosphere of a particular moment now (aesthetically) suspended in time” (p. 64). The offerings—participants’ responses to that question: *What do you need from curriculum now?*—marked a desire for the kinds of knowledge exchanged over kitchen tables, ancestral religious traditions, childhood play, the process of leaving a familiar place and of coming to know a new place, the fluidity and experimentation of artistic practice. The Box became a time capsule of “sensualized epistemologies” of a summer “(aesthetically) suspended in time” (p. 64). In dialogue with definitions participants tucked in—with keeping open-ended the forms that *gathering, time, movement* take—the Box’s contents were the stuff of “the education of embodied intuition in a transforming world situation” (Berlant, 2011, p. 52).

As part of that education of embodied intuition, these offerings demand processes of contemplation and creation from the participants who contributed them and invite interactive experiences from future participants. Time is central to the experientially oriented offerings (postcards, cooking spices, fortune-tellers) when activated by subsequent recipients of the Box, *do*. The Box’s offerings invited “the not-yet that lurks at the edges of experience” (Manning, 2016, p. 47): the note to be written on postcards, the meals to be made with chile powder, what will have been lost and what will have been found, what other provocations and invitations will

be offered to the box and its future participants. Each contribution, as object and process, takes up not only the "not-yet," but it also feels for the edges of the historical moment, the summer of 2020 suspended between the sudden disruptions the Coronavirus pandemic wrought on the end of the 2019-2020 school year and the still uncertain 2020-2021 year.

In inviting others into its material, sensory practices—cooking, taking a turn to wear an amulet, flipping the fortune-teller, adding lost and found objects to the journal—the Box's offerings highlight the way in which "temporality is a nonreproductive, but nevertheless somatic and material, mode of sensory receptivity that collates bodies in relations of affinity across space" (Freeman, 2019, p. 8). We could feel historical together through our material, sensualized practices for processing the ruptures to our principles of curriculum and teaching. This connected us across distances. Flung to California, Detroit, North Carolina, and strewn across boroughs of New York, we could not be together physically, but these material modes of apprehending the present allowed us to be together in time. As Freeman wrote, "being together with others is a matter of keeping in time with them" (p. 188).

The pace of the box slowed as we entered the 2020-2021 school year; the long slog, in which participants in the education system were expected to soldier on, for the body to act *as if* these were ordinary times—for the "disturbed time" of the historical present to become an ordinary present (Berlant, 2008, p. 5). The slowing of the box, sitting for months in the corner of a participant's apartment, might suggest that participants learned to settle into "conditions for continuity of life," supplemented, I argue later, by the work of intuition as it finds new habits or forms to sustain going on (Berlant, 2008, p. 5). The experience of time was—if not ordinary—at least cohering into a set of conditions for continuity.

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Time	*5a. LIFE TIME; 5b. a period of apprenticeship; 5c. a term of military service; 5d. a prison sentence*
DECEMBER 15, 2020	AFTER DE BLASIO KILLS SNOW DAYS, FRUSTRATED STUDENTS VOW TO “TAKE MATTERS INTO OUR OWN HANDS”

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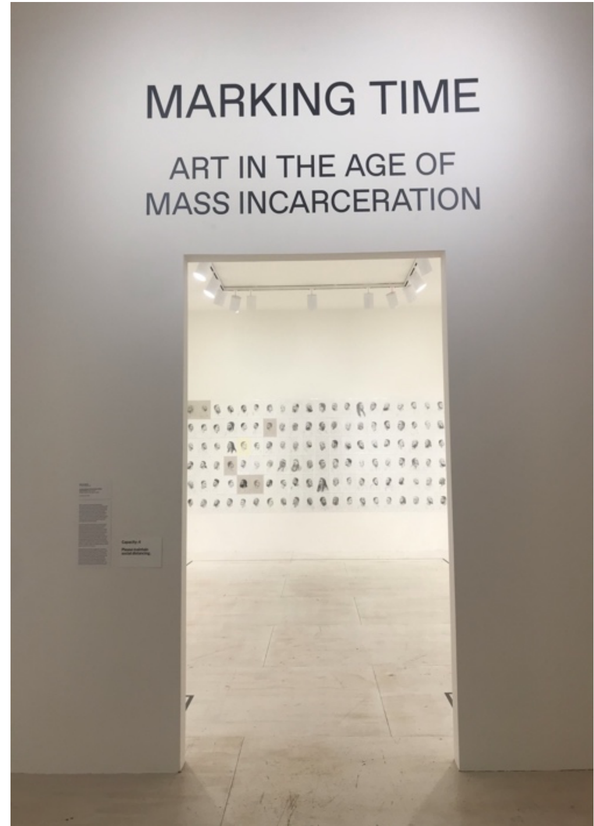
Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration

In December 2020, when the backgrounds of our Zoom screens became darker and darker, Lab visited an exhibition called *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* at the Museum of Modern Art’s (MoMA) PS1. As I stood on a subway platform in Brooklyn in the late afternoon on my way to PS1, the sky caught my attention. That winter, the sky flickered between an endless grey, like a film strip from *The Giver*, and opalescent pinks and blues. Its pearly streaks were for me what the redness of the apple was to Jonas. What a privilege to enjoy these shifting colors, when, as Sable Elyse Smith noted in a statement about her work in *Marking Time,* the carceral state denies that slice of blue to people in prison for years or a lifetime (Fleetwood, 2020, p. 261). Many find other ways to keep track of the days.



Curated by Nicole Fleetwood, *Marking Time* includes works made by artists affected by the carceral state. Many artists were in prison at the time of their work's production, while others had loved ones who were incarcerated. Fleetwood defined carceral aesthetics as "the production of art under the conditions of unfreedom; it involves the creative use of penal space, time, and matter" (p. 25). Time—the principal disciplinary technology of prisons—and matter—the available materials that inmates appropriate for artful purposes—are repossessed in the fugitive plotting and making of art. Time and matter become visible in seriality: 500 portraits on flimsy paper; 39 bedsheets covered in landscapes; 292 bars of soap imprinted with portraits and hidden in as many decks of cards; tiny animals painted on dried leaves; abstract paintings made from dirt retrieved from the prison yard. Process and things compose resistance to "slow death," as Stephen Dillon theorized penal time (cited in Fleetwood, 2020, p. 39).

The exhibition opens with a room papered in pencil-drawn portraits: *Pyrrhic Defeat: A Visual Study of Mass Incarceration* by Mark Loughney (2014-present). During his sentence, Loughney drew portraits of fellow inmates in 20-minute sittings, using whatever pencils and cheap paper were available to him. Fleetwood emphasized how difficult it is to find the calm—a temporal wormhole of sorts—in the chaotic environment of the prison to conduct these portraits (p. 135). Sometimes Loughney completes the realistically rendered portrait in 20 minutes, but in many, a quick outline of an eye, ear, or torso indicated unfinished areas. The series of nearly 500 portraits in rows stacked six portraits high covers four walls of the gallery. Together, they portray hours and years: interminable repetition and remarkable individuality (and, as Loughney noted, barely a "a drop in the bucket of our 2.4 million brothers, mothers, sisters, and fathers that are locked away in prisons in our country," cited in Fleetwood, 2020, p. 135). On one side of the gallery, the subjects appear with masks, a timestamp of the pandemic's devastating intrusion into prisons. One person who visited the show was struck by the title, a play on the term Pyrrhic victory: "a victory that inflicts such a devastating toll on the victor that it is tantamount to defeat. Winning a Pyrrhic victory takes a heavy toll that negates any true sense of achievement or damages long-term progress."[3] It is unlikely Loughney was predicting the relationship between the state's management of the pandemic and schools, but a 'pyrrhic defeat' might describe how many teachers and students, parents and administrators, felt by December of 2020.

[3] Wall Panel Text, *Marking Time*, PS1. See a similar statement in Fleetwood, 2020, p. 134.

Another work that caught the attention of several Black Paint members was Jessie Krimes's *Apokaluptein: 16389067.* Similar in scale to *Pyrrhic Defeat*, *Apokaluptein: 16389067* covers the length of an extended gallery wall: a surreal, Boschian landscape over three rows of 13 bedsheets. Upon entering the gallery, the visitor enters a landscape that might at first—with its pastel sky, dancing figures, and verdant hills and streams—appear whimsical. The only artwork in the room, the eye-level horizon line draws the viewer into a vertiginous warp of headlines, advertisements, and headless leaping bodies. The assembled scenes become increasingly discordant: a child from a J. Crew advertisement plays near a sea creature made of a garden hose, obliviously to the scenes of farmworkers in fields and flooded homes below her. Influenced by Dante and Agamben, Krimes conceptualized the three rows as "heaven, earth, and hell to visualize and critique dominant notions of recognition and social value" (Fleetwood, 2020, p. 78). Each sheet testifies to penal temporalities and materialities: the time it took Krimes to paint in his cell clandestinely, improvising canvases from prison bedsheets, bedsheets made through the extorted labor of incarcerated individuals; relationships with inmates in the post office that enabled him to smuggle the sheets out of prison; the snapshot of culture and

contemporary events that Krimes culled from the pages of *The New York Times* and painstakingly transferred to the sheets with hair gel and a spoon. Krimes worked on the mural for 3 years, only assembling the 39 sheets and seeing the full composition after his release. As with *Pyrrhic Defeat,* the Greek linguistic origins of *Apokaluptein*—"an event involving destruction or damage on a catastrophic scale" (Krimes, 2020)—also has unintended resonance with the impacts of COVID-19 on those involved in the U.S. education system.

