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Welcoming Narratives in Education: A Tribute to the Life Work of Jonathan Silin

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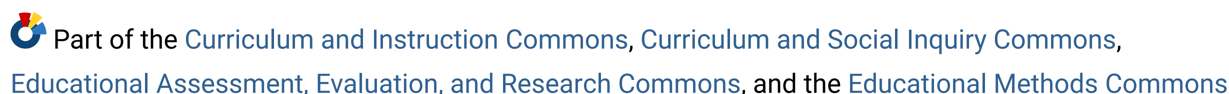
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Welcoming Narratives in Education: A Tribute to the Life Work of Jonathan Silin

Introduction

Lisa Farley

Gail Boldt

Essays by

Nicole Ineese-Nash

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw

Fikile Nxumalo

Debbie Sonu

Tran Nguyen Templeton

Wendy Luttrell

Esther Ohito

Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández

Harper Keenan

Jen Gilbert

Alyssa Niccolini

Jennifer Rowsell

Cassie Brownell

Karen Wohlwend

Ana Carolina Díaz Beltrán

Paty Abril-Gonzalez

Cinthya Saavedra

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Occasional Paper Series

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Jonathan Silin

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Introduction Part 1

Welcoming Narratives in Education: A Tribute to the Life Work of Jonathan Silin

Lisa Farley and Gail Boldt

Issue 45 of the Bank Street *Occasional Paper Series* is a labor of love. It testifies to our love for Jonathan Silin, who for 17 years served as Editor-in-Chief. The issue is also a testament to our respect for the things that matter to him. We have designed Issue 45 to exemplify two commitments that have shaped the decades of Jonathan's career and that we believe will resonate with readers of the *Occasional Paper Series.*

One of these commitments is Jonathan's passionate belief in the power of narrative—of well-crafted story-telling—to act as a dialogic, interpretive, and transformative form of writing that makes clear that the language we use to represent knowledge can also create new ways to imagine the social world. While there is always more than one way to tell a story, we understand from Jonathan's rich writings that the *how* of telling a story matters.

So often, our imaginations are constrained by dominant narratives repeatedly told that govern the very recognizability of being: who we imagine to be a child, a citizen, or a person whose life matters. Interweaving the personal and political, Jonathan's work features narratives that challenge the normative conceptualizations of childhood and development that too often deny children's complex subjectivities, that individualize socially produced traumas, and that pathologize diverse loves, peoples, and pleasures. In precisely those times when words congeal around fixed meanings and disavow difference, Jonathan's work reminds us that narrative is the resource we need to reconnect stalled meanings with the fluidity of experiences, voices, and relationships that have the potential to animate and exceed what we thought we knew.

The second commitment at the heart of Jonathan's work is his devotion to nurturing intergenerational relationships for creating conditions that can welcome newcomers into the extant world. Jonathan has inspired scholars, teachers, and caregivers with a vision of education and a practice of mentoring characterized by an open generosity and a nuanced understanding of shared social worlds of commitment and care. As Editor-in-Chief of the *Occasional Paper Series,* Jonathan brought these practices to life through his commitment to seek out and support the publication of richly storied pieces that centered historically underrepresented voices and highlighted the work of new writers, including practicing teachers and administrators, students, and young scholars. He exemplifies hospitality, welcoming new ideas as readily as he welcomes new colleagues and friends.

To celebrate the spirit of Jonathan's lifetime of work, in this issue we have invited scholars to tell us stories of education as hospitality, as welcoming the newcomer and the stranger, with all the complexities this involves. To create the issue itself as an act of welcoming, we invited a group of curriculum theorists who are newer to the field—scholars whose voices are emerging as powerful representatives of a new generation of scholars—to write essays. We then paired each of these theorists with a more senior scholar, who wrote a response to their paired partner. In inviting the senior scholars

to respond, we asked them to put narrative to use in welcoming the work of their partner, again exemplifying hospitality, creativity, and care.

Invited authors were told that their pieces did not have to directly reference Jonathan's work; some did and some did not. Regardless, what followed from the invitation to contribute was nothing less than a profound testament to the spirit of Jonathan's work, leading to inspired acts of support and generosity shown by our contributors to one another, all occurring during the extreme stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic. As will be clear, the senior scholars were deeply moved by the rich and vulnerable offerings of their partners and they responded in kind. Indeed, in one particularly moving act of reciprocity, when the cruel duplicity of Trump-era immigration policies made it impossible for one of our contributors, Ana Carolina Díaz Beltrán, to complete her contribution, her senior partner, Michelle Salazar Pérez, wrapped Ana in loving care, inviting Cinthya Saavedra and Paty Abril-Gonzalez to join in a shared effort to produce a piece that allowed Ana's continuing participation. It was an act that moved us and the *Occasional Paper Series* board to tears of gratitude and admiration.

This issue is made up of seven pieces written by emerging curriculum theorists: Nicole Ineese-Nash, Fikile Nxumalo, Tran Nguyen Templeton, Esther Ohito, Harper Keenan, Alyssa Niccolini, and Cassie Brownell. Each of their pieces is paired with responses written by their respective senior partners, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, Debbie Sonu, Wendy Luttrell, Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, Jen Gilbert, Jennifer Rowsell, and Karen Wohlwend. It also includes one essay collaboratively written by four scholars—Ana Carolina Díaz Beltrán, Michelle Salazar Pérez, Cinthya Saavedra, and Paty Abril-Gonzalez. It contains a telling of Jonathan's career, by Gail and Lisa, and concludes with reflections on Jonathan's life and work by two close colleagues, Virginia Casper, and Deborah Britzman.

Photography and photographs play a key role in several of the essays in this issue. The reader will also find photographs taken by Jonathan's late partner, Robert Giard, a portrait, landscape, and figure photographer. Bob Giard was renowned for his own kind of welcoming and hospitality. In the 1980s, during the height of the AIDS crisis, Bob turned to photographing both established and emerging LGBTQ literary figures with the goal of documenting and celebrating queer lives. Jonathan made Bob's photos available to us for this issue.

INTRODUCING THE ARTICLES

Nicole Ineese-Nash's essay reminds us that the emphasis in Jonathan's work on relationships and narrative has always been foundational to Indigenous thought. Nicole tells a creation story of Indigenous "ontologies of relation" that moor existence in kinship structures that decenter the human-centric focus of Western thought. For education, Indigenous ontologies of relation charge both teachers and students with a responsibility to actively decolonize the terms of commodity, individualism, and control that frame colonial relationships with land and knowledge. Indigenous ontologies of relation usurp the Western idea that any one of us can claim to be a rightful host of "the places we inhabit." They remind us that we are "visitors on this Earth" whose responsibility is to restore "caretaking relationships to place" that can extend the right of everyone "to live in more sustainable and life-promoting ways."

In her response, Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw tells a story that enacts the "ontologies of relation" of which Nicole speaks, while actively refusing a proprietary relationship to Nicole's story. Her narrative lays bare a "common history" forged between children and creatures of the natural world, one "that refuses to follow the colonial narrative," rendering squirrels as mere "animals that humans come into conflict

with.” In Veronica’s narrative, welcoming comes by way of the more-than-human world that “create[s] an alternative relational force” and should call us into sustained and collective attention to matters that live beyond the orbit of our own individual existence.

Fikile Nxumalo, too, probes children’s encounters with the natural world. She offers three stories of young people’s encounters with water that serve as, in her words, “illustrations of pedagogies that welcome young people into caring relationships with more-than-human life.” Fikile begins by sketching the landscape of “settler colonial and anti-Black inheritances,” which such encounters disrupt. In particular, she shows how human-centered approaches to learning *about* the environment not only uphold the colonial hierarchy that positions the human above the natural world, but perpetuate a highly racialized image of “a pure idyllic nature… to which white and privileged children ‘naturally’ belong.” In this construction, racially minoritized children are made to stand outside of “nature,” where they are subject to hyper-surveillance and deficit narratives of “underdevelopment and underachievement” that nature is then recruited to “fix.” The featured stories of Fikile’s essay offer a counterpoint to racist constructions by restoring the place of both Indigenous and Black knowledges in early childhood education.

Debbie Sonu’s response underlines her learning from Fikile’s paper by demonstrating how the stories we tell about human and more-than-human relationships matter. When humans are constructed as inhabitants of a natural world meant to serve us with endless resources, we are absolved of our “responsibility for its future sustainability.” Debbie reads the place-encounters featured in Fikile’s essay as narratives of both creation and futurity that “re-story the very epistemological frameworks that perpetuate the human-nature division” and highlight “the relational qualities of being” needed to “remake the world anew.”

Tran Nguyen Templeton extends this idea of relationships through a discussion of children’s visual representations of the worlds they inhabit. Her essay considers what photographs might reveal about how children construct a sense of self “on their own terms” that is, at the same time, shaped by multiple contexts and bonds with others. Tran’s piece shows us what can happen when adults risk letting go of their own claims of expertise to welcome children’s concerns, wishes, and jokes that unsettle school rules to pay attention, stop laughing, and “get things right.” Tran shows us that what matters to children is not the developmental narrative that adults tell about them, but the times when adults greet children’s representations of relationships, made from both “power *and* vulnerability.”

Wendy Luttrell greets Tran’s research by noticing the care that Tran takes to provide “glimpses of children’s shared identity work” and “make visible their active participation in care networks.” Together, Tran and Wendy shift the common idea that children are passive recipients of their worlds to show how, through photographs, they speak back against adult constructions—whether “negative appraisals” or “pet names”—that fail to notice the depth of children’s capacities and perspectives.

Esther Ohito draws from photography as well, but for her, images offer a portal for thinking about the relationship between childhood memories, moving emotions, and “social ills—such as anti-Black racism and misogynoir,” that press down on seemingly individual experiences pictured inside the camera’s frame. Esther suggests that, if family photographs “return us to our origin,” the memories they invoke are not always of our choosing or wanting. Still, because photographs “catalyze narratives,” they can be used to work through the hard parts of loving relationships that “we cannot, must not, leave behind,” insofar as they fundamentally shape who we are and who we imagine ourselves to be in relationship to others.

Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández meets Esther's family photograph with an analysis of his own personal portrait. For him, the images "provide glimpses into our path toward affectional solidarities" across differences—between then and now, between there and here, between child-self and adult-self, and even between "Esther's father and my mother." Solidarity here refers not to sameness across differences—whether of generation, place, citizenship, race, and/or gender—but to a commitment to preserve all that is "ungraspable and beyond our capacity to understand or know" about the other. It is in this relation across difference where, for Esther and Rubén, ethical possibility emerges and resides.

In his own act of solidarity, Harper Keenan pens a moving letter to new queer and trans educators that chronicles a five-decades-long history of queer and trans activisms to strengthen "intergenerational connection." Against the cold objectivity that can sometimes fix history squarely in the distant past, Harper's narrative brings to life the lasting impact of queer and trans legacies of thought, including Jonathan's, on his own unfolding story. His narrative of welcome reminds us that queer and trans educators are not alone because they have been there from the beginning. In sharing their legacies of resistance and solidarity, Harper welcomes all queer and trans educators into "caring futures" of "collective survival" that can productively disrupt exhausting binaries, gender normativity, and compliance.

Jen Gilbert responds to Harper's narrative by thinking with him about "queering" legacies of activism and noticing an ambivalent core in the generations that Harper chronicles. That is, efforts to secure the rights of queer and trans children are built on an unspoken legacy of activism that was made to abandon queer and trans teachers ironically in the name of protecting children from their so-called nefarious influence. Jen's response links the work of Harper and Jonathan by underlining their shared commitment to work against idealized narratives of both identity and education, and to remember and confront the losses, struggles, and failures that comprise even the most progressive narratives.

While "Romantic ideas about forest kindergartens are one of the reasons" Alyssa Niccolini was drawn to Germany, the newness of the place and the language call her into a vulnerable form of literacy that "evades language" and invokes bodies, gestures, and rituals. In Alyssa's narrative, the ticks covering the forest floor of her children's school that "taunt" their bodies become a metaphor for thinking about the unexpected, and even the "unwanted," as the ground of existence. The ticks of Alyssa's narrative have no concern for the construct of childhood innocence that presumes to protect (certain) children from harm. Ticks have no concern for Alyssa's shaky grasp of German as she tries to explain her worries to a doctor. Indeed, ticks might be thriving because of "human interference" warming the globe. Even as Alyssa attempts to abate her anxiety by "entomb[ing]" the "spider parasites" in a "cruel curation" of sticky plastic, she wonders what it means to welcome "the wildness of the world" in a generative, if fearful, invitation to learn from what we cannot control in our entangled existence.

Jennifer Rowsell responds to Alyssa with a narrative that affirms vulnerability as a condition of being in relation, and not a deficit belonging to those considered weak or failed. "Vulnerability," as Jennifer suggests, "gives fluency to literacy" that "opens expressive floodgates" and dislodges the surety of our footing. Vulnerability obliges us to care for others beyond curative narratives that reinstall the fantasy of the adult-in-charge, and provided we let it, can "move us to new places."

Cassie Brownell's piece begins with a story of 7-year-olds racing through a school hallway and out onto a play yard in an energetic game of "Corona Tag." Cassie brings together Jonathan's (2013) observation

that children use play as a tool to “devise narratives that help them sort through their experiences” and that adults must make space for discussing with them the fact that “children, like adults, live lives fraught with uncertainty, loss, and trauma.” She documents how, as a new teacher in a second-grade classroom in New Orleans some years after Hurricane Katrina, it was in fact the children and the veteran teachers who made space for her, an outsider and a stranger, to learn how to live together and care for one another as a new hurricane approached the city. Bringing us back to the present context of COVID-19, Cassie contends that adults must “take children’s play as a starting point for the critical work and care associated with our roles as educators and caretakers” and that, in turn, children’s play can remind us that our imaginations may take us to places not previously imagined.

Karen Wohlwend, in response, describes Cassie’s essay as enacting an “ethical action,” performing gratitude, respect, recognition, and empathy in her descriptions of the children and teachers who welcomed her to her first teaching position. “Welcoming,” Karen writes, “is an opening of possibilities.” This is especially so when it is grounded in the teacher’s capacity to tolerate the vulnerability of not knowing and not controlling, when we embrace the realization that children at play can be “trusted and supported to work through the uncertainty in their worlds in times of pandemic or natural disasters,” and when we can welcome children as partners in imagining classroom spaces of creativity and hope.

The piece entitled “Enlaces” performs the enlacing of narratives of its four authors, Ana Carolina Díaz Beltrán, Michelle Salazar Pérez, Cinthya Saavedra, and Paty Abril-Gonzalez. Framed as a testimonio, bringing together their commitments to “women of color feminisms and how these ways of knowing and being can inspire anti-oppressive and anti-colonial imaginaries in early childhood studies,” the authors tell stories of linguicide, invisibility in schooling and in the academe, and of border crossings. They draw lovingly on memories of weaving done by their mothers and in their communities to describe cultural tools handed down “to navigate and maneuver oppression and life in general” and also to create conditions for friendship, joy, belonging, and powerful work. The work of Gloria Anzaldúa supports them in providing their testimonios as “a retelling or putting ourselves back together” that also stand as a powerful model for a transformative curriculum, an approach to teaching and learning that is grounded in the strength of stories that produce knowledge and pass along insights and hard-learned lessons.

Virginia Casper and Deborah Britzman share with Jonathan a history as central figures, as Deborah writes, “in the beginning era of gay and lesbian rights, during the AIDS pandemic, during key moments of feminism and civil rights, and in dramatic and sometimes maddening challenges within our field of education.” Deborah helps us think about how Jonathan’s work slows the “harried time” of education that can make us feel anxious and instead helps us to think deeply about how our earliest experiences of having been cared for by others return to adulthood as “soft situations” felt as “vulnerability, dependency, curiosity, and care.” Her account reads Jonathan’s work through a psychoanalytic lens to suggest that while development is rooted in troubling assumptions of normativity, this much-critiqued concept can also signal a second chance, or what Deborah describes as “a desire for weird continuity” made from “think[ing] on purpose with what chance has created.”

Virginia, in her account of a hike she and Jonathan took early last year through the hills above Las Cruces, New Mexico, writes about Jonathan’s latest work on legacy: “Rather than focusing on passing the torch to another generation, Jonathan, throughout his career, has enacted reciprocity through intergenerational dialogue, validating new voices and welcoming ‘newcomers’ of all kinds into a larger

community of thought." For Virginia, Jonathan's work and friendship have brought a generative and generous intellectual camaraderie that allows her to "plumb the depths of [her] own thinking as well as create a whole enterprise of ideas that is most definitely greater than the sum of its parts."

We take many lessons from the magnificent stories of our generous contributing authors—gifts that we frame through the commitments present in the life and work of Jonathan Silin and that are brought to life in these pieces. We are filled with gratitude for the ways the authors welcomed our invitation, embracing it as an occasion to write things that are deeply held, that matter. They displayed a remarkable vulnerability, grace, and generosity. They welcomed the chance to engage with one another through their writing, the kind of intergenerational opening that Jonathan holds dear. It is our sincere hope that the authors will continue to find, in the ideas and relationships forged through this work, an enactment of hospitality that will continue to grow and nurture their spirits and imaginations for years to come. Even more fervently, we hope that readers of Issue 45 of the Bank Street *Occasional Paper Series* will feel welcomed into these pages, will find a sense of belonging here, and will feel inspired to extend welcoming and hospitality, love, respect, creativity, and curiosity to the children and adults that populate our world.

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Introduction Part 2

Relationships at the Core: A Story of Jonathan Silin

Gail Boldt and Lisa Farley

Issue 45 of the Bank Street *Occasional Paper Series* was conceived to pay tribute to Jonathan Silin for his 17 years as Editor-in-Chief, for his contributions to education through his research and publications in early childhood education, curriculum, and gender/sexuality studies, and for the remarkably generous and caring mentor, teacher, and friend he has been and continues to be to so many.

Jonathan's life at Bank Street College began in the fall of 1968. That spring, he graduated from Columbia University with a bachelor's degree in history and landed a job as kindergarten teacher at the Friends Seminary in New York. He quickly discovered his love of teaching young children. Recognizing a need for teacher training, Jonathan began the Bank Street teacher preparation program. In the fall of 1970, he took a job as teacher of 4- and 5-year-olds at the Walden School, returning to the school he had attended as a child and adolescent. He taught there for four years.

Man in an Arctic Cap (Jonathan Silin). Photo by Robert Giard. Used with permission of Jonathan Silin

In 1974, Jonathan moved with his partner, the renowned portrait, landscape, and figure photographer Bob Giard, to Amagansett, New York and took a teaching position at the Hampton Day School, working with 3- to 6-year-olds. After three years there, he began a doctoral program in Curriculum and Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University, where he was profoundly influenced by Maxine Green and Dwayne Huebner.

Jonathan completed his PhD in 1981. After a short stay at Colgate University as a visiting professor, he began 10 years of full-time work as an AIDS educator and advocate, first at the Long Island Association for AIDS Care and then as an independent consultant. During this time, he published a number of articles, including, in *Teachers College Record,* "The Language of AIDS: Public Fears, Pedagogical Responsibilities" (1987). This was an important piece, one of the first that put a conversation about AIDS into a scholarly framework, bringing to educators information about what was happening around AIDS in schools. In the face of panicked attacks on adults and children who had contracted AIDS or who were perceived as "dangerous," Jonathan advocated that AIDS education be taught across the curriculum, starting with the youngest children.

Throughout his years in AIDS education, Jonathan kept in close contact with many faculty at Bank Street, including Harriet Cuffaro (see Occasional Paper Series #32, *Living a Philosophy of Early Childhood*

Education: A Festschrift for Harriet Cuffaro). He gave frequent talks at Bank Street and Columbia University about AIDS and education. Following the loss of funding for community AIDS work, in 1992 Jonathan returned to Bank Street as a member of the graduate faculty, supervising student teachers and creating and teaching a course called "The Social Worlds of Childhood," which expanded understanding of childhood beyond traditional discourses of child development.

In 1995, Jonathan published *Sex, Death and the Education of Children: Our Passion for Ignorance in the Age of AIDS.* In this moving and important book, Jonathan wrote through and beyond the AIDS crisis to ask how under the guise of "protecting children," adults cultivate a deliberate and politically charged ignorance by their avoidance of controversial or difficult topics. Bringing the then-emerging theoretical lenses of queer theory to bear on an analysis of the education of young children, Jonathan wrote boldly of working in preschools in the mornings, participating in AIDS activism in the afternoons, and attending the funerals of his friends in the evenings. His book demonstrates the political power of personal narrative for research, what happens when writers are fully present in the words they write. Always, but especially in an era of COVID-19, *Sex, Death and the Education of Children* reminds us that both childhood and education are thoroughly marked by death, illness, and loss—experiences that some might like to imagine exist outside of these domains.

Among the many who were moved and inspired by *Sex, Death, and the Education of Children* were the members of the Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education group (RECE), in which Jonathan has been an active member since its second conference in 1992. Begun by early childhood education scholars who were critical of the normalizing and culturally obtuse discourses that then pervaded the field, Jonathan played a powerful role in wedding queer theory to early childhood research, theory, and practice. His work set an early tone for this group and established him as a mentor to new generations of early childhood scholars. It was at the 1993 RECE conference where Gail Boldt first met Jonathan, who was assigned as a discussant for the first conference paper she ever presented, a discussion of "gender-bending" children in her third-grade classroom. Jonathan's generous response was the beginning of a mentoring relationship and a friendship that has carried on since that time. He has continued to play a key role in RECE, including chairing the 2001 New York conference that took place just three weeks after the events of 9/11, and helping to organize the 2017 conference held in Toronto. Jonathan has worked on numerous RECE program committees and, since 2017, has served on RECE's steering committee, which is currently hard-at-work examining how the pandemic offers an opportunity to re-envision this international conference.