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Time	*13a. the playing time of a game; 13b. TIME-OUT*
JANUARY 8, 2021	"THIS IS HISTORY": NYC TEACHERS PAUSE CURRICULUM TO FOCUS ON CAPITOL HILL INSURRECTION

*

Carceral Time, Curricular Time

Though *Pyrrhic Defeat: A Visual Study of Mass Incarceration* and *Apokaluptein: 16389067* invite comparisons, I do not intend to suggest that the experience and consequences of incarceration are similar to the pandemic's varied effects on teachers and students, myself or other members of Lab, but I do run the risk and responsibility for such a comparison. The show stirred strong emotions and responses from participants, which arose in Lab discussions. The proliferation of arts-based events on the topic of mass incarceration[4] and their implications for an abolitionist pedagogy is also worthy of the attention of curriculum theorists. Insofar as I do draw comparisons between the way these artists experienced time in prison and the way the participants of Lab, and teachers and students more broadly, experienced time during the

[4] See */Mirror/Echo/Tilt* (New Museum, 2019, Shaun Leonardo, Melanie Crean, and Sable Elyse Smith) and *Visualizing Abolition*, a project with University of California-Santa Cruz Institute of the Arts and Science with Professor Gina Gent, involving several exhibitions and events over 2020/2021.

COVID-19 pandemic, it is out of respect for what those whom the state has long forced to be "out of time" as a form of punishment might have to teach myself, someone who has not been personally affected by incarceration.

The comparison I do want to make hinges less on the similarity between penal time and pandemic time; and more on the relationship between carceral time and curricular time: temporalities created in large part through the discipline of bodies. Lab participants noted the ways that lunch menus and food trays; copy paper; pencils; allusions to disciplinary tactics (one work in the show involved broken windows with plants growing behind them, referencing the policing tactic from which prominent 'no excuses' charter schools drew); and the setting for the exhibition itself (MoMA's PS1 is a museum located in a former New York City public school) recalled the well-documented school-to-prison-pipeline.[5] In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1975) traced the co-development of these techniques of biopower through the management of bodies by way of space, materials, and time. Nancy Lesko (2012, p. 105) and Elizabeth Freeman (2019, pp. 3-4) both pointed out that the penetration of the body by time—time tables, Taylorism, physical drills, and the like, which synched individual bodies into productive forces—is crucial to Foucault's conception of the disciplined body. "The disciplinary techniques of penal time" Freeman explained, operate through "a pre-cognitive, non-linguistic communication between bodies, forging relationships to one another: dispositions learned through the sensate interface of the body," such that "time itself began to seem immutable and unmalleable both because it was orchestrated by institutions large and small and because it was seen to emanate from the individual body's very gestures" (p. 20). Penal and panoptical time contributes to the development of the *student body*: a population made up of bodies temporalized

[5] For a sample of extensive STPP literature, see Heitzeg (2016). Kim et al. (2012), Mallett (2015), and Vernikoff (2021).

and socialized by age-graded schooling; school bells, seat-time based credit hours, time on task, 180 days of teaching; summer breaks; 4-year graduation cycles. A half-century ago, Philip W. Jackson (1968) insisted that the quantitative amount of time cannot adequately convey the psychological experience of time in school. Little does more to prepare students for the modern "rat race," in which the "grayness of our daily lives has an abrasive potency of its own" (p. 115), Jackson claimed, than this "daily grind" of life in schools. The daily grind, Jackson illustrated, is made up of repetition and duration of time in schools, a preponderance of hours far surpassing sleep and other regular institutional activities such as church attendance, that largely consists of boredom, triviality, the humdrum of ordinary events and distractions, and, notably, the "social intimacy" (p. 117) of schools or compulsory participation in a "crowd" that is unlike almost any other setting (p. 119).

These temporal disciplinary techniques collated bodies into populations and produced heteronormative modes of sociability across the 19th century. As Lesko (2012) demonstrated, *panoptical time* normalized linear models of human evolution and civilization, contributing to normative stages of child development. Adolescence, a stage of particular social alarm about youth who lag behind or leap ahead of developmental timelines, "both makes and marks time" as bodies are surveilled for appropriate growth, expected to be mature, and yet denied the independence of adulthood (p. 96). In discourses on time in schools, "learning" is often a stand-in for normal youth development and economic development, and more is always better. As *A Nation at Risk* (1982) and *Action for Excellence* (1983) largely equated more time in schools with more learning, and thus a more competitive work force, state legislatures passed measures for longer school days and longer school years. Time today, these reforms posited, is a cheap and easy investment in the future. In "About Time for Educational Reform," Henry Levin (1984)

expressed skepticism toward these policies, concluding that there are too many other variables (such as, Jackson would have pointed out, student interest and desire to spend that time on learning) to make these increased-time policies cost-effective and that "a largely mechanical approach to time allocation should be avoided" (p 162). In Levin's cost-benefit analysis of time in schools, time is a scarce resource and the budget is limited. Time is expensive, goes Levin's argument, and if the kids are not going to use it optimally, well, then don't give it to them!

As we discussed *Marking Time*, a Lab'er reflected on how, "for a lot of students, school can feel like a place where they're literally watching the clock until they're released, so [*Marking Time*] is resonating." She did not have a chance to see the exhibition in person, but in our sharing during the Lab, she was struck by the artist's nearly obsessive accumulation of small things and related this to students' own tendencies while passing time in schools:

> When you're talking about the small little things that [the artists are] collecting that they don't want confiscated, I'm thinking of a student who's been found with these small little things in her desk, and, that stuff happens all the time in schools. I'm thinking of myself—as a kid, I had these little paper dolls that I would make. In school, you are kind of distanced from others and making social connections through small things, or else making this monumental thing to have your own connection with.

This fugitive collecting and making, drawn from mundane materiality of schools, forges individual identity, relationships between students, and alternative experiences of normative curricular time. In 2020-2021, taking their classes over online platforms, what were students pocketing? What collections accrued in bedrooms? What scribbles were made off-screen?

This student body, legible because of its unified movement through time, was ruptured by the sudden thrust to forms of online learning—asynchronous learning, learning pods, the precipitous drop in student enrollment for home schooling or delayed schooling—that wreaked havoc on the education system's temporal control of students' bodies. COVID-19 disrupted the temporal coherence and stability of the student body, as students by choice, design, or

inequitable access to schooling moved in ways counter to the normative timelines of educational progress. This became the cause of curricular concern: learning 'lost' as student bodies dispersed from the linear, temporal march toward mastery. As one Lab member put it, "Pandemic time is all about saying how behind kids are." Another chimed in, "That's also something we're talking about in my school, this idea that learning has stopped. But it hasn't stopped, it's happening in all these other ways that we haven't developed means of tracking, and because we can't track it, it doesn't exist." It became a year that could not *count* according to dominant grammars of schooling—illegible to the chrononormativities of the Carnegie unit.

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Time *7a. a rate of speed; 7b. the grouping of beats of music*

JANUARY 26, 2021 DE BLASIO VOWS NYC SCHOOLS WILL REOPEN IN SEPTEMBER AT "FULL STRENGTH"

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In Time's Wake

Let us travel back in time for a moment, from *Marking Time* at PS1 in 2020 to *National Times*, an installation by Agustina Woodgate featured in the 2019 Whitney Biennial. A discreet, doorless entryway draws us into a white-walled cube, away from the riot of color and form in the open-flow galleries behind us. Clocks are mounted in a uniform line around the perimeter of the room. They are grouped in evenly spaced clusters of five with neat electric work that runs back to a central source in the middle of the room. In the tradition of coding languages, taken from the tradition of slave labor, the timekeeper in central node at the middle of the room is called a "master clock." The rest, hung on the walls, are called "slave clocks." They appear identical, in the bland, institutional style of clocks mounted in a bureaucratic waiting room, or at the back of a

classroom (the kind you were admonished not to look at, which made it ever so tempting to turn your head and do). Their black and red hands tick imperceptibly, dutifully. The black hands, at first glance, mark the same time. But take a moment to slowly scan the row of clocks. Notice how the angles created by the black hands differ by a few degrees and the red hands swivel madly out of sync: the times they tell are no longer the same. Peer more closely, and notice rings worn on the face of the clock, etching away at the numbers on the face of the clocks. Sandpaper, attached to the back of the clock's hands, marks their circular routes, literally drawing the passing of time on the face and causing the un-syncing of the clocks' collective timekeeping efforts.

I do not recall any of the pieces in *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* using the image or object of a clock. Things were less worn down than built up, accumulated, layered, collected: years of advertisements collaged into a landscape that stretches across the entire room; rows of pencil-drawn portraits; stacks of lunch trays, plants that grew out of soil behind broken windows; so many bars of soap, so many decks of cards, so many doodles on the back of scraps of paper. The teachers' closet is crammed with decades of materials: bulletin board borders and workbooks with curling edges inherited from the last teacher who left in a hurry, which you save because maybe having them will make you a better teacher, and sorting through it is too overwhelming in your first week of teaching anyway; the students' backpack stuffed with notices and pencil nubs and all kinds of plastic paraphernalia: key chains and small figurines and crusted slime sculptures; a box bursting with postcards and spices and 'lost' and 'found' ephemera. It is through what you make when you try not to watch the clock, when you try to resist the way time's passing wears you down, that you begin to sense other ways of being in time.

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Time	*9a. one of a series of recurring instances or repeated actions; 9b (1). Added or accumulated quantities or instances*
FEBRUARY 8, 2021	NYC's PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS SET TO REOPEN FEBRUARY 25TH

*

An Accumulation of Sensations

Habit is another word for an accumulated instances or repeated actions. Shaken out of our usual routines as we began meeting on Zoom in 2020, we shared new habits that were forming: morning heading-out-the-door rituals that now included fumbling for masks; writing midmorning at a desk devised in the kitchen instead of one's favorite table in the library; the third (or was it fifth?) cup of tea in the afternoon. The semester of spring 2020 came to an end, as those habits were solidifying. Through the fall, participants continued making time for the Curriculum Lab. Each Thursday at 4 p.m., for the next year, a half-dozen people logged onto Zoom. "It's habit," one said, and others echoed that explanation for being there. Still, that habitual, worn-out question "How are you doing?" became no less exhausting to answer. We borrowed the title of a recent book by Sigrid Nuñez (2020), which was sometimes easier to respond to: *What are you going through?* In other words, *How is your body moving through time now?* Opening prompts—a ritualistic practice that marked the beginning of the Curriculum Lab hour—explored this somatic sensation of time. These small acts may seem banal, and that is the point. They are a mode of "relearning the present," when the ordinary falls out from beneath our feet (Berlant, 2011).

October, What brings you here today?

October, Bring an object that you've been meaning to get rid of.

November, What color are you today?

November, Roll your neck slowly, with your eyes open.

What catches your eye from this perspective, that you haven't noticed in a while?

December, Share a stretch your body wants to make at this moment.

December, Describe your favorite snow day activity.

January, Name a texture that represents how you're feeling right now.

January, Send a single photo of something that resonates with the word: care.

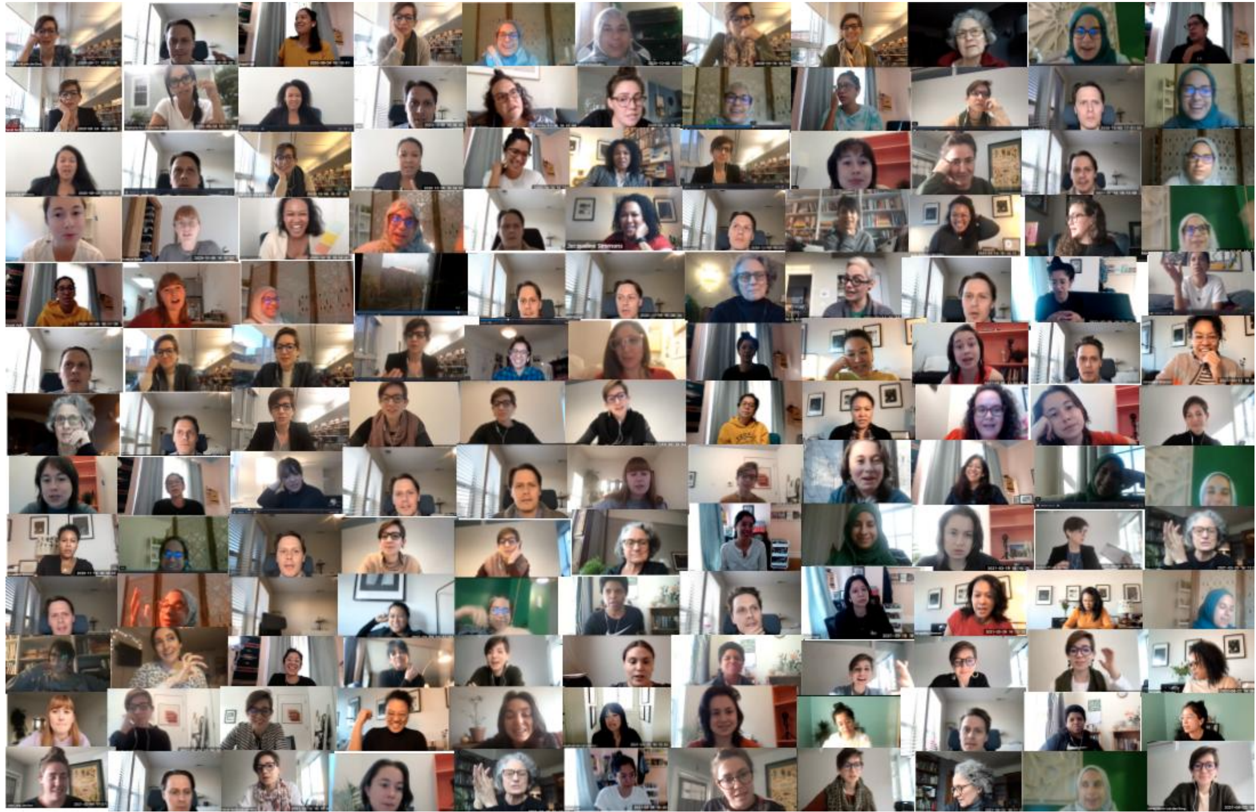
February, Doodle your body's experience of the day.

March, Share a piece of mail you received recently.

March, Bring an object from your childhood related to belonging.

April, Open your curriculum crafting kits. What material tugs at you?

You felt and feel like the wool at the elbow of your sweater, just a bit thin, stretched, compressed, from wearing this sweater at this seat in this posture so many days in a row. You felt and feel like the sherpa-lined hoodie you pulled on when you saw how grey it was outside. You snuggle deeper into it; not minding this affordance of Zoom-life, happy to be with this group of people near the end of the week. You felt and feel like the oiled wood of the table where you have been sitting all day, each day. You flick some crumbs from your afternoon snack to the floor.



Habits are repeated actions, and the fine line between habit and ritual brings us back to intuition. The ritualistic significance of habits gives them the aura of a sacrality, providing spiritual nourishment. The repetition of the body's movements (ordinary habit) becomes an antidote to slow death and a creative form of slow living. Manning (2016) distinguished the grand sacred significance of ritual from rituality: these minor forms of spiritually significant, socially connective, repeated actions, like those opening exercises for Lab that sparked meandering conversations about curriculum.

> Rituality is the return, through repetition, to a task that, despite its habitual nature, is nonetheless capable of shifting the field of experience. The morning coffee that opens the way for the day to begin. The cleaning of the desk that creates the conditions for a day of writing. The breathing techniques, for the performer, that facilitate the shift from the street to the theater. Rituality, like ritual, performs a shift in register that opens the way for new modes of becoming. (p. 67)

Ritual is a particular genre for the present (punctured by the past); but in the "affective urgency to remake intuitionisms…that might someday achieve a habitual rhythm," rituality offers a mode of living in the historical present (Berlant, 2011, p. 63). Rituality—a minor form of ritual, a habitual rhythm—offers a way of detaching from genres of relating to the world that do not work for oneself or others and of creating new genres. The effort to create new habits, as acts of self-care and preservation, "is the work of affective tendencies making their way toward form, toward intuition" (p. 63). In our somatic, material ways of beginning conversations at the Lab, we felt for curricular genres that would be adequate to the present—an adequate response to: *What do you need from curriculum now?*

*

Time	*10. Finite as contrasted with infinite duration*
MARCH 16, 2021	'WHAT'S THE POINT?': A YEAR AFTER COVID SHUT DOWN NYC SCHOOLS, MANY STUDENTS STRUGGLE TO COPE

*

An Inhabitation of Dehabituation

During various personal and public health crises, Berlant (2011), Cvetkovich (2012), and Freeman (2019) tracked how habit emerges as "an idiom of the claim on life" (Berlant, 2011, p. 57). Berlant analyzed Greg Bordowitz's film *Habit*, situated in his own and his social network's experiences of the AIDS pandemic, writing that

> everyone lives in the present intensely, from within a sense that *their time, this time, is crisis time*.… [Bordowitz's audience] might not be in the same crises biographically or physiologically, but all must inhabit the shared atmosphere of dehabituation and forced improvisation that an endemic and pandemic health crisis induces. (p. 57)

We are not in the same crisis as Bordowitz, but through the Coronavirus pandemic that broke out in 2020, came to "inhabit the shared atmosphere of dehabituation and forced improvisation that

an endemic and pandemic public health crisis induces" (p. 57). For Greg Bordowitz and his partner Claire Pentecost, cultivating routines such as a daily yoga practice or counting out medication in a daily pillbox, and the rituals of making coffee provide a sense of the ordinary amid the AIDS pandemic. The improvisation involved in finding a new idiom is deeply social, as Bordowitz gathered conversations with and scenes from the lives of friends living with AIDS. Elizabeth Freeman (2019) called the "regulated improvisation" of habit as a kind of "making do" to ways of living with unending duration and ongoingness, a "sense-method": a mode of relating to others in time. Through Bordowitz's "need to constantly check in with strangers and intimates and to document the variety in different lives shaped by the same crisis," Berlant emphasized that habit is not the preoccupation of "bourgeois universalism"—the pursuit of the perfection of the self—but rather a way of relating to the intimacy and alterity of self and others (p. 61).

Habit also catches the attention of Ann Cvetkovich (2012), who described Bordowitz's repetitive practices of everyday living and surviving with AIDS as an affective project that gets at "how capitalism feels" in chronic illness (p. 196). Cvetkovich's own "utopia of ordinary habit" involves hobbies and exercises like crafting and swimming that function as a fold between the sensory and temporal, grounding her in her body and in a 'here and now' (p. 191). Her utopia is not a hoped-for-future, but the ability to continue in the present. One might read habit as the responsibility of the individual to fashion modes of living and making a life worth living amid indifferent neoliberal regimes, but Cvetkovich emphasized that "[habit] reconceives the rational sovereign subject as a sensory being who crafts a self through process and through porous boundaries between self and other, and between the human and the nonhuman (including animals and things)" (pp. 191-192). Habit is a processual and transversal mode of becoming. It is a way of forging a nonlinear relationship to time through the rhythms of the sensing and affecting body.