Jonathan's involvement with the Bank Street *Occasional Paper Series* began in 1999. An initiative of Dean Patricia Wasley to highlight the work of Bank Street Graduate School faculty, the first issue of the series edited by Frank Pignatelli, was published in April 2000. Jonathan served on the first committee, which later became the editorial board, and was designated as Editor-in-Chief when Frank stepped down in 2001. During his tenure, the *Occasional Paper Series* expanded from a semi-annual print publication of 300 copies to an online, open-access publication attracting national and international writers and guest editors, and read by tens of thousands of readers in almost every country in the world.

Even with the remarkable growth of the *Occasional Paper Series,* Jonathan maintained a clear vision of research as human storytelling. He encouraged authors to take full advantage of the affordances of an online publication to contain graphic images, including photography, comic essays, and paintings, as well as audio and video pieces. Jonathan was always forward-looking, always excited about the possibilities of non-traditional and creative forms of research. Jonathan retired from the role of Editor-

in-Chief in 2018, after spending a year mentoring Gail into the role, and he continues to serve on the editorial board as a trusted advisor.

Throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, Jonathan worked in Newark, New Jersey with Carol Lippman at Project New Beginnings. The project was Bank Street's response to an invitation to participate in early childhood public school renewal in Newark, following a court takeover of the district. Their work together resulted in the 2003 publication of *Putting the Children First: The Changing Face of Newark's Public Schools.* Typical of Jonathan's commitments, the book keeps a tight focus on the voices of the teachers, staff developers, and administrators, all working on the front lines to reform a distressed school system suffering decades of political upheaval and economic neglect.

In 2002, Jonathan created the **Robert Giard Foundation** to preserve and promote the legacy of his partner Bob, who died suddenly that year, and to provide fellowships for emerging LGBTQ+ photographers. He continued to write and publish. His 2006 book, *My Father's Keeper: The Story of a Gay Son and His Aging Parents,* again brought to the fore the importance of first-person narrative, the grounding of teaching and learning in complex entanglements of love and loss, the critical learning that occurs in intergenerational relationships, and the potential of queering up overly instrumental versions of teaching and caretaking. In the book, Jonathan considered how his experiences of caring for young children and dying friends aided him in caring for his parents in their final years, and how being with them provided experiences that continued to expand his own perspectives and beliefs.

In 2007, Jonathan moved to join his new partner David Townsend, and became a fellow at the University of Toronto's Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies. It was after his move to Toronto that Lisa first met Jonathan at a party hosted by shared friends. This was far from her first encounter with him, however—she became acquainted with Jonathan as a graduate student in and through the prose of his first two books. Jonathan's work was paramount to her thinking about how history lives inside children and how narrative can symbolize and transform its impacts. Having met Jonathan through his published words, Lisa was thrilled to be introduced in person. In a room packed with seasoned academics, Jonathan asked questions prompted by his curiosity to learn what it felt like for Lisa to be new to the academy and to struggle to feel connected within an institution that ranks and often divides people at its very core. Afterwards, they worked together closely on the host committee for the 2017 RECE conference held at Ryerson University. They continue to ask each other big questions about the meaning of education and childhood not only at conferences, but over many coffees and much fine cheese.

In Toronto, Jonathan has been a consultant on staff development, training teachers as classroom researchers, and education program evaluation. He has continued to write. In his latest book, *Early Childhood, Aging, and the Life Cycle* (2018) Jonathan builds insights that draw from the continuities and themes that have framed his life to consider the generative acts and thoughts that can accompany him, struggling and thriving, as he enters what he playfully calls "young old age." As always, Jonathan's work surfaces feelings of fear, loss, hope, and optimism to provide us all with insight and grace for reflecting upon living artfully as adults and as educators of young children.

Finally, it is through Jonathan that we, as co-editors of this special issue, were brought together. We first met in the context of another special issue of the *Occasional Paper Series, "Classroom Life in the Age of Accountability,"* which was guest-edited in 2009 by Boldt, Paula Salvio, and Peter Taubman

under Jonathan's general editorship. Lisa published an article in that issue that brought together psychoanalysis and childhood memory to raise questions about the role of the unremembered past in teachers' contemporary and future aspirations, wishes, and worries about their work with children. This started an enduring connection between Lisa and Gail as colleagues and friends. Now, as co-editors of Issue 45, we have come full circle to honor Jonathan. The pieces in this issue embody the spirit of his lifetime of work; they feature relationships as the core of existence; they use personal narrative to raise questions about the social, political, and emotional situations of both education and childhood; and they put inside the walls of the school urgent topics, conflicts, and complexities that are marginalized within models of education oriented towards rationality, efficiency, and the measurement of pre-set outcomes.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gail Boldt is a professor in the College of Education at the Pennsylvania State University in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. She is on the undergraduate reading and elementary education faculty and is the professor in charge of the PhD emphasis in Language, Culture, and Society. Gail is also a clinical psychotherapist and a fellow in the College of Research Fellows of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Her research focuses on how studies of affect drawn from both Deleuzo-Guattarian and relational psychoanalytic sources can inform the creation of classrooms in which students and teachers experience vitality.

Lisa Farley is an associate professor in the Faculty of Education at York University in Toronto, Canada. Her research considers how psychoanalytic theories of childhood can help us think about the conflicted qualities of growth, belonging, and education. She is the author of *Childhood Beyond Pathology: A Psychoanalytic Study of Development and Diagnosis* (SUNY Press, 2018) and a collaborator on a recent project that examines how teachers' childhood memories inform their understandings of both teaching and children.

Ontologies of Welcoming: Anishinaabe Narratives of Relationality and Practices for Educators

Nicole Ineese-Nash

Nanaboozhoo, waciye. Minogizheghad. Zoonge Winneshe Wabigonikwe Nindizhinikaaz, Mamawmattawa minwa Tkaronto nindonjiba, mukwa nindodem, Anishinaabekwe nindow.

My name is Nicole Ineese-Nash. I am an Anishinaabe scholar, educator, and writer. I am also a community member, a caregiver, an auntie, a daughter, and an inheritor of knowledge that exists within the rivers of my family's traditional territory. In Anishinaabemowin,[1] my introduction is inherently relational; I tell you who I am through the relationships I hold to land, to spirit, and to my kin. This is a practice in relational accountability that is embedded in my culture and exemplifies the understandings of relational ethics I would like to speak to in this essay.

No matter which culture you belong to, or where on the planet you call home, each of us has an ethical responsibility to our first mother, the Earth. I would like to demonstrate what I have come to understand about relational ethics through Anishinaabe storywork and land-based knowledge systems as they may invite us to think differently about our relations to one another and the non-human world. Indigenous storywork is not merely fictional. Rather these stories exemplify our cultural teachings, understandings, and ways of living so that they may be carried through generations (Archibald, 2008).

NANABOOZHOO WALKS THE WORLD

Nanaboozhoo (or Nanabush) is a popular protagonist in Anishinaabe stories.[2] Considered by many as the first being sent to Earth from the Sky World, Nanaboozhoo is an exemplification of humanness in its imperfect and awe-inspiring form. Nanaboozhoo is both human and manito (spirit), and oftentimes represents the duality that all beings hold within them. They are both humble and greedy, respectful and mischievous, eager and lazy; perhaps most importantly, Nanaboozhoo demonstrates how we are both learner and educator through the processes of continuous inquiry we engage in throughout our lives.

Many stories describe Nanaboozhoo's initial walk around the Earth. In one story (as written by Edward Benton-Benai, 1988), Nanaboozhoo receives instructions from Gitchi Manito (the great spirit) to descend to Earth and to walk across the entirety of her surface, to learn about everything in Creation, and to bestow each animal, plant, and being with a name. These names come about through ceremonial practices, through relational participation, and through intentional observation. Nanaboozhoo comes to name each aspect of Creation through an in-depth understanding of it in relation to the entirety of the universe. For this reason, most names in Anishinaabemowin speak to the spirit of that being, their purpose, and their abilities. Each name holds its own story, an interwoven part of the narrative of existence.

Nanaboozhoo visited all parts of the Earth, visited with each tree, lived among each species, and touched each body of water. When this great journey was complete, Nanaboozhoo began to realize how everything existed in relation to one another; everything except Nanaboozhoo. Nanaboozhoo began to feel a deep sense of loneliness, as a being not completely of this world and yet, not fully a being of

1 The language of the Ojibwe people. There are many dialects that may differ from the words used here.
2 Not all Indigenous communities agree on the teachings and content of these stories. This is one version of many.

the Sky World. The Great Spirit noticed this and sent Nanaboozhoo a companion in the form of a wolf, Miangun. Miangun and Nanaboozhoo continued to travel the earth together, visiting, observing, and learning the wisdom that each plant, animal, and landscape had to offer. During this time, Nanaboozhoo and Miangun developed a strong bond to one another and through this relationship, both came to understand their position in the world as kin to all of Creation.

KINSHIP THROUGH RELATIONAL ETHICS

Nanaboozhoo serves as an example for understanding human relations with respect to the natural world, but also as a mechanism to personify kinship relations between peoples. The Anishinaabe are the sacred beings descended from the sky to a world already harmoniously balanced through cycles of interconnection. Indigenous relational ethics are cultural worldviews premised on understandings of these interconnections and our place among them. I have been taught that each being on Earth has a unique gift to share, and is part of an interconnected network of entities who hold a responsibility to maintain harmony with one another. We have learned this through story, such as the one I have spoken to here, but also through our experiences with the non-human and more-than-human world.

When humans came to Earth, they were welcomed and cared for by the first beings of Creation. We learned about family from the wolf, who Nanaboozhoo came to know as a sibling; we know of the need for seasonal readiness from watching Ajidimoo (squirrel) save food every autumn; we understand reciprocity through plants as they grow in mutually beneficial ways. Our world operates through relational ethics. We are in constant relation to the world around us, to the cosmos, and to the spirit world. Yet through the construction of social hierarchies, humans have largely forgotten or denied their place within the webs of Creation.

Indigenous concepts of kinship allow us to reconsider our place in the world and move away from human-centered configurations of living. Kinship refers to our familial relations, but also to the extended relationships we hold with other humans and the natural world. You may find it silly for me to tell you that a tree is my brother, or that a river is my grandmother, but conceptualizing the world in this way impacts how we carry ourselves and the decisions we make. You may visit that river a little more often or listen to her song a little more attentively if you think of her as a holder of knowledge. You may protect her a little more actively if you think of her as a member of your family. We are all visitors on this planet who have been invited to make this Earth home. We have an obligation to honor that extension of welcome and to remind ourselves of our expansive relations with one another. We are all related.

How might our world change if we were to reinstate biocentric relational ethics into our day-to-day lives? Nanaboozhoo demonstrates the humble principles of visiting that can provide an example of how we can walk as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in colonial contexts. Indigenous stories such as the one told here can help shape our understandings of education by bringing about new ways of thinking of ourselves as educators (as co-learners). These stories are but snapshots of what land and Indigenous perspectives can offer us in caring for one another and our planet. In this way, land itself is pedagogy. It teaches us whether we are there to listen or not. It holds memory of the past and knowledge of the future that enable us to answer questions about how we can live within the changing contexts of our world. We just need to know how to ask.