One genre of a nonlinear relationship to time is the chronic: a tenselessness or "certain shapelessness in time…[that] seem[s] to belie narrative altogether" (Freeman, 2019, p. 125), a perpetuity characteristic of, say, a pandemic or the "grammar of schooling" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). While Bordowitz and Cvetkovich would be deeply familiar with chronicity as an unending condition, Freeman (2019) considered how habits and public health discourses converge, contributing to chronicity as an indicator of "either machinic perpetuation or complete inertia, along with its connotations of pathology" (p. 126). Freeman's study of sense-methods brought her to the biopolitics of public health campaigns and the birth of the Human Resources Administration in the turn of the 20th century, as preserving worker health and optimizing workers' behaviors became crucial to economic productivity. For Freeman, cultivating a sense of duration—going on but not going forward—amid public health narratives that demand movement, progress, and productivity is a form of resistance to the temporal technologies of biopower. The logic of these early 20th century public health reforms, exemplified in the 1908 *Report on National Vitality, Its Wastes, and Conservation,* a hallmark of the Roosevelt administration; the Life Extension Institute in 1913; and the emergence of the modern insurance industry, continues through education policies that equate extended and efficient learning time with learner productivity: from the mid-century dominance of the Taylor Rationale, to the affective reporting in *A Nation at Risk* (1984) and *Prisoners of Time* (1994), to New York City's *Out-of-School Time (OST) Initiative* (2005) and similar OST programs in other cities at the beginning of the 21st century. In 2008, Larry Cuban, who with David Tyack coined the phrase "the grammar of schooling" to describe the intractable characteristics of schools, disparaged "perennial reform" efforts directed at "fixing school time," pointing out students and teachers own differing experiences of time (p. 249)—a point taken up years earlier by Henry Levin

(1984), a long-time advocate of increased academic learning time and other measures to optimize the use of school resources. The repetitive nature—one might say "machinic perpetuation"—of these reform agendas belies a perpetual obsession with time, only to be met by a similarly chronic inertia confounding those reform efforts. Together, machinic perpetuation and inertia contribute to the "grammar of schooling," a condition of general resistance or "preferring not" to conform to national discourses on learning time, not unlike Freeman's subject "Bartleby the Scrivener," a law office employee who refuses to do anything at all—even to leave the office. Anticipating, perhaps, Bartleby the Student, and intuiting that students might prefer to spend time in schools different than policymakers expect them to, Levin argued against longer school period, days, and years. The grammar of schooling could be taken as an intensification of habit, "a way of living aslant to the chrononormativity of clinical life, as well as to the larger global discourse of the chronic and to biopower itself" (Freeman, 2019, p. 147).

As the biopolitics of chrononormativity indicates, even as habits enable us to keep going on, they are ambivalent tools. There are unhealthy habits, addictions, and modes of self-discipline that makes humans good subjects of the neoliberal state and preserves the status quo. The automaticity of habit is seen as a barrier to critical intervention or creative innovation (Pedwell, 2017, p. 102). Habits foster predictability and comfort, barriers to experimentation and change (Manning, 2016, p. 89). This is the grammar of schooling: a habit as impasse. As one put it during a Lab meeting: "We're having the same old frustrated, anxious conversation. How does this conversation go somewhere else? [The grammar of schooling] stifles the ability to envision something else."

Another responded by suggesting that habit might actually be the other side of the grammar of schooling, and posed that "there's grief, in the dying of old habits" but also

affordances—letting you go on autopilot to think about other things, providing a semblance of control over the future. Habits are also the very stuff from which our daily lives are formed and can be channeled into the making of different worlds (Berlant, 2011; Cvetkovich, 2012; Manning, 2016; Pedwell, 2017). While not optimistic about the revolutionary potential of habit, Berlant (2011) conceded that the "autopoesis" of habit frees the mind for other pursuits and reserves energy for dealing with life's crises (p. 63). Insofar as habit sustains living and opens up capacities for further action, it is not an insignificant technology for social change. Cvetkovich (2012) and Pedwell (2017) shared a slightly more aspirational view of habits' ordinary work. Cvetkovich (2012) considered habit "a mechanism for building new ways of being in the world because it belongs to the domain of the ordinary, to activities that are not spectacular or unusual but instead arise from everyday life" (p. 191); this ordinary ongoingness of new forms of life is the material, affective, slow work of social change (Pedwell, 2017). Habit does not always need to be a change in behavior—a 'new habit'—to create social disturbance; the intensification of habit can manifest as "the refusal of something regular to go away" (Freeman, 2019, p. 145). This refusal to quit, to leave, itself becomes a form of resistance. The very tendencies foreclosed by habit, though, make habit a "mutable force" (Manning, 2016, p. 89). "The challenge," according to Manning, is "to make these minor tendencies operational, thereby opening habit to its subtle multiplicity and exposing the fact that habit was never quite as stable as it seemed" (p. 89). The repetition of an action is never exactly identical to its original.

*

Time	*2. the point or period when something occurs*
APRIL 14, 2021	NYC PARENTS SUE MAYOR FOR A FULL REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

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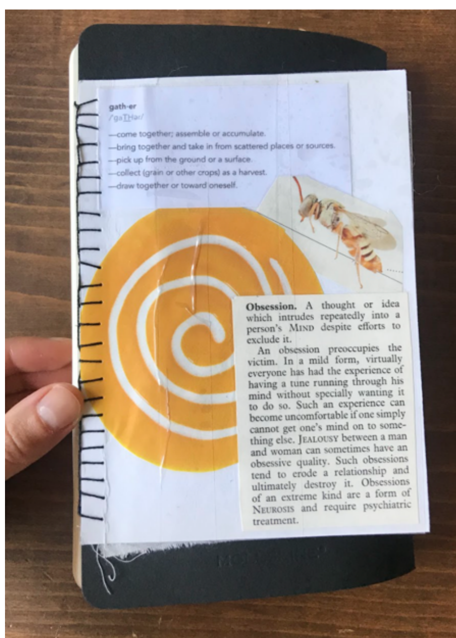
Marbling Time

It is August 2020: time unmarked by most school calendars. I have had the box for a week and feel an urgency to send it on to the next participant but do not know what to offer. I make fajitas with the chile powder and remind myself it is okay to “take [my] thyme.” I wear the amulet and describe its walk on the back of a postcard. I “send” the postcard to the Box’s future recipients, placing it back in the box as a record of the amulet’s journey.

I unpack the contents again. I linger with the LOST/FOUND notebook and return to a passage on its cover from Stewart’s (2007) *Ordinary Affects:* “the ordinary throws itself together out of forms, flows, powers, pleasures, encounters, distractions, drudgery, denials, practical solutions, shape-shifting forms of violence, daydreams, and opportunities lost or found...” (p. x). As I review the directions for the box, I am struck by the accumulation of digressions. I wonder what else gathers, moves, and is lost/found in the margins of the time between moments of the Box’s reception and the space between its contents in unanticipated juxtapositions. I collect materials: a postcard and magazine clippings from the box, scraps of fabric I marbled a few months earlier and my copy of Berlant and Stewart’s (2019) *The Hundreds.* In the time that I collect them—“the things we think with” (p. 20)—and manipulate them, cutting, layering, pasting, folding, stitching—“matter’s movement” (p. 57)—“a thought slides out of a story, overflowing the eddy of its liquidity” (p. 15). I inscribe these lines onto the margins of marbled fabric; fold the fabric into pages; and bind them between a postcard and the back of the LOST/FOUND notebook. I label the back of the journal “Index,” for future recipients to fill.



That summer of 2020, the Box's journey skipped rapidly from host to host. Its path slowed, as schooling sputtered to starts and stops and going on over the 2020-2021 school year. When many students returned to schools in September 2021, the box was returned to the previous sender and spent long stretches of time waiting to be forwarded to its next destination. Eighteen months after the Box's journey began, it arrived in Jersey City. Its penultimate

recipient, who was added to the Box's participants after the conversations in Spring of 2020 that precipitated its journey, called me for more context.

W*hat do you think it's about?*

I feel like I'm witnessing all these stories, of what everyone was going through.

Spinning out myriad minor gestures, the Box's offerings contained "the intuitive potential to activate the future in the specious present, to make the middling of experience felt where futurity and presentness coincide, to invoke the memory not of what was, but of what will be" (Manning, 2016, p. 47).

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Time — *1a. The measured or measurable period during which an action, process, or condition exists or continues: duration*

1b. A nonspatial continuum that is measured in terms of events which succeed one another from past through present to future.

APRIL 26, 2021 — OVER 50,000 MORE STUDENTS RETURN TO NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS TO CLOSE OUT THE YEAR

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As they logged in from San Francisco, Denver, Detroit, and New York at 4-5 p.m. (ET) each week, the earth shifted in relation to the sun and the moon, and the colors in the patches of sky viewed through windows behind them changed colors: sunny cerulean blue; just-barely-there blue; wintery indigo blue. In the "magic hour" (Taussig, 2020), what they thought they knew about curriculum unraveled, spiraling further and further out of sight. They marked time not in the arc of the pandemic—not in waves, or cures, or progress; and not in sure returns to school or

even the normative progression of their own studies and research and careers—but instead in different rhythms; in haptic, textured, material relationships; in habits and rituality.

There was a time—is a time—when curriculum refers to a way of ordering the accrual of knowledge, typically in lockstep with a larger social group. The lockdowns, quarantines, and social distancing mandates imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic ruptured this march, which was never so tidy or working for everyone to begin with. The discourse around "learning loss" reflects this concept of curriculum as the primary source of discrete knowledge and skills accumulated in a linear fashion. Even in curriculum for social justice, these linear, progressive curriculum temporalities continually position liberation in the future and the child in a perpetual "not yet" of development (Biesta & Säfström, 2011, p. 543). As time was spent out of school and that synchrony was traded for asynchronous models, what accumulated were other affects and indices of a historical present: the sense that everything had changed and nothing had changed while what we had before did not constitute a desirable point of return. These affects composed the "tension between 'what is' and 'what is not'" (p. 541). Biesta and Säfstrom developed a manifesto for an "atemporal understanding of education," neither overdetermined by the repetition of the past nor given over to a never-here utopia. Instead, with a responsibility to the present, an atemporal understanding of education begs an attunement to curricular contact zones: to the interruption or opening for dissensus (what Manning [2016] might call the 'minor gesture' of curricular practice) that creates an opening for "radically new rather than a repetition of what already exists" (p. 541). What is new, whether the interference of an interruption or the minor variation on a repetition, might emerge slowly, even opaquely: weekly practices of being with others through meandering conversations prompted by bodily sensations and vibrant matter; as well as the erratic movement and timing of a box, sent back and forth across the country, filling

over the course of 18 months with curricular invitations for making sense of the moment. Artful practices developed by Lab inhabited curricular temporalities that were based both in irregularity, as in the Box, and repetition, as in rituality of weekly meeting, but rarely in the neat linearity of the time of neoliberal learning. These artful practices created conditions for curriculum to emerge on its own time.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

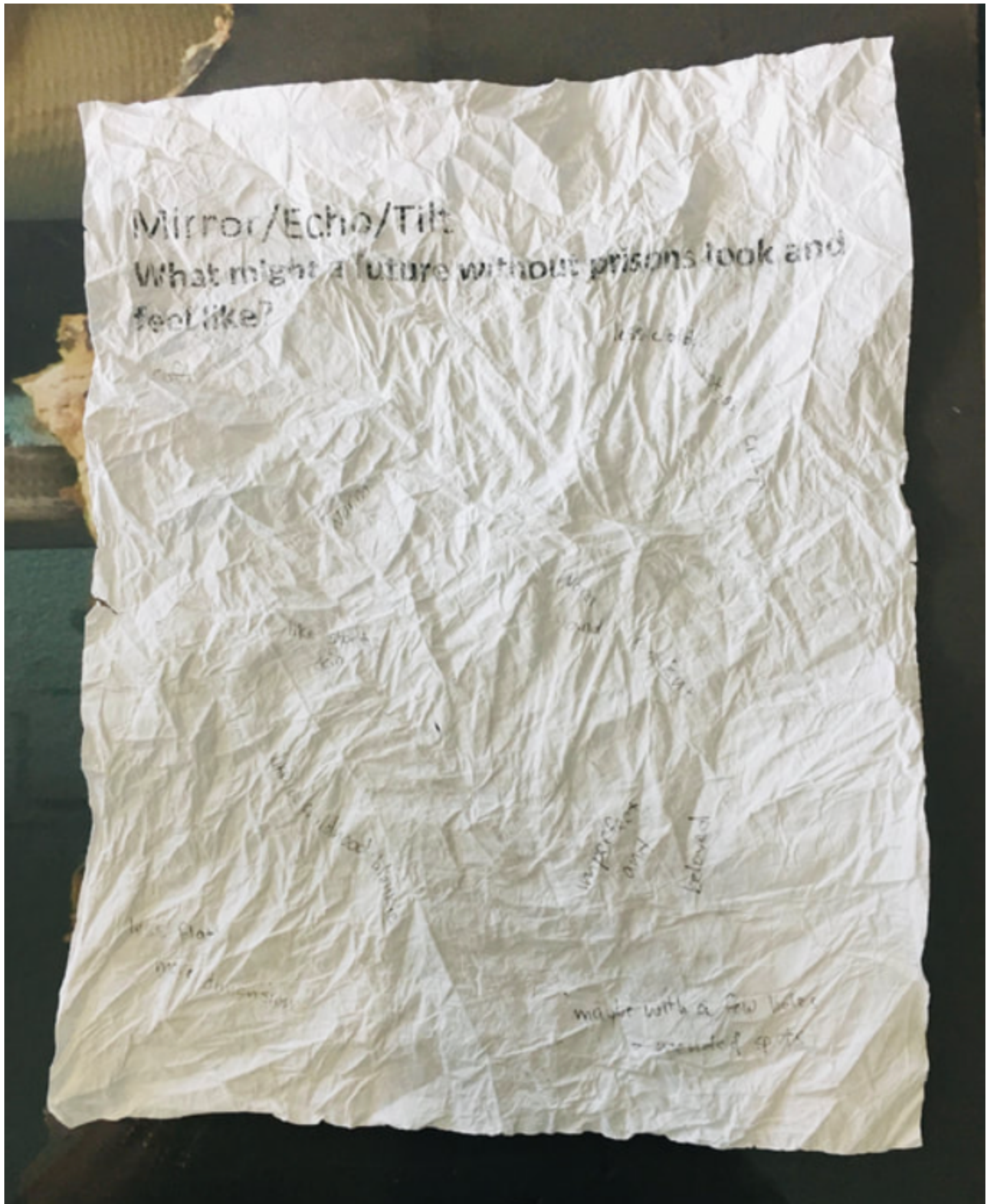
> The wager of this book is, in part, that the pedagogically charged events, environments, and objects I have chosen to consider here constitute a series of "whats" that do indeed open the aesthetic in new and unprecedented ways to teaching and learning, and they do so in ways that invite teaching and learning to open in return to the aesthetic in terms that are largely unexplored by the official literature of educational research. (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 9)

A Piece of Paper

Let us return to /*Mirror/Echo/Tilt*—the dimly light rooms illuminated by films of figures moving with slowed, intentional gestures communicating tenderness, loneliness, vulnerability, and love, juxtaposed with the institutional impersonality of a courthouse, jail cell, waiting room. The films are the result of workshops with people affected by the criminal justice system, using the visual and embodied language of performance to empower participants to craft their own narratives about incarceration. The figures are dressed in prison uniforms and masks made up of mirrored pieces and reflective foil. In reference to the Knight of Mirrors, the performance is meant to dissolve the deceit of criminality, turning it back on the viewer. The artists, Crean, Leonardo, and Smith (2019) aimed to imagine a world without notions of criminality and imprisonment, declaring their manifesto: "so that the mind and body may think differently…we begin with a word that must be removed." The exhibition includes a reference room with a library of abolitionist literature, iPads housing a formal curriculum for the workshops involved in the production of /*Mirror/Echo/Tilt*, and plain white paper, blank but for a prompt across the top: "What might a future without prisons look and feel like?"

You take a paper and crumple it. Its loud crunch fades to a rustling as the moisture and warmth of your hands changes the paper's structure. It comes to feel like a smoldering ember,

gently emitting heat. You carefully flatten the ball of paper. There are a few small holes where it has worn out entirely from the crumpling, and you notice its size has shrunk. It is soft.



The worlds made in a softened piece of paper and mask of mirrors constitute the "wager" of this study: that "pedagogically charged events, environments, and objects…invite teaching and learning to open in return to the aesthetic in terms that are largely unexplored by the official literature of educational research" (Ellsworth, 205, p. 9). At the core of this wager and invitation is the assumption that if curriculum is concerned at all with knowledge or sense-making, and if we take "aesthetic in its original sense of making sensible, making felt" (Manning, 2016, p. 81), then aesthetic and sensory experiences are critical for curriculum theory and design. If this is a quixotic task, it is also one that mirrors, echoes, and tilts curriculum's field and objects, pulling us into the entanglements of curricular contact zones and curriculum theorist-designers.

Artful Practices for Curriculum Theory and Design

The films, workshops, and audience prompts of */Mirror/Echo/Tilt*; the site-specific orchestral scores activated by the listener's movements of *SOUNDWALK*; the recordings of extinct species amid a forest of dead cedar trees installed in a bustling city park of *Ghost Forest*—these transdisciplinary, participatory works stage "an engaged encounter with the very constitutive nature of knowledge, be it at the level of new forms of subjectivity, or in the reorientation of how thinking and doing coexist" (Manning, 2016, p. 43). Crean et al., along with other artists, designers, theorists, and educators assembled in these chapters, blur divisions between thinking and doing, knowing and feeling, being in the world and becoming with the world: dualisms that have upheld hierarchical relations and justified endless violences. As demonstrated in these works—spanning prison abolition, ecological repair, histories of racial and colonial violence, mental health and healing—this effort "is necessarily a disruptive operation that risks dismantling the strong frames drawn by disciplines and methodological modes of inquiry" (p. 43) and involves "bringing back an aesthetics of experience where it is needed most:

in the field of learning" (p. 44). Such artworks could be thought of as "boundary objects" (Loveless, 2019), simultaneously art, public installation, and curriculum that nomadically traverse ecology, history, music theory, and urban design, among other studies. While they could reinforce the notion of art as a discrete, bounded object, Manning's (2016) conception of "artful practices" turns toward a more expansive understanding of art as a *way*, a process. As Manning illustrated, "artful practices… honor complex forms of knowing and are collective…. they can be activist practices, environmental practices, social practices" (p. 13). If artworks activate the curricular charge immanent to events and environments; the artful practices emerge from the curricular yield, or excess, of such events.