LAND-BASED ONTOLOGIES OF RELATION

Ontologies are our diverse manners in understanding the nature of being: what does it mean to be alive and what is our place within the world (Kincheloe, 2011)? For Indigenous peoples, our ontologies are not abstract philosophical ponderings, but are manifested in our daily practice, enacting our beliefs into our actions. Many Indigenous worldviews have been developed by our ontologies of relation; our understanding of our place in the web of Creation, cared for and nurtured by land. Aki (land) invites us to regain our relations to one another and to the non-human and more-than-human world. She does not discriminate based on race, class, ability, or gender. She does not require that we hold prerequisite knowledge. She does not care where on her surface our stories originate. All that she asks is that we honor her by showing her the care that she has shown us since the beginning of Creation.

In Anishinaabe culture, land is our mother: a caregiver who nurtures us, sustains us, and allows us to thrive. All humans exist in reciprocally dependent relationships with land. These relationships are transactional, but also spiritual. We honor our relationships to land when we spend time tending to her and receiving her gifts. This does not only occur when we do what seem to be land-based activities but also in our everyday lives when we acknowledge and invite land into our everyday discourses.

Indigenous theories position land as sentient, as a teacher who communicates in various ways (Styres, 2011). Land continues to have agency even when we are not present, and maintains story and memory of our past. Much of Anishinaabe culture is premised on teachings from the land with an understanding that our physical and spiritual bodies are composed of and dependent on land. Land teachings can extend into future contexts, only insomuch as we maintain good relations with land that allow her to prosper. In the context of settler colonialism, land is under constant duress, which strains our ability to tend to our relational responsibilities to land and the non-human world. As a result, our ability to access teachings from the land are hindered by various mechanisms of land proprietorship. Elders are often conceived as the transmitters of cultural knowledge between generations and are our interpreters of land teachings. As a result of colonial violence against Indigenous peoples, many land-based teachings are threatened. The disruption of place-based relations through Indigenous erasure and displacement have hindered the transmission of land-based knowledge to subsequent generations. This results in less access to land both materially and spiritually for all peoples.

BRINGING LAND ONTOLOGIES AND RELATIONAL ETHICS INTO THE EVERYDAY

Indigenous land-centered understandings of place have applications in care and education sectors, as well as within the interactions we engage in every day. Our world is made up of complex assemblages of human, animal, and other living beings. Decentralizing humans as the primary facilitators of care and education allows us to consider how the non-human and more-than-human presences in our world impact our lives. What may happen when we question our relations to land and enter into relational inquiry with her and the other non-human entities with whom we hold relations? Engaging in these conversations are critical acts of decolonization that may bring us into new relations with Indigenous peoples and lands.

Restorying the environments in which we work allows us to refigure the Indigenous presences that remain held within land, regardless of whether these places are considered to be land-based contexts (Nxumalo, 2016). Land knowledge exists regardless of the presence of our animal kin or plant life. Land knowledge resides within the rocks beneath our cities, in the waters from our taps, and embedded in the stars in our sky. Orienting pedagogy to land-centered, place-specific contexts

can be an intervention upon the colonial structures that reproduce narratives of land proprietorship and Indigenous subjugation. This orientation is an entry point from which all cultures could uncover realities that exist outside of settler-colonial presences, and a means for us to remove the constraints imposed on lands, bodies, and minds. Restorying is a way in which we can decolonize our societies more broadly, informed by but not appropriated from Indigenous knowledges.

The application of Indigenous land ontologies in educational contexts is a challenging yet rewarding endeavor. Restorying place encourages critical thought, hypothesis testing, and scientific inquiry. Further, it encourages cross-cultural constellations of relationality that enable us to live in more sustainable and life-promoting ways. While much of the scholarship in regard to land-based education is focused primarily on forests, or natural environments, we can restory places in urban settings by interrogating the histories of place and the origins of our environmental materials, and by considering what presences are displaced through our occupation of territory. Land-based experiences are not confined to pristine, seemingly uncolonized places, but should be explored in a variety of settings. Engaging in inquiry about land and Indigeneity makes evident the irreparable damage caused by coloniality, invoking us to accept collective responsibility for reconciling, not only with Indigenous peoples, but with the land itself.

MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS IN THE SPIRIT OF WELCOMING

What does it mean to be a good relative? As educators, we may not see ourselves as being familial with our students, our institutions, or our environments. Yet these relations exist whether we are conscious of them or not. Indigenous understandings of relationality can serve as a critical intervention in education, inviting us to think in ways that decenter individualism, welcome communal well-being, and encourage inquiry into the more-than-human realm. Ontologies of welcoming are the various understandings we hold as human beings of our place on this Earth and our consequent responsibilities to the places we inhabit. Nanaboozhoo helps us to remember our position as visitors on this Earth. While we have come to call her home, we do not own her; we call her home because of our undeniable relationship to her. But we must always remember that this was the home of the cedars, the wildflowers, and the animals long before we arrived. Just as we have been welcomed by Creation to reside on this Earth, we too must extend that invitation to others, in ethical and respectful ways.

Ethics from an Indigenous perspective are not static practices and procedures; they are ways of being in the world premised on cultural values, beliefs, and relational obligations (Simpson, 2008). Being in good relations with one another begins with relations to land and concerted attempts to decolonize the control of Indigenous territories and Indigenous and Black bodies in the environments in which we live (Smith, 2013). This requires a concerted effort to acknowledge and address white supremacy in our education and social systems. It means actively engaging in difficult discussions and calling out discriminatory and harmful practices. Recognizing the care that land shows us allows us to extend that care to others and to respect those who have an intimate relationship to the places we visit (i.e., Indigenous and Black communities).

Engaging in land-oriented pedagogical practice poses responsibilities for the ways we engage with Indigenous communities as well as with the physical world. It inspires us to think of futurities that challenge the normalized oppressions of particular peoples through systemic mechanisms of control. Considering land as a partner in our work changes the ethics we may employ, and places us all in various positions to remove structures of colonization that hinder our relation to place and place-based

knowledge. However, tensions arise when the ethics of land-based relationality call us to decolonize the systems from which we benefit. We cannot enter into good relations with land when we seek to hold it as property or commodity. To do this work without concerted effort towards positioning land as self-sovereign is to enact further colonial harm that discharges colonial culpability. Land-based understandings cannot be employed without also acknowledging and attempting to restore pre-colonial caretaking relationships to place. This means allowing Indigenous nations to tend to the land employing the ethics of relationality that Creation has taught us for generations.

The places we live, play, and teach are land-specific environments, which hold wisdom we often take for granted. Indigenous nations hold teachings that offer valuable information on how to live in interconnected ways, but it is both an individual and collective responsibility for us all to critically interrogate our relations and honor the responsibilities we carry. All of Creation works so that we may prosper and it is up to us to reciprocate that care to all beings.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Boozhoo. Songe Wabigwanikwe niindizhinikaaz, mukwa nindodem, Mamawmattawa nindonjiba. **Nicole Ineese-Nash** is an Anishinaabe (Oji-Cree) scholar and educator whose work focuses on Indigenous experiences of social systems, understandings of land-knowledge, and community-based research. She completed a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Studies with a minor in psychology from Ryerson University before continuing graduate studies in early childhood studies. Currently, Nicole is a doctoral student at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in the Social Justice Education program, specializing in Indigenous health.

Nicole works as a research associate and contract lecturer cross-appointed between early childhood studies and child and youth care at Ryerson University. Her work centers on Indigenous youth, families, and communities and seeks to support self-determination and Indigenous resurgence. Nicole is particularly interested in supporting Indigenous youth to connect with their ancestry, land, and cultures. Nicole is also the director and founder of Finding Our Power Together, an Indigenous-led non-profit organization supporting youth in realizing their own goals.

Witnessing Encounters: A Response to Nicole Ineese-Nash's "Ontologies of Welcoming"

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw

Responding to Nicole Ineese-Nash's beautiful offerings is exhilarating and humbling. "Ontologies of Welcoming" invites us to create openings that those of us who have been educated within a Western tradition are unequipped to do. Before writing, I read Nicole's contribution more than 10 times, unsure how to respond to it as a non-Indigenous scholar in Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, and Lenapewak and Attawandaron territory. Reluctant to appropriate knowledge that isn't mine, I was aware that not responding for fear of implicating myself in ongoing colonization would be yet another way to enact my privilege.

Imperfectly, I offer a story from my own work with young children in early childhood education: witnessing encounters between children and squirrels in an urban park. In early childhood, witnessing means much more than observing from afar. Witnessing requires us to respond and be accountable to the troubling stories of our times. We become attentive witnesses through ongoing encounter, recognition, and curiosity that exceed all rational calculation (Nxumalo, 2019).

The park I visited with the children was built in the 19th century. It is a prototype of colonial intervention in a city designed to resemble the center of the British empire: London, England. It served as both a "cleansing landscape" and "a unique window on Victorian views of nature as well as the politics of class, ethnicity, gender, race, and neighbourhood" (Fisher, 2011, p. 27). Landscaping "functioned as an imperial mode that defined and transformed" the city (Fisher, p. 1). Through landscaping techniques, some human and nonhuman bodies were included. Others were rejected and pushed out. Four pairs of squirrels were introduced to the park in 1914 "to entertain and attract" children and women. In fact, placing squirrels in parks was a common colonial practice across North America.

The original eight squirrels were the ancestors of the melanistic eastern grey squirrels that the children from the early childhood center noticed during our walks. Over the years, as the squirrels reproduced and more were added, they became tame, shifting the orderly rhythms of the park's design. Today, squirrels are so common in the park that they are easy to ignore.

During one of our walks to the park, two children noticed a squirrel approaching us. We decided to stay a little longer in the park that day, watching the squirrels clamber up and down the trees, gracefully jump from branch to branch, cautiously approach passersby for food, and disappear at the sound of a leashed dog's bark in the distance.

Noticing the squirrels anew every time we visited the park slowed us down. Attempting to practice an ethos of becoming-witness, we paid attention. The children noticed that some squirrels had built a nest in a tree. They watched the squirrels drag food up the trees, and they mused about where they might be going. Witnessing the squirrels became a daily practice.

One morning during a clay nest-making inquiry, one of the girls announced she wanted to gift the many clay nests the children had crafted to the squirrels in the park. Together, we planned our next visit with great anticipation: Where exactly in the park would we go? Where would we place each nest? Should we place them up high? Did we need to hide them? And would the squirrels notice the nests? With a dozen clay nests carefully wrapped, we walked to the park. The squirrels joined the children in their proposal.

Each child took the task seriously, carefully deciding where to place a nest. In the midst of this decision-making and dialogue, a squirrel approached the clay nest a child had left at the bottom of a tall tree. Picking up the nest, the squirrel moved it to the other side of the tree. In just a few seconds, at least ten other squirrels tuned in to what the children called “a game of nest”: as the children watched, curious squirrels checked the nests and moved them around with their front paws.

After a few weeks, the children’s attention turned to how the squirrels survived in the park. They had seen squirrels rummaging for food in the park’s garbage cans: eating muffins, Tim Horton Timbits, and the remnants of a sandwich. We had also observed a local squirrel fan tossing peanuts to the squirrels. A child suggested we bring fruit for the squirrels. Reluctantly, we nourished the children’s observations that the squirrels’ chances for survival are enhanced by the food humans bring to the park.

With pieces of fruit in our backpack, we arrived at the park and sat on the grass waiting for the squirrels to approach us. During the wait, one child started to call the squirrels with loud kissing sounds. Everyone followed suit, and in a few seconds, several squirrels approached from all directions. It appeared as if they all arrived at once. The children threw grapes and small pieces of oranges and tomatoes until the squirrels came close.

There was very little talk during the food exchange. Instead, smiles and expressions of astonishment filled the half hour we spent marvelling at the squirrels’ responses to our offers. For many of these children, this was the closest encounter with squirrels they had ever experienced.

Perhaps the children started to see these urban squirrels as having wisdom, rather than as animals that humans come into conflict with. Such a view of squirrels disrupts the colonial narratives of human-animal relations that position animals outside of ethical and political realms. Perhaps through these minor acts of witnessing, children and squirrels are composing a common history that refuses to follow the colonial narrative toward squirrels that drives most citizens in the city. It was the squirrels themselves that created an alternative relational force, signalling for the children a serious commitment that brought them to attend to other relations.

Perhaps this is exactly what Nicole’s offerings in “Ontologies of Welcoming” is asking of us—to attend to relations that might not be highlighted by the colonial imaginaries that have taken hold in childhood studies.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw is a professor of early childhood education in the Faculty of Education at Western University in Ontario, Canada. Her writings and research contribute to the Common Worlds Research Collective (tracing children's relations with places, materials, and other species), and the Early Childhood Pedagogies Collaboratory (experimenting with the contours, conditions, and complexities of 21st century pedagogies).

Decolonial Water Pedagogies: Invitations to Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous World-Making

Fikile Nxumalo

In this article, I share small stories of young people's pedagogical encounters with water. I share these stories as illustrations of pedagogies that welcome young people into caring relationships with more-than-human life. So, why do the ways in which young people are welcomed into relationship with the more-than-human matter? In my work, I spend a lot of time with young people and educators in everyday place-based encounters. An important orientation of this work, both pedagogically and conceptually, is trying to figure out what it might look like to learn *with* place, and its more-than-human inhabitants, in ways that disrupt settler colonial and anti-Black inheritances. These inheritances include Euro-Western human exceptionalism, which manifests in myriad ways in place-based education, including as a normalized understanding of the natural world as intrinsically separate from, and lesser than, humans (Bang et al., 2014; Nxumalo, 2019). This separation shows up, for instance, when nature is described in ways that construct it primarily as a mute site for young learners' meaning-making and their universalized cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional developmental progression (Nxumalo, 2019; Taylor, 2017). This is not to suggest that there are not important benefits that derive from pedagogical encounters with the natural world. However, my concern here is with two interconnected key issues that arise from the dominant focus on developmental outcomes.

First, human-centered approaches to learning about the environment and what it can do for students reinforces colonizing and extractive views of the world. These views are extractive because nature is valued primarily for how it can benefit certain humans. While lessons on environmental stewardship that actively teach students to protect the environment can be an antidote to extractivism, they remain colonizing if they maintain a view of nature as a passive object of humans' care and protection (Taylor, 2017). They are also colonizing because they erase Indigenous peoples, lands, and the inherently reciprocal relationalities of Indigenous peoples with land (Cajete, 2000). As Bang and Marin (2015) explain, universalization of a bifurcated relationship between "human culture" and "non-human nature" "tends to structure learning in ways that restrict experienced and possible forms of agency, identities, and relations" (p. 531).

A second concern is that while there is compelling evidence for positive relationships between students' learning in the outdoors and their physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional developmental outcomes (see Chawla, 2015, for a review), the narrow focus on universalized developmental outcomes perpetuates deficit views of marginalized children and youth. Pérez and Saavedra (2017) describe this as a "one-size-fits-all mentality, grounded in the image of the White, monolingual, male, heterosexual child, [that] not only disaffirms diversity but also stigmatizes children of color through discourses of underdevelopment and underachievement" (p. 6). Brought to contexts of environmental education, this shows up, for example, through outdoor programs targeting socio-economically and racially marginalized young people that narrowly focus on outcomes such as healthy eating and improved test scores (Cairns, 2018). Coupling universalized developmental norms to learning about the more-than-human world also leaves intact anti-Black and settler colonial constructions of nature as pure and idyllic (rather than understandings of nature-culture relations) to which White and privileged children "naturally" belong. For others, particularly Black children who are always viewed as being outside of a state of childhood

innocence, connections to the more-than-human are constructed through hyper-surveillance, salvation discourses, and the erasure of Black land relationships (Bernstein, 2011; Cecire, 2015). It is not surprising then, that for many young Black children, everyday experiences of the more-than-human world remain sutured to the anti-Black geographies that continue to restrict Black life in myriad ways, both within and beyond schooling contexts (Nxumalo, 2019; Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; Nxumalo & ross, 2019).

For the rest of this article, I share three short stories of learning with water that individually and collectively illustrate decolonial ways of welcoming young people into relationship with the more-than-human. These stories are told as an antidote to the anti-Black and settler colonial inheritances that I have just described. The stories are place stories, meaning that they are inherently tethered to the places in which they are situated. Therefore, rather than offering them as practices to follow, I share these stories to highlight the ways in which welcoming others matters pedagogically as an ethos for living well with human and more-than-human others within and beyond educational spaces. In particular, I would like to invite readers to think of pedagogies of reciprocity, relationality, and testifying-witnessing in relation to their necessity as an ethos for Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous futures (Nxumalo, 2018b, 2019; Nxumalo & Berg, 2020).

PEDAGOGIES OF RECIPROCITY

Throughout the five days of the summer encounter, water is an affective presence that welcomes us into the space. Along the steps leading up to the stage of the large hall where we spend our time during the indoor portions of the encounter, a community altar has been built. Amidst the blistering Texas summer heat, much of this encounter is held indoors in the large hall where the altar is set up. The water sits on a woven blanket in a large white container at the center of the altar, surrounded by beautiful, carefully placed gifts, including turtle carvings, a drum, conch shells, a gourd, and rattles. The day before the start of the encounter, the water has been collected in a ceremony by Coahuiltecan community elders and encounter educators from Ajehuac Yana, the springs currently named San Marcos Spring Lake. These springs are sacred to Coahuiltecan peoples.

The annual summer encounter described in this narrative is organized by Coahuiltecan elders in San Marcos, Texas, and brings together over 30 young people aged 5 to 12, most of them Latinx and Indigenous, to learn with Indigenous knowledges in ways that aim to activate relational modes of learning with Central Texas lands and waters. Much of what is taught, learned, and (re)remembered cannot and should not be fully described here and is not for me to tell. I tell this story, and the stories which follow, from a partial perspective (Collins, 2004; Haraway, 1988) situated within particular ethical responsibilities towards people, lands, and waters. These place relations include those that come with being a recent immigrant to Yana Wana lands who carries particular Indigenous knowledges of relating to land and water from my childhood and youth in eSwatini (Nxumalo & Villanueva, 2020a). It also matters that I am telling these stories as a Black, African (Ndwandwe clan) researcher invited into the space of a Coahuiltecan summer encounter. As a participant witness to the pedagogies of reciprocity, relationality, and refiguring presences that I story in this essay, my storytelling is shaped by these and multiple other temporal-spatial-embodied relations with and responsibilities to people and places.

Figure 1. Community altar

The community altar to water and the collective practices that have resulted in its creation can be encountered as a story of welcoming that is simultaneously visual, spiritual, material, and embodied. Importantly, the altar, the creation of the altar, and the caretaking of the altar throughout the week are all profoundly pedagogical. Prior to the beginning of the planned learning activities, all who enter the space, including myself, are being invited, through the presence of the altar, to witness and learn that welcoming includes actions of reciprocal care. The word reciprocal is critical here. Water has many powerful roles in this space: as a welcoming, living, and affective presence, as teacher, as aesthetics ... and more. However, we are reminded in this place that we cannot stop at appreciating what water does for us. That is to say, I witness the altar and its creation as a powerful teaching that to be welcomed into place and space is a political act that comes with responsibilities.

In the context of this encounter, participants are not only being welcomed into the physical space of the setting; we are being welcomed into relationship with Yana Wana, which means the spirit of the water and is the Coahuiltecan place name for the Central Texas lands and waters on which we are gathered. There are many responsibilities, of multiple scales, that come with being welcomed into relationship with Yana Wana in the particular place and purposes of this week-long summer encounter. These responsibilities include acts of care as embodied in the careful curation and maintenance of this community altar throughout the week. Another responsibility is beautifully expressed by one of the children:

> *Water is life, she loves to hear us sing her name Yana Wana.*

This responsibility also comes from lessons that teach the children some of the reasons why water needs protection. For example, for one session, a community organizer teaches children about the threat to Texas aquifers that is posed by a planned pipeline in the region. Ajehuac Yana is one of these aquifers; they are a vital source of clean water. Afterwards, the children spend time writing and drawing their responses to the teachings. One child writes:

> *Because we are water, I am a river, Because we are flowers, I am alive.*

There is a risk that the children's responses to pedagogies of reciprocity that I have illustrated above will be viewed through a lens that reinscribes the idealization of children's relationships with the more-than-human world (Nxumalo, 2019). Despite this risk, I share them here to show that learning

reciprocity can be enacted through creative, joyful, protective, and caring acts as matters of climate justice and decolonial action.

PEDAGOGIES OF RELATIONALITY

On the third day of the summer encounter, we (students, educators, and researchers) are invited to participate in a water ceremony. We assemble in a large circle. At the center of the circle, Maria Rocha, Coahuiltecan elder and co-founder of the summer encounter, sits in front of a container of sacred springs water that has been at the center of the community altar. Next to the water is a popoxcomitl with burning copal. While we sing a song to Yana Wana accompanied by drumming, Ms. Rocha invites us to come into the circle in pairs. In turn, she guides us to pass an empty vial over the copal and then guides us to carefully fill each vial with some of the sacred springs water that has been at the center of the altar. On leaving the circle, each participant places a water-filled vial on the community altar. The vials will stay at the altar until the last day, when each participant will be invited to take one home. This water ceremony embodies relationality in multiple ways.

The relationality between the participants is (re)generated and amplified every time we come together in a circle for teachings, such as those in this water vial ceremony. This relationality is also generated through the collective work of singing to Yana Wana and filling the vials of water for each other—we do not know which of the vials we will end up with at the end of the encounter. Pablo Montes, one of the educators and my research collaborator, describes this relationality as gifts: gifts of sacred water and gifts of the collective blessings that will be carried in the water to everyone's home when they leave. In this story, then, relationality is never just between humans; it is also between human and more-than-human life. As a pedagogical practice, this water ceremony is an invitation into teachings of spiritual, affective, and embodied interconnectedness with water. What might be provoked in multiple educational contexts by thinking with pedagogies of relationality that welcome young people into learning with/about the more-than-human through interconnectedness rather than as separate objects of human knowledge and meaning-making? The normalized separation and privileging of certain humans over the more-than-human, also known as anthropocentrism, is intimately linked to ecological precarity and underpinned by racial capitalist colonial conditions (Nishime & Williams, 2018; Vergès, 2017). As Bang et al. (2014) state,

> … taking anthropocentrism as a universal developmental pathway privileges settler colonial relationships to land, reinscribes anthropocentrism by constructing land as an inconsequential or inanimate material backdrop for human privileged activity and enables human dislocation from land. (p. 44)

Finding ways to disrupt anthropocentrism in education feels urgent to me as part of the work of building decolonial worlds for current and future generations.

Pedagogies of relationality with young people can happen in multiple ways (Nxumalo & Villanueva, 2020a, 2020b). Over the course of the summer encounter, children learn songs to sing to and about water-as-life. They listen to stories that teach about the coloniality of the Texas/Mexico border. They create art and write poetry about what they are learning. They learn dances that honor lands, waters, and all living beings. They learn the native plant ingredients for the tea they drink at snack time as medicine gifts to their bodies from earth's lands and waters. They learn multiple expressions of

gratitude for the tea they drink and the food they eat, gratitude that teaches the inseparability between their human bodies and more-than-human life. They learn and re-enact a Coahuiltecan creation story which contains many teachings, including of Ajehuac Yana waters as a sacred relative and the origin of life for Coahuiltecan people. The pedagogies that I have named here are intentional and planned. At the same time, this is not a passive transmission of knowledge. Instead, the pedagogies are relational, interactive, and affective, open to what emerges in encounters between children, place, materials, and educators (Nxumalo, Vintimilla, & Nelson, 2018). There are many examples of this throughout the week, where pedagogical invitation leads to an unexpected trajectory, such as in response to a child's question, when the drumming and singing invites spontaneous movement, and when a child peers through the glass-bottomed boat on a tour of Ajehuac Yana and remembers something that connects this place to the Coahuiltecan people's creation story.

PEDAGOGIES OF TESTIFYING-WITNESSING

For this narrative, I move from the summer encounter to another educational setting on Yana Wana lands, a small independent school in the suburbs of what is currently known as Austin, Texas. My work at this school as a researcher-pedagogista was focused on deepening engagements with outdoor curricula and pedagogies for kindergarten children. The particular focus of our collective long-term inquiry centered on children's relations with a creek that borders the school where we spent time weekly. With my collaborator, Marleen Villanueva, who is a member of the Miakan-Garza Band of Coahuiltecan people, and a kindergarten teacher, Libby Berg, I have recently written about our pedagogical encounters with the creek, focusing on their potential for anti-colonial climate change education that is attuned to children's affects and invites creative expressions of relationality as well as for education that presences Indigenous land and life (Nxumalo & Berg, 2020; Nxumalo & Villanueva, 2020a, 2020b). Here, I want to begin to extend this work by storying our pedagogical encounters as spaces of possibility for subverting the anti-Black discourses that I referred to earlier in this article, where Black children's relations with the more-than-human world are constructed through deficit salvation frames.

Simone[1] is one of two Black children in the kindergarten class. In documenting our weekly pedagogical encounters at the creek, I often write about Simone, paying attention to the questions that she asks and her creative expressions. I write about the ways the creek and particular trees and plants along the creek bed are in relation with Simone and her ways of being-with. Her multiple ways of being with this place include an impromptu desire to bring her umbrella and crouch in the creek waters while we talk about the latest floods in Austin. They also include plopping herself on my lap when we all sit together bedside the creek to listen to her teacher, Miss Libby, do a read-aloud. On one particular day, I remember her sitting on my lap as we listened to *The Water Walker,* a book about Anishinaabekwe Grandmother Josephine Mandamin and her revolutionary walks for water protection. On more than one occasion, the tree that hangs over the creek beckons to Simone, and she climbs it, pretending to be a bird in a nest; usually one of her friends will join her. Simone is excited when Marleen teaches us a Coahuiltecan song to sing to the creek. Afterward, Simone remembered this song and would often sing or hum it when we were at the creek. When we have guests for our creek lessons, such as the doctoral students who come to help us test the creek water, Simone is the first to volunteer to collect samples and carry out a test; her enthusiasm is infectious, and several children clamor for a turn. After heavy rains, the creek fills with water, and we have to find ways to cross over without getting water in our rain boots; often it is Simone who will lead us, getting us across by walking along a branch and on rocks, and taking a quick leap.

1 pseudonym

Figure 2. Simone, her umbrella, and the creek

I call these small, everyday stories of Simone's encounters with the creek pedagogies of testifying-witnessing. Pedagogies of testifying-witnessing are small but important modes of resisting anti-Blackness in environmental educational contexts and the silences on issues of race in broader environmental discourses (Karera, 2019; Nxumalo, 2018b). Anti-Blackness in environmental education operates in both subtle and overt ways. As I suggested earlier in this article, anti-Blackness pervades the assumption that Black children lack relationships with the more-than-human world (Nxumalo & ross, 2019). Anti-Blackness is also at work when educational exposure to nature is primarily seen as way of fixing Black children's academic achievement gaps or behavior (Nxumalo, 2018a). In addition, the lack of socio-culturally responsive and sustaining environmental education is a form of knowledge-making that maintains and normalizes the erasure of geographies and histories of Black nature relationships (Finney, 2014; Nxumalo, 2019).

In subverting anti-Blackness, pedagogies of testifying-witnessing are on the lookout for ways in which Black children can be invited into relations with the more-than-human. Such invitations may be explicit, such as through curriculum that stories Black nature relations. As the stories I have shared suggest, these invitations can also be through simply providing the space for Black children's curiosities—this is resonant with what Silin (2017) described as practices of waiting and witnessing as resistance to the "unrelenting march of the linear" in early childhood education (p. 94). As with the story I shared of some of Simone's encounters, this includes ensuring that Black children's practices of place-making and relationship with the more-than-human world can be nurtured, made visible, and taken seriously. While such pedagogies are interested in the learning that happens among children, educators, and places through emergent and planned curriculum, they are not interested in narrowly prescribed developmental outcomes. Such outcomes would foreground an understanding of learning according to pre-determined, universalized expectations for all children. Such an understanding would mean, for example, focusing on the scientific learning that happened as Simone learned about creek water pollutants and then linking her capabilities to the mandated Texas kindergarten curriculum.

While this is not to dismiss such learning, pedagogies of testifying-witnessing are more interested in opening spaces for Black children to relate to the more-than-human as necessary activations of more livable and just worlds. The particularities of these activations cannot be known in advance and captured in the restrictive confines of developmental norms. Inspired by Black feminisms, such pedagogies refuse to accept the confines of anti-Blackness and its dehumanizing formations (Collins, 2009; Tarpley, 1995). Put another way, these pedagogies are interested in the ways in which disrupting

human exceptionalism in early childhood education does not disappear the mattering of Black lives and other subjugated human lives (Nxumalo & Vintimilla, 2020). Pedagogies of testifying-witnessing attend to geographies of Black life that cannot be contained by anti-Blackness. These Black geographies include spatialized practices of fugitivity, relationality, creativity, and resistance—as embodied and transmodal expressions of joyful being-with-place, making-place, and belonging-to-place (Finney, 2014; Hawthorne, 2019; King, 2019; McKittrick, 2011). It is also intentional that I have shared examples of Simone learning in relation with Indigenous relational knowledges. I see an imperative for creating pedagogical invitations for Black, Indigenous, and Black-Indigenous peoples to be in relation. Our liberatory futures are intimately connected, and as Habtom and Scribe (2020) state, we must find ways to co-conspire for decolonial futures, including within educational contexts. Importantly, just as pedagogies of reciprocity and relationality refuse the seductive colonizing romance of separate and pure nature, pedagogies of testifying-witnessing do not seek to reform childhood innocence and its racial and colonial formations (Bernstein, 2011; Templeton & Cheruvu, 2020). On the contrary, pedagogies of testifying-witnessing affirm Black childhoods and Black children's place relations in resistance to anti-Blackness, as forms of (micro)political expression.

I write this article amidst an intensification of anti-Black violence in Canada and the United States, including yet another painful reminder that Black people are marked as not belonging in nature (Scott, 2020). Both the global pandemic and uprisings against anti-Blackness are filled with transformative potential in radically breaking away, at multiple levels, from current systems and practices under racial capitalism that have normalized anti-Blackness, individualism, and unsustainable ways of living with the natural world. Roy (2020) has, for example, utilized the metaphor of a portal to describe the potential of the current moment for imagining and enacting new hopeful, just, and more livable worlds. As one of many urgently needed modes of responding to the current moment in early childhood education, perhaps educators can actively seek ways to invite Black children into learning with the more-than-human world and to witness and testify to their brilliant ways of relational place-making.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

In this article, I have shared three short examples of pedagogical encounters as a gesture towards what might be generated by experiencing welcome and practices of welcoming, including their accompanying affects, as more-than-human events, where the more-than-human is an active presence and participant. The stories are told from the standpoint that everyday pedagogical encounters with place, including those that enact welcome, always occur within the interconnected conditions of settler colonialism, anti-Blackness, and environmental precarity. Therefore, from my perspective, welcoming others and being welcomed into place-attuned pedagogy and curriculum is always fraught and requires engagement with complexity and tension. Stories are one entry into such engagement, if accompanied by critical questions on the where, who, what, and why of certain stories. These questions might include asking: how can the stories I tell of children's learning in nature dismantle rather than reinscribe racial childhood innocence? What new pedagogical narratives might emerge when acts of welcome are encountered as inherently political? What can it look like in my own educational context to enact, witness, and narrate welcoming pedagogies that explicitly refuse coloniality and anti-Blackness?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fikile Nxumalo is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Her work is centered on environmental and place-attuned early childhood education that is situated within and responsive to children's inheritances of settler colonialism, anti-Blackness, and environmental precarity. Her book, *Decolonizing Place in Early Childhood Education* (Routledge, 2019), examines the entanglements of place, environmental education, childhood, race, and settler colonialism in early learning contexts on unceded Coast Salish territories.

What Stories, Like Water, Hold: A Response to Fikile Nxumalo

Debbie Sonu

The stories we tell carry our beliefs, our histories, and our relationships. They orient us toward particular ways of living and being, both with each other and with the natural world, and guide us into our sense of self and our encounters with difference. They describe what is made alive and what is rendered in service.

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass,* Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, welcomes us into the story of Skywoman, who falls downward on a stream of light and looks into the dark waters below to see not emptiness, but the glimmers of many eyes gazing up at her. Carried by a council of animals, she is grounded, and upon the back of Turtle, she spreads the mud found in the clenched paw of Muskrat. As the land grows from the mud, she sings and dances her gratitude for the extraordinary gifts of the animals, forming together with them what the original peoples of the Great Lakes call Turtle Island. From the hands of Skywoman are scattered the branches and seeds of the many grasses, flowers, and medicines that abundantly flourish there.

As Fikile Nxumalo reminds me, this story is not mine to tell, but I interpret it from Kimmerer's book to show how origin stories shape the contours of our relationship to land. Within such stories is the possibility of reconfiguring our sense of what a human person is and how a person is nested within the more-than-human ecologies of life. As such, these are readings in which living (and non-living) things do not exist as separate and stable entities, but rather unfold as always more than "mere" matter, as vital and creative. We can also remember that we, as humans, are continually being made in relation to all that is outside of us: other human and non-human beings, as well as those that pass by in our dreams and memories.

In this way, all stories work as pedagogical expressions of our place in the material world. In some, like the Creation story above, the land and animal kinfolk come into a reciprocal relationship, dependent on each other and in gratitude for their shared existence. The land is quite literally made together, in commune, and when seen from this perspective, both human and animal are transformed alike. This is not to romanticize such a viewpoint, but to show by juxtaposition how stories matter in the way we teach young children about living systems and our place within them.

As another story goes: At the confluence of the great Tigris and Euphrates River, G-d places the first humans into the biblical garden of innocence. Pure, clean, and luxuriant, this garden is a mythical place of origin, where there is no old age, where ravens do not cry, lions do not kill, and the wolf snatches no lamb. All is abundantly offered for the humans, except for the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge, of good and evil. Yet provoked by the serpent, the woman turns against herself and disobeys the command. Raining down onto the terrestrial world is an evil that renders her ashamed, naked, and forbidden from touching the tree of life. The garden, once content with peace, has all but been lost, and all of creation plunges into the curse of futility and sin. Instead of union, difference and division comes to separate god from humanity, man from woman, human from earth.

No matter what our personal conviction is, these stories affect us. Even the agnostic sees how in this creation story, the natural world is not made along with us humans, but rather exists as a metaphysical landscape into which we are placed by G-d. We inhabit it, yet with no responsibility for its future sustainability, only for facilitating its eternal ruin. Instead of sowing the seeds for an abundant future, the woman in this version is the figure whose malfeasance brings nature into a state where we are perpetually searching for its lost gifts. Of course, no story ever exhausts its many interpretations, and much is left open for examination.

Remember, creation stories are not the only stories that create, and as I read Fikile's three narratives of young children and their encounters with water, I am moved by the potential of those narratives to emerge as pedagogical practices that countervail settler colonial beliefs about human exceptionalism and objective property. When children are told, both directly and through metaphor, that the natural world is an inanimate backdrop that can be observed, measured, and predicted by scientific method alone, then in that world, causal relationships are solely controlled by the actions of man; they see the world around them as a separate, even antagonistic, object available for human mastery, whether that be in the form of resource exploitation or eco-salvation.

Attending to the ethical, aesthetic, political, and spiritual tasks of education, Fikile's stories lift up the act of teaching as a gesture that welcomes reciprocal care, creativity, wholeness, and integrity. Here, we see how illustrating everyday place-based encounters can work to re-story the very epistemological frameworks that perpetuate the human-nature division, highlighting how we are not just connected, but rather emergent from our relational qualities of being, entangled within broader webs of reciprocity, and in this case, opened up by the gifts of intergenerational knowledge.

Yet as Fikile cautions, affective scenes of care and community run in tandem with the rational social order that continues to treat difference as other, and other as less than. Against settler colonial and anti-Black inheritances, the construal of nature as idyllic and innocent, or wild and untamable, lends itself to the normalized separation and ruthless exploitation of both the natural world and racially minoritized communities. Viewing children as mythmakers and visionaries in their own right, Fikile questions whose childhoods are linked to nature as pleasure or whose are linked to it as profit, or if they are connected to nature at all. Water then becomes a striking metaphor that collapses the boundaries between teacher and student, adult and child. Knowledge, like water, is in constant movement, circulating from place to place, nourishing yet sublime. Such a metaphor challenges the colonial habit of naming and securing matter as a graspable, tangible thing to own. Racial capitalism as a framework reveals how individualism, ownership, and racial disenfranchisement takes priority over our connectedness with the gifts of place and other.

Teaching, then, does not matter in this time alone. Storying with children is storying for a certain kind of futurity. As the wildfires in California and the Pantanal burn on, and despite the calls to cede back stolen land and to demand the right to life within the Black community, the narratives that shelter our terrestrial entanglements can do more to acknowledge how our stories matter in the remaking of a worldview. Fikile's stories do this by interrogating the expressions of our unfolding beliefs, begging for more capacious understandings of what young people and the more-than-human can teach us about living in this shared world.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Debbie Sonu is an associate professor of education in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching and doctoral faculty in the PhD Urban Education Program at The Graduate Center, CUNY. Her scholarly interests include curriculum theory as it relates to urban education, politically-oriented teaching in public schools, and critical childhood studies. Her work has been published in *Race, Ethnicity and Education, Curriculum Inquiry, Journal of Teacher Education,* and *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing,* among others. Currently, she is collaborating on a grant exploring teacher memories of childhood.

Whose Story Is It? Thinking Through Early Childhood with Young Children's Photographs

Tran Nguyen Templeton

> *You're [adults] not thinking about the people [children]. Maybe the people don't want you to take a picture of them when they're like that. Like they just think, "Oh that's so cute" (makes a shutter noise, "chk") and they don't even want you to do that. What about that? Grown-ups aren't thinking about that!* — Saloma

Looking back at photographs of herself taken by adults in preschool, 6-year-old Saloma (all names are pseudonyms) articulates a rebuttal to adults' representations of young children. At the age of 4, Saloma had participated in my classroom research, taking photographs and talking about the images in interviews and in a group with her peers. In her pictures and accompanying narratives, she revealed the complexity of her shifting, multiple identities (Grieshaber & Cannella, 2001) as hyper-feminine, daughter of a single mother, young child, consumer, etc. When we returned to the same images two years later, she recalled her precarious relationship with a classmate and proclaimed her newer preference for rock and roll versus the Disney ballads she'd liked when she was younger. Revisiting her photos piqued Saloma's interest. She asked to see more, but we only had the 25 she had taken with the research camera. Instead, we looked at photos taken of her for the teachers' documentation purposes. In seeing images taken by adults, Saloma suddenly became indignant, recognizing an identity constructed for her (and for other children, as indicated by her use of the word "people"). She spoke on this topic for nearly 30 minutes, recounting the undesired pet names that teachers (including myself) often gave her. What was so striking about her exposition was just how clearly and carefully she verbally articulated these matters and memories. Between the ages of 2 and 4, she expressed her displeasure in ways that we as adults seemed unable to register. For how long had she been containing these feelings?

My work emerges out of a concern that many adults are unable, and perhaps even unwilling, to conceive of children's desires and capacities to have a say over their own representations. After all, so much of young children's identities and narratives have been constructed for them by adults through authoritative textbooks (Walkerdine, 1984), media (Holland, 2004), visual images such as paintings and photographs (Higonnet, 1998), and even teachers' documentation that aims to center children's perspectives (Yoon, 2019). Saloma's critical reading of adults is one of myriad examples that demonstrates how aware young children are of the distinct social position they occupy by virtue of their age. Lesko (2012) writes of age as a "shorthand, a code that evokes what amounts to an 'epidemic of signification'" (p. 4). While Lesko refers to adolescence, a period that conjures up images of puberty and fits of unruliness, early childhood resembles adolescence in its own significations. The early years are marked also by an attendance to "progress, precocity, arrest, or decline" (Lesko, 2012, p. 96) as adults examine children's development within established precepts. To Silin (2014), the temporal complexities of early childhood suggest the circulation of both power *and* vulnerability between children and adults: the child has been determined to be "incomplete," but also carries the strength of potential and multiple becomings at once.

According to Holland (2004), children—and I would emphasize children from minoritized communities more than others—"suffer the indignity of being unable to present themselves as they would want to be seen, or indeed, of even considering *how* they might want to be seen" (p. 19, emphasis added). As adults, we "routinely set [ourselves] up as the 'understanders,' 'interpreters,' and 'translators' of children's behavior" (Waksler, 1986, p. 73). In particular, research *about* children is often rooted in adults' commonsense understandings of children's behaviors. I've written with Haeny Yoon on the imperative of listening to children instead of to our own desires for who we think they are; listening is contingent on *how* we hear (Yoon & Templeton, 2019). Further, as teachers and researchers, we easily access children's stories by virtue of our adult position, but what parts of their stories do children want us to know, and what right do we have to know them?

CRITICAL CHILDHOOD STUDIES TO THINK THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD

> *Thinking through early childhood is to privilege the performative nature of our knowing rather than a search for its truth value and to privilege the messiness of lived experience over the rationality of theoretical constructs.* — Silin, 2014, p. 16

Silin (2014) proposed the notion of "thinking through early childhood" by looking to children's knowledge as performed through desire, fear, experience, being, etc., rather than by measuring children's behaviors, gestures, and stories against theory. The danger, he noted, of overreliance on theories is that they may act as governing rules (Silin, 2017) that diminish our possibilities and capacities for responding. Because very young children's primary modes of communication exceed the verbal (Bengochea et al., 2020), many adults cannot fathom children as capable of *speaking* to their own experiences (Fincham, 2016; Waksler, 1986). Such was the case with Saloma when she was 4. At the same time, she was a young White girl whose very aesthetic garnered positive attention. She was likely *heard more* than her peers. This is to say that levels of trust in children's capacities to narrate their own lives are uneven. Children from minoritized communities are less likely to be *heard*—or are easily *mis*heard—through their multiple modes of communicating themselves (Dumas & Nelson, 2016).

Inspired by Silin (2014), I "think through early childhood" by exploring with young children (ages 2 to 5) the photographs they take to (re)present themselves across contexts. To guide this thinking, I take up critical childhood studies as an interdisciplinary framework that, at a macro level, questions the universality of childhood, and at a micro level, regards children as experts in narrating their own lives (for more extensive discussions of critical childhood studies, see Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Farley, 2018; Luttrell, 2020; Yoon & Templeton, 2019). While I spend much time writing generally about children as a social group, it is vital to note that children's specific positions are marked by their multiple subjectivities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, language, nationality, dis/ability, religion, citizenship, etc.). That is, children express and live out different childhoods by virtue of their social, political, historical, and cultural positions.

VISUAL METHODS FOR PICTURING CHILDHOODS

By employing visual methods and photography as mechanisms for a critical study of childhoods, I work to account for the ways that "children and adults *'see'* and interact with their worlds in distinctive ways *that may be obscured from one another,* not only through cognitive developmental differences but also because they inhabit different cultural worlds offering dissimilar power and social status" (Burke, 2008,

p. 34, emphases added). Rather than relying solely on verbal language or the manual dexterity needed for writing, photography instead offers children the ability to "author their own texts, create meanings, and make sense of the often mysterious and complex world of which they are a part" (Silin, 2014, p. 24).

This work adapts the collaborative seeing approach (Luttrell, Restler, & Fontaine 2012; Luttrell, 2010, 2016, 2020; Restler & Luttrell, 2018), originally employed with youth, to young children. The approach puts cameras in the hands of participants to explore what images children take and how they narrate (with words, utterances, and gestures) their photos across a series of audiencings. While similar multimethod, multistage approaches (e.g., Clark and Moss's [2011] Mosaic approach) have been taken up by early childhood teachers and researchers, collaborative seeing opens the lens for my work in several ways. First, my interest is broadly in what children want others to know about them and how the stories they tell about themselves are fortified across time and space. How do children's processes of showing and narrating their photographs to different audiences "speculate about the inner work of growth as impacted by the social and historical world" (Farley, 2018, p. 4)? Second, the approach accounts for the image itself, whereas in other approaches, images elicit talk that then becomes the primary unit of analysis. Tied to this is the commonplace notion that images and narratives are necessarily coherent (when they rarely ever are), so an overreliance on representation may obscure the complex meanings an image can hold (Vellanki & Davesar, 2020). Collaborative seeing asks that we hold multiple meanings at once. Finally, and most vitally, collaborative seeing concerns itself with power and the subjectivity of seeing and knowing (Luttrell, 2010, 2020). In the context of child-adult dynamics, therefore, it forces me to ask how my adult eyes may be privileging particular narratives over children's desired stories. As an inquiry process, I have to ask into what space children might be welcoming me (or alternatively barring me entry from); that they allow me a glimpse into their lives via their intimate images is worthy of a deep awareness and reflexivity.

In this work (conducted with several groups from 2013 to 2019), young children in multi-age preschool classrooms take photographs with a digital camera. To minimize the expectation that I want to see specific photographs, the prompt I give them is simply, "Take pictures." With a digital camera holding up to 75 images, the children take the camera home (for one day up to 21 days). Once they return the camera and feel ready to look at their photos, they sit with me for a photo interview (taking between 13 and 60 minutes, depending on the child's desire to stay with the images). At the end of our child-led conversation, I ask the child to choose five images they would like to show to their peers during a group meeting. The ways children select these photographs is akin to the ways that adults curate their social media feeds, for example. I consider that children engage in a process of carefully constructing identity. The children then audience their chosen photos to all of the peers in their classroom, who can then comment and ask questions of the photographer. These opportunities engage both the child who took the photographs, and the children who are viewing the images, in shared identity work. Each is coproduced in and through relations among themselves and the images at work.

The study in this article took place with 11 children in a preschool classroom at a private university-affiliated child care center in upper Manhattan, where I previously taught. Due to word limits, I cannot expand here on the site and participants, the shortcomings and affordances of my relationship with the school, or the philosophy and pedagogy of the classroom. Readers can find more details about this classroom, my research methods (including 40 days of ethnographic observations), and my analysis in my article in *Children's Geographies* (Templeton, 2020) and in a joint paper with Haeny Yoon (Yoon

& Templeton, 2019). In the former article, I wrote about Jaylen, a biracial, 3-and-a-half-year-old, self-identified boy who is also featured here. There, I described Jaylen's understandings of being a child in the city vis-à-vis his documentary-style photographs of his trip from school to home in East Harlem. While one identity of his is discussed in that work, here I describe another, surfaced by the ways that the material objects in his life are "embedded in webs of care—that is, as a means to differentiate, identify, and underscore [his] belonging" (Luttrell, 2020, p. 75).

This work purposely holds open possibilities for children's becomings and identities that are not always visible to us as adults in their lives. How do we *meet* children again and again, on their terms? How do they welcome us into their inner worlds? How do we come to know children—with their layers of subjectivities and ways of seeing themselves?

"TAKIN' PICTURES FROM MAMA": JAYLEN'S PHOTOS OF FAMILY

One of the five photographs Jaylen chose to showcase to his classmates was one that I immediately coded as including an iPad: a picture that seemed to require planning, in which an iPad, encased in a thick child-proof cover, is placed in landscape orientation against the arm of a brown leather couch (Figure 1). Folded over the arm of the couch to the right of the device is a pair of Jaylen's pajama pants. Pillows that Jaylen may have moved in order to more easily take photos of the iPad are on the ground further to the right. This was one of 13 images of the same iPad, taken from different vantage points, from close-ups to shots taken while Jaylen stood above the device. The multiple images of the iPad spoke to its importance to Jaylen. I had noted the figure on the screen, but I naively thought that an equally important part of the photograph was the iPad itself. Like Fontaine (2015) writing about a youth participant's photographs of TV and computer screens, I became fixated on the proliferation of digital devices in young children's lives, part of a longstanding debate that dichotomizes screens into "good screens" and "bad screens."

Figure 1. Untitled by Jaylen

What Jaylen emphasized in the interview, however, was not the iPad (his classmates did not ask him about the iPad during the group meeting, either); I seemed to be the only one who was interested in it. Jaylen's first statement during the interview about this sequence of images was, "But can you see what … I take a picture from … Dada." Shuffling through all 13 nearly duplicate images, he deliberated, "I don't know what … how… how many pictures I take from Dada." What was important for Jaylen to share with me and his peers was that his Dada was on the screen. "And I was takin' pictures from my Dada," Jaylen told the class as he showed the image.

As an only child, whose parents have separated, Jaylen split his time between their homes. He stayed with his father on weekends, and in the interview, I asked him if he talked to his dad every night. "Yeah, and every morning too," Jaylen added. I asked him other questions, including whether he called his dad or vice versa. "I call him," Jaylen clarified. To my question about whether he knew how to use the device on his own, he replied—with a slight look of surprise, or perhaps indignation that I might think that he didn't know—"I just—, I *do*." When I even more obtusely asked him why his father was on the iPad, he said, "Because that's what people do." It was not unusual for him (why should it be?). Jaylen's relationship with his father during the week was facilitated through technology, but it was no less intimate.

The photographs of his Dada on the iPad were not Jaylen's only pictures showcasing care networks as mediated through digital devices. He also audienced a photo of his mother holding up her phone to take a picture of him (Figure 2). Set against the backdrop of East Harlem, Jaylen's mother smiles as she directs her iPhone toward him. The picture captures an intimate after-school moment between Jaylen and his mother. He often travelled to school with her, but from school to home with his college-aged nanny, so this trip was not common. Upon seeing the printed version for the first time, Jaylen smiled as I held it up. In mid-sentence, he offered a description that he would later repeat verbatim to his peers, "… I was takin' pictures from Mama, and Mama was takin' pictures from me." Again, despite the digital technologies' physical centrality in the photographs, Jaylen focused on the images as reflective of his relationship with caregivers.

Figure 2. Untitled by Jaylen

The meta-photograph of his mother photographing him potentially served as a way for Jaylen, one of the younger children in the group (he was 3 years, 5 months old while the group's average age was 3 years, 10 months old), to bolster his social position. Before sharing the photo with his peers, he asserted, "I wanna take this one cause, cause I was takin' pictures from Mama. That was so funny one. I'm gonna show everyone." In remarking that "it was so funny one," Jaylen seemed to understand that humor was a way to gain social leverage in *this* space. Indeed, humor was valued in this classroom; it was a mode of relationality among children and adults. In my observations of him, Jaylen often tried to pick up on other children's jokes. If another child made a sequence of sounds that got other children to laugh, Jaylen emulated that behavior, though not always with the same level of success. His brand of humor tended to be more physical, and while this worked more often than not with those his age, older classmates were less receptive to it. The photo of his mother that "was so funny one" seemed to serve a dual purpose. It was a token of his relationship with his mother *and* a way to gain status in the preschool community, where provoking laughter from classmates strengthened affective bonds and elevated social status.

In addition to being younger, one of only a few Black or Brown children in the child care center, and one of only two boys in the classroom, Jaylen was also a second language learner (he was learning French, which his mother also spoke). Perhaps because of this, he spoke slowly, deliberating about the words he would use. His diction and use of the phrases "from Dada" and "from Mama" instead of "of Dada" or "of Mama" revealed his burgeoning second language acquisition. As is often the case in preschool classrooms, those with more linguistic prowess ruled play and meeting spaces. In this space, younger children like Jaylen who were developing their verbal capacities seemed to work harder to obtain and maintain prominent positions. Jaylen was known for his gentle disposition and his motor skills; he leveraged this through engaging in more physically oriented play. He often followed others' lead in play, joining in on ongoing scenes before initiating his own ideas. Jaylen's position in the classroom was not necessarily central. In my observations of him, I noted that he seemed to be positioned on the margins. Other children often did not hear him when he spoke during group meetings, and teachers often intervened to ask others to listen to him. Children, whether older or younger, at times corrected Jaylen's language. For example, when Jaylen accidentally called Saryu "Daryu" in the group meeting, Valeria (who was younger than he) quickly reprimanded him, "DAH-ryu? SAR-ryu!" Jaylen often responded to moments like these by quieting down or silencing himself.

Sharing the photographs presented Jaylen with an opportunity to hold a different position in the classroom. As we left the one-on-one photo interview, he seemed excited to have the chance to share his images. I explained to him what his role would be ("you can be the one in charge of the circle and you can call on people to ask questions and talk"), and Jaylen responded, "Yeah. Because I haven't do those. I hadn't do those," referring to the fact that he had not audienced his photos yet, as he had seen others do. Two days later, eager to share the photographs with his peers, Jaylen greeted me at the classroom door. "I'm going to show everyone," he declared as he and I pulled out the pictures. He shuffled through the five photos, pulled out the one of his mother, and smiled at it.

During Jaylen's group meeting, the picture of his mom did not get the reaction that he seemed to hope it would (another photo that he took of a train did); he looked around at the children and waited for a response as he seemed to try to convince them of the humor of the image. The photo did receive attention from Natalie, but she was more interested in the "wallet" (a phone with flap cover) his mom was holding. Jaylen said it was because "she's takin' pictures."

MEETING JAYLEN AGAIN THROUGH HIS IMAGES

Though initially Jaylen did not seem to show as much interest in the camera as his peers did, he took 157 photographs during the study, nearly twice as many as the other children took. He was one of two children who asked for an additional memory card to take more pictures, and when the children's pictures were placed in shared photo albums, Jaylen filled in the empty pages with other photos he had taken. Among those was the one shown in Figure 3 of his mother, still in her work clothes, presumably looking at her telephone. In front of her is a laptop; the image on the screen suggests she is working rather than playing. In the photo interview, Jaylen talked about sitting next to his mom while she worked every night before bedtime: "Look, mommy doing work. She do this every night, she do that." This routine was part of a life shared with his mother, including walks