I sought to craft questions that would set into motion an exploration of how aesthetics and senses might offer forms of curriculum commensurate with such onto-epistemological orientation and aims; questions adequate to my desire to understand this entanglement of curriculum and aesthetics. As the research developed, I modified the language of the two primary questions for this study. I sought to simplify the terms of these questions and to clarify the relationship they set up between curricularly charged artworks and artful practices for curriculum design. The first question is about curriculum as a field or object of study; the second question is about the humans involved in its projects. I originally included a third question, about what "new problems" these experiments create. I intended for that question to channel the orientation and charge of speculative pragmatisms, concerned more with new questions and areas for study generated by the experiment. This, I realized, was redundant to the two primary questions and addressed in the discussion of implications and future study included in this chapter.

Research Question 1: *What understandings of curriculum do transdisciplinary art works and artful practices open up?* In other words, how do pieces like */Mirror/Echo/Tilt* work as

curriculum or curricular interventions? What does it mean when they describe themselves as curricular? If curriculum is just a floating signifier, what does it signify here? Are our categories for curriculum adequate? What happens when these artful practices percolate through curricular dialogues and design processes?

Research Question 2: *What do experiments with curricular practices and forms do to curriculum theorists, researchers, and designers*? If the first question is embedded affective, more-than-human philosophies, what does that mean for the curriculum theorist, researcher, and designer? How do they affect their attachments and relationships to curriculum? Where do these experiments with sensational, aesthetic, material curricular practices leave design?

I approach these questions as flexible containers for over a decade of moving between art history, social practice art, transdisciplinary creative practices and museum education, middle school teaching, teacher education, and theological learning. While I cannot untangle myself from these objects, I do “tr[y] to slow the quick jump to representational thinking and evaluative critique long enough to find ways of approaching the complex and uncertain objects that fascinate because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us” (Stewart, 2007, p. 4).

Curricular Categories: Just Noise?

Sound literally hits us. In Chapter 4, I explored the pull of *SOUNDWALK, Fighting Dark,* and *Ghost Forest*, three artworks involving sound, around which much of Lab’s discussions orbited. *SOUNDWALK*’s GPS-enabled orchestral scores and poetry read by the Young People’s Chorus covered Central Park and engaged with its history and topological features. *Fighting Dark*, an audio walk taking place in lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, narrated the events of the 1863 Race Riots, with care to the hundreds of Black lives terrorized by White violence. *Ghost Forest* used recordings of indigenous extinct species, set amid an installation of dying cedar trees

in Madison Square Park, to raise awareness of climate change. As public artworks designed to be listened to individual, each contended with background noise of their contexts: ambulance sirens or city buskers in the case of *SOUNDWALK;* buses and pedestrians in the case of *Fighting Dark;* shrieking toddlers and scampering squirrels in the case of *Ghost Forest.* In his study of site-specific sound art, Brandon LaBelle (2015) noted that "background noise…should be understood as designating not so much what goes unnoticed, but what in a sense cannot be ignored" (p. xx). For LaBelle, site-specific sound art such as John Cage's *4'33* performed in a public square in Boston frames background noise *as* the art piece. The artists and designers might not have intended to frame the ordinary sounds in the way Cage did, perhaps hoping instead that the sounds piped through individual headphones would drown out the noise, but sought to draw attention to curricular charge immanent to those background scenes.

As I consider understandings of curriculum that these artworks open up, I heed curriculum theorists—Aoki, Gershon, Wozolek—who urge curriculum studies to take up sound metaphors. Sound is more diffuse than a visual form, inescapably material and relational, spatial and temporal. Attention to background noise and aural interference supported the theorization of "ambient curriculum," an adaptation of Berlant's (2011) concept of "ambient citizenship:" a genre of civic participation that primarily involves listening to, moving with, and contributing to political noise. Ambient curriculum is the "background noise," which is not to say its affects are insignificant. Ambient curriculum can be thought of as a contact zone or an assemblage rather than an object or a discrete body of knowledge; it encompasses the more-than-human organization of and will to knowledge that slips between established curricular categories of informal, hidden, or null curriculum. These curricular categories bequeathed by the

Reconceptualists can obscure the immanent, aleatory curricular charge of such events and environments.

At this point, ambient is less a sonic metaphor than a description of movement. While ambient sound is meant to be an "unobtrusive accompaniment," ambient in its definition of "existing or present on all sides" derives from the Latin root *ambire* (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Berlant (2011) drew on this Latin meaning, "to go around" as in surrounding and as in soliciting for votes; ambient citizenship, Berlant emphasized, is a "gathering modality" (p. 230). An ambient curriculum is ambulatory and ambitious—it goes around, surrounds, gathers. What ambient curriculum gathers are the ways of knowing created and conveyed by "ordinary affects": "a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges" (Stewart, 2007, pp. 1-2). In *Soundwalk*'s response to the melancholy mood pervading NYC throughout most of 2020, its collision with the celebrations following the November 2020 election results, and design as a solitary experience, *Soundwalk*'s ordinary affects consists of "public feelings that begin and end in broad circulation, but also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of" (pp. 1-2). Beside *Fighting Dark*'s narration of the null curriculum of the 1863 race riots, it circulates the ordinary affects of a "dream of escape or of the simple life"—the kind of life glimpsed in the free Black communities of Seneca Village and Weeksville that were terrorized by White violence in the mid-19th century. As we saw in the simultaneous shrieks of children and cries of extant species in *Ghost Forest*, ordinary affects can also be "a scene of both liveness and exhaustion," vitality and extinction (pp. 1-2). The sites for these works—Central Park, City Hall, Madison Square Park—were already animated with the "varied, surging capacities to affect and to be affected that give everyday life the quality of continual motion of relations, scenes, contingencies, and emergencies" (Stewart, 2007, pp. 1-2). The artworks' strategies of aural

interference *affected* Lab participants as well as myself and attuned us to these scenes: a slowing down and hyperawareness of transitional details (*Soundwalk*); a need to sit on a bench in silence or otherwise process anger and grief (*Fighting Dark*); a difficulty listening to the list of extinct species and desire to lay hands on a living tree (*Ghost Forest*). These three works are not containers for ambient curriculum in themselves but create the techniques and conditions that contribute to and make apparent ambient curriculum as a continual surround, an ethology in which humans participate. Going around and gathering, *ambire* casts a wider circuit than Pinar's *currere*; *ambire* surrounds without centering the human.

One artful practice developed over the course of the Coronavirus pandemic highlighted this quality of ambient curriculum as surround and solicitation. A box visited nearly a dozen participants over a year and a half, going around the country and gathering artifacts—we called them "curricular offerings"—that made felt some aspect of how we experienced the pandemic. Going around to each participant, the box accumulated spices, postcards, moving packaging, a fortune-teller, an amulet, magazine cut-outs, a journal with envelopes stuffed with lost and found ephemera, an index, and definitions and quotations gathered from what someone was reading. These materials were a form of sensual data-gathering through which participants *made sense of the times* and marked time in ways counter to dominant pandemic timelines or expectations of curricular aims and mastery. As an artful practice, these sense-methods were collective, situated, and multiple: in the directions of queer and feminist pop culture, anti-racist action, the intimacy of memory and ancestral tradition, theoretical references that thrummed with an excessive resonance, invitations to make and cook and write and relate and reach out, which is to say, to participate in an already ongoing ambient curriculum.

Sensing Curriculum's Emergence

While sound scholars emphasize the spatial dimension of sound, which is well suited to following intensities and movements in an assemblage, listening to sound is also a temporal experience; it requires attention in an unfolding present. *Soundwalk* prompted a "sloowwwing down" to notice details in the surrounding scene: the teenage photoshoot tucked into the woods, the babble of water, the live busker, the precise hue of autumn leaves, the moment the streetlights turn on. This changed relationship to time became the focus of Chapter 5, which explored ways of making and marking curricular time through embodied movements and sensations, textures and materials, habits and rituality. I use the term *curricular temporalities* in this chapter to refer to the *time* during which one comes to know something, the time of knowledge-in-the-making, and to the prioritized processes for making sense of *the times* one lives in and the privileged types of sense made about those *times*.

This sense of time finding its form—a sense of how an event will find its genre, of how the story will go—is what Berlant (2011) called intuition. *Cruel Optimism* is largely about the re-education of intuition, in moments of historical crisis and transformation on a global scale: times when "the activity of living demands both a wandering absorptive awareness and a hypervigilance that collects material that might help to clarify things, maintain one's sea legs, and coordinate the standard melodramatic crises with those processes that have not yet found their genre of event" (p. 4). Collected material took the form of textures that convey a state of being, lines that represent a day, details yet unnoticed in too familiar rooms, packages of craft supplies, childhood objects symbolizing belonging, objects waiting to be discarded. This "sensual data-gathering" became a form of habit or rituality, creating conditions in the Lab for

conversations that wandered across individual situations and shared questions. In it, we might feel intuition tune to

> the coursing of minor gesture within frames of everyday life [which] involves crafting techniques that create the conditions not for slowness, exactly, but for openings of the everyday to degrees and shades of experience that resist formation long enough to allow us to see the potential of worlds in the making. (Manning, 2016, p. 15)

Fighting Dark juxtaposed the noise of "everyday life" in the present—rumble of buses, distant chatter at a crosswalk—with narration of the 1863 race riots, whose consequences too are part of everyday living. *Ghost Forest* juxtaposed the aural list of extinct species' names and calls, amidst the organic movement and sounds of living species: squirrels running along branches, leaves drifting down from large oaks, toddlers running between tree trunks; the corpses of Atlantic cedar trees mingling with the branches and leaves of live oaks. These create the conditions for slowness as a moment of abeyance in the inchoate swirl of the present; conditions that do not promise coherence or cogency but open the event to minor gestures: to variations in their unfolding. Minor gestures have the effect of "altering rhythms, reducing our alignment to the homogeneity of capitalist speed…becoming more attuned to event-time, the lived duration of experience in the making" (Manning, 2016 p. 15). Freeman (2019) demonstrated how "alignment to the homogeneity of capitalist speed" is a technology of biopower, collating individual bodies into populations legible to and manageable by the state. According to Freeman, minor populations in the 19th century developed strategies of resisting conformity to chronotypical identities and relations through "sense-methods": embodied forms of sociality and knowledge that support "ephemeral relationalities organizing and expressing themselves through time" (p. 7). Breaking with the disciplining chrononormativity of capitalist time—the grammar of schooling, the stakes of a "year of lost learning"—is key to moving from curriculum design as a discipline to curriculum design as an integral part of curriculum *study*. I spend so much time

with intuition and sense-methods—modes of making sense of an event as it extends and unfolds, in relation to other materials and bodies—because to do so is to develop skills for attuning to design as an emergent practice.

Nomadic Design

For art educators, discussion of multimodal, creative exercises as curricular fodder and form might be banal. For educators in conventional classrooms, an aesthetic turn in pedagogy suggests a curious indulgence at best, an inexcusable dilettantism at worst. Springgay (2016) anticipated a response to her own exploration of the pedagogy of participatory art: “So what, if anything, has this got to do with education, and/or curriculum studies?” (p. 71). From a field pressed to be as directly applicable as education, Springgay defended her interest in considering such sites of inquiry and experimentation. Participatory art, architecture and design, and research-creation are oriented not toward mastery and ready answers, but toward the “imperceptibility of knowing” and “becoming imperceptible,” “sensation construction,” and “provisional[ity], rather than prescript[ion]” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 54). Curriculum as ambient—surrounding and gathering in situated, local contact zones—is not oriented toward mastery; it is provisional, imperceptible. It destabilizes curriculum as an object of inquiry and design, causing our—my—attachments to curriculum tremble, bend, contort, flex.

I come into curriculum studies after the work of the Reconceptualists, critical pedagogues, and scholars of public pedagogy, who have demonstrated that curriculum encompasses the informal and null curricula and that its field expands to homes and subways, cafeterias and TikTok. Even as I argue that curriculum is far more complex and emergent than those categories give us language for, the field of curriculum studies positions me to teach courses on curriculum design, participate in credentialing systems for teacher preparation

candidates, and work with schools in the hope that those formal and enacted, informal and null curricular practices might change. Schools request interdisciplinary curriculum that both engages students through personal connections and equips them to encounter the cross-disciplinary complexity of the world. Scholar-practitioner programs in higher education turn to integrative curriculum, seeking to combine embodied, contextual forms of knowledge with the insights of traditional disciplinary study. Students in a curriculum design course at an institution committed to social justice are emblazoned by their commitments to diverse voices and critical pedagogies and the urgency of addressing injustices seen through the intersections of their content areas. The curricula that pour forth from these student-scholar-practitioner projects strive to bring different disciplinary approaches and critical perspectives to bear on urgent social issues: *STEM for Social Change; Islands: An Ecosocial Curriculum; "Feeling Out" American History.* Yet, the critical, and curious, potential of study that strives to do justice to the world-making stakes of situated knowledges is often subsumed by the humanist assumptions that curriculum tends to take in institutional spaces.

Study is distinct from discipline: feminist studies, queer studies, animal studies, *curriculum* studies (Haraway, 1988; Harney & Moten, 2013; Manning, 2016). While disciplines are bodies of knowledge with illusions of autonomy and objectivity, governing what counts as knowledge, study is nomadic, situated, and plural (Haraway, 1988; Harney & Moten, 2013; Wakkary, 2021). Wakkary (2021) argued that design should be approached more as study—a minor, nomadic science—rather than as a discipline. This nomadicism, Wakkary explained,

> refigures design from a single territorial discipline to a multiplicity of concurrent, allied non-allied, collaborative, competitive, contradictory, or aligned practices of design marked by who gathers around a particular something to design. There is a plurality of gatherings that traverse across a landscape, territorializing and deterritorializing as they go, following the somethings they design for wherever that may lead, often crossing paths to contest or form allegiances with other nomadic practices. (p. 53)

Design is an onto-epistemological relationship to the world, a way of making and being made by the world. Wakkary also emphasized that nomadic practices for design are situated and collective, and in this aligns with Arturo Escobar's (2018) vision for design based in radical interdependence. For both Wakkary and Escobar, design is an ethical and political act that, tied to the humanist assumptions of modernity, has served the "defuturing practices" and projects of Man (p. 15). Looking specifically at curriculum design, I hope to contribute to the conversation on whether design could instead be "redirected toward other ontological commitments" and "become part of the tool kit for transitions toward the pluriverse?" (Escobar, 2018, p. 15). Are those transitions glimpsed in the soundtrack of extinct species played amid scenes of living human and nonhuman sociality? Might we glimpse curriculum design redirected toward other ontological commitments when it takes up a paradigm of wandering instead of mastery? These "*something[s]*" that design *designs* are "structured in different ways that are embodied, situated, and contingent—meaning that designers, as a matter of co-constitution, are also relational and multiple" (Wakkary, 2021, p. 47, italics in original). Entangled in desires, impasses, and what we need from curriculum, design is a practice that makes us—designers—as much as we make it. The issue of nomadic, co-constituted subjectivities is central to the question of what curricular experiments *do* to their subjects (Braiddotti, 2018). As destabilizing as a deterritorializing approach to curriculum design might be, I have been guided by an affirmative ethics—a "queer tendency," Berlant notes in a nod to Sedgwick—"to put one's attachments back into play and into pleasure, into knowledge, into worlds…to admit that they matter" both because they make me, and because they allow me to participate in making a world I would want to be made by (Berlant, 2011, p. 123).

For a while, the lure of works like *Soundwalk, Fighting Dark,* and *Ghost Forest* for me lie in the possibility of replicating their strategies of creative transdisciplinary inquiry and production with students. Wouldn't it be engaging and productive for students to investigate the geological and social history of their local park and make a composition that responds to their findings? Wouldn't it make an inspiring lesson to consider what sounds and stories are missing from a space's formal history and develop an audio tour or installation to educate the public? Perhaps, and these can still be valuable learning experiences, when developed in conjunction with the situated interests, aims, and possibilities of local learning communities. But the point is not to package the processes of these artworks with the hope of repeating their outcomes. Instead, engaging these artworks helped to hone a curricular way of thinking: a way of attuning to how and what curriculum becomes within their artful practices and sensory, affective, material modes of engaging knowledge. If we think of design not as a discipline, but as study and as "a multiplicity of concurrent, allied non-allied, collaborative, competitive, contradictory, or aligned practices of design" (Wakkary, 2021, p. 53), these artworks might inspire

Producing Affects and a Methodological Excess

Attempting to convey this nomadic, collective subjectivity, I developed a composite "you" figure. This second-person was based on participant perspectives shared through Lab discussions, WhatsApp group conversations, photographs and artefacts. It was originally inspired by Stephen Best's (2018) descriptions of artworks from the second-person perspective, and Katie Stewart's (2007) third-person "she" in *Ordinary Affects*. Best uses the second-person "you" to suit the impersonal object of the *artwork's* address; this you "is neither simply me…nor the 'viewer' nor the 'subject'" (p. 144). Like Best, I aim to suggest the agential quality of artworks, and affects and matter in a curricular ethology. In this way, "artfulness reminds us that the 'I' is

not where life begins, and the 'you' is not what makes it art," wrote Manning (2016, p. 63). The facets of this "you"-figure were developed by attending to what "glowed"—as in one participant's differing experiences of *Soundwalk,* in October and November of 2020, which then gathered other resonances with sound across Lab discussions (MacLure, 2013). Unlike Best, my use of the second-person "you" refers to a composite figure made up of these partial perspectives and experiences of Lab members and myself. This more-than-one subjectivity is the interest of Manning (2016) and Braidotti (2018), both influenced by Deleuzian ontology. "What is the self that is being studied here?" asked Braidotti, in an interview about posthuman methodologies for self-study or intimate research: "It is a relational entity, it is you, and me, a collectivity and a group. It is never just one" (p. 183). "You" is the particular collective of Lab, and myself; while "you" does not intend to refer to the reader, it may invite the reader into its nomadic, transversal subjectivity. Stewart's (2007) third-person "she" is also an invitational figure—neither wholly herself ("I"), nor a distinct subject. Stewart explained:

> I call myself 'she' to mark the difference between this writerly identity and the kind of subject that…senses, takes on, performs, and asserts not a flat and finished truth but some possibilities (and threats) that have come into view in the effort to become attuned to what a particular scene might offer. (p. 5)

Stewart's "she" observes not from a God-eye position, but rather from a position immanent to the affective field she describes. Similarly, the you-figure I employ is situated in particular curricular ethologies described in earlier chapters. "You" is "not a trusted guide carefully laying out the links between theoretical categories and the real world, but…a point of impact, curiosity, and encounter" (p. 5).

I experimented with marbling this second-person voice, theoretical texts, definitions, and headlines through the analysis, to have the writing "*do* what it is *about*" (Snaza, 2019, p. 10). My aim in generating these affective scenes was to, as Stewart (2007) did in *Ordinary Affects*, "is not

to finally 'know' them—to collect them into a good enough story of what's going on—but to fashion some form of address that is adequate to their form; to find something to say about [them] by performing some of the intensity and texture that makes them habitable and animate" (p. 4). Curriculum flickers into view as an inhabitation of those scenes and method for listening to their address. Curriculum, in that sense, is not criticism, but like Berlant's (1994) perspective on worthy criticism which was never far from their perspectives on teaching and making homes for thinking in the minor science of gender studies, curriculum's aim can be to "keep the event open, animating, and vital…. to generate its objects, to construct unexpected scenes out of the materials it makes available" (p. 133). Through marbling as an analytic method and genre for writing under the umbrella of nonrepresentational methodologies, I have sought to keep open, animate, and vital the scenes generated through the Lab's practices.

Any study has its temporal and material limitations and omits more than is ever possible to include. The three artworks discussed in this study were the ones available to us physically and digitally over the course of 2020-2021; the ones that I was aware of through networks, newsletters, and other chance encounters; and the ones in which other members of the Lab expressed an interest. Many more led me to this study. An incomplete list would include Marisa Morán Jahn's *Snatchural History of Copper*; Caroline Woolard's *Study Center*; Tatyana Fazlalizadeh's *Stop Telling Women to Smile*; Chloë Bass's *Book of Everyday Instruction*; the bodies of work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Suzanne Lacy, Anna Deavere Smith, Theaster Gates, Hank Willis Thomas; and still more performances and practices across the globe (of which the Hemispheric Institute is an excellent archive). The kinds of curricular thinking and doing these works open up could constitute an "inventory of shimmers," which, Seigworth and Gregg (2010) kindly pointed out, "can be work enough" (p. 11).

One crucial methodological strand could not be addressed in the scope of this dissertation. That is the design of a curriculum for informal learning spaces and times, by a subset of participants including myself. This design was influenced by and fed forward into our experiences of the Lab's weekly meetings and arts-based events. What began as a desire to create a curriculum involving sound experiences, which would address experiences of grief, isolation, and care during the pandemic, turned into an analysis of how the Lab meetings affected each of us. An iterative process of developing propositions for learning experiences and identifying conditions or techniques for the emergence of sense-making through those experiences led to a curriculum oriented around wandering (Appendix A, *Wander: A Curriculum*). Mindful that wandering is not a neutral practice (Cervenak, 2014), we used this term as a more colloquial expression of the nomadic, transversal movements of study operative in the curriculum that emerged through *SOUNDWALK*, *Fighting Dark*, the Box of Curricular Offerings, and habitual practices of engaging the senses.

My own experience of the process supported discussion of wandering and the transversality of subjectivity and design, in response to the second research question on what such experiments with curriculum do to the subjects involved in its emergence, environments, and objects. I have begun to think of formal curriculum, such as *Wander: A Curriculum* produced by Lab's Design group, as being at its most generative when it occurs after curriculum has happened as such. Rather than to 'begin with the end in mind,' as dominant frameworks like *Understanding by Design* would have curriculum writers do, this suggests that the work of a curriculum designer (which is always, already theoretical work) is to sense curriculum in its emergence, any where at any time. From this "speculative middle" (Springgay & Truman, 2018), curriculum writing theorizes those relationships to knowledge and learning and develops

propositions—activities, experiences, “scores”—that incite the emergence of another, never identical, curricular happening.

Future Study: Laboratories for Curriculum

That emergent design process is part of another refrain—“What is a Lab?”—asked throughout Lab meetings over 2020-2021 and murmuring throughout this study’s objects, analysis, and discussion. A laboratory in the sciences is typically a container for experimentation, one which reduces complexity to isolate a phenomenon and better understand it. This laboratory, conversely, sought to meet curriculum in its complexity, to enmesh itself in a ‘surround’ or ethology of practices of knowing and being. I focused on the role of aesthetics and sensations in Lab experiments and practices. A historical analysis of the relationship between sensation and curriculum could complement this line of inquiry; which would also further curriculum studies’ increasing interest “sensual” and “sensuous” curriculum (Gershon, 2011, 2019). Elizabeth Freeman’s (2019) analysis of the senses and forms of sociality, Bernadette Baker’s (2013) analysis of the impact of scientific discourses and theories of the mind on educational practice, and Erica Fretwell’s (2020) analysis of the relationship between psychophysics, sensation, and social difference each considered the role of sensation in the 19th century and provided a model for this historical analysis. Baker’s and Fretwell’s research also touched on the contextual, local nature and social stakes of scientific knowledge and experimentation, particularly in relationship to theories of the mind and body. Despret (2016), Barad (2007), and Haraway (1988) provided ways of thinking about how a laboratory constructs its objects of study, and the entanglement of the researcher with those objects. This is an important area for further study, particularly in relation to Research Question 2: *What do experiments with curricular practices and forms do to curriculum theorists, researchers, and designers*?

“The Work’s Affirmation of the Not-Yet”

Much of this project has been an exploration of the “beautiful risk” (Biesta, 2015) and affirmative ethics of different curricular forms—forms that are “unsettling and always unsettled” (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 56). In these explorations, the project became less about responding to a problem and more about responding to a possibility. Sitting with that space of possibility, I continue to turn over Manning’s (2016) counsel, that this process is akin to making wine (or kombucha, or beer, or gardening, or teaching, or activism):

> as messy, as uneasy-making, as exciting as pounding the grapes, provided that we take this situatedness seriously. For it is in the midst of the field of relations, in the undercommons, that practices are at their most inventive, at their most intense. This is also, of course, the place of risk. All that work, and the wine may still turn. Or just never be any good. The same goes for the sympathetic reading that creates a concept, or the artistic process that activates an object. These may go nowhere. But what they will do, no matter what, is create a process and, even better, a practice, and it is this that will have made a difference. For it will have made felt the urge of appetition, and with it the work’s affirmation of the not-yet. (p. 14)

I return to the box, which has completed its circuit. It has gathered, in addition to the blank postcards with definition of gathering, a collage with definitions of movement and moving company stickers, a bag of magazine and textbook cut-outs, a protective amulet, packets of chile powder from New Mexico, packets of thyme, a fortuneteller folded from a letter about time: cleaned and empty chip bags in different languages, a shadow-box with a narrative about a mer-creature, an activity for noticing details framed by overlooked windows, and more ephemera tucked into the “lost” and “found” envelopes.

Lost: four covers, each with a solitary student, from an edition of the *The New York Times Magazine* titled “The Lost Year”; a penny-sized blue quartz stone with a description of the stone’s properties. I hold the blue quartz in my hand. The description says this enhances

creativity and expression. It directs me to hold the blue quartz in the palm of my hand, until I am ready to say something, and then to utter whatever it is that has come to mind aloud.

Sound waves, materials, time, and curriculum collide.

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Appendix A

Sample page from *Wander: A Curriculum* (2020).

Gerth van den Berg, S., Elsamadicy, A., Mewes, R., Simmons, J., & Vigil, R. (2020). *Wander: A Curriculum.* Black Paint.

WAYS OF WANDERING THROUGH THE WORLD ARE PRACTICES FOR LEARNING.

Image Six: Simmons, 2020

HERE ARE GENERATIVE STRATEGIES, IDEAS, AND SPRINGBOARDS FOR WANDERING, MANY OF WHICH CATALYZE WAYS OF LOOKING AT SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY.

This curriculum highlights the learning and meaning-making that happens with something as simple as awareness of materials, attention to senses, and exploration of place across different spaces and lived experiences. We wander to return with greater attunement - a shift in our orientation to ourselves, to each other, and to the world. Meaning-making is personal and can also coalesce in the collective.

Materials change an experience.
Materials foster creativity and imagination by placing objects and artifacts in our presence so that we have something to react to. Materials and objects provoke emotions, memories, and different bodily sensations in our stories and experiences.

Senses are how the body encounters the environment.
Sensing, being with our senses and what we sense, is how the body encounters the environment. Attunement occurs with deep listening, noticing, and observation. These experiences with our senses draw us in certain directions, towards surprising orientations and discoveries. When we permit ourselves to follow our senses, we wander.

Place plays a big role — and — wandering can happen without going anywhere.
Wandering through physical places allows us to layer affect, history, movement, and memory. The experience of wandering through rooms, routes, landscapes, and landmarks invigorates the ordinary and extraordinary. While our experiences of singular places have been more intense during the pandemic, our ability to be in different places has been limited. We might yearn for different places and the act of going somewhere, but wandering within limitations of movement can foster new relationships to a familiar place.

"Wandering" might first connote physically walking without a clear purpose or destination, but needn't be exclusively a physical movement or geographic activity. Wandering can happen without going anywhere - falling down a tik tok rabbit hole, rifling through old photo albums, diving into your bookshelf. Whether through physical, digital, imagined, or interior spaces, wandering can support intentionally getting lost, exploring, and swerving off the given groove; as well as for wayfinding and orienting oneself to the unfamiliar path.

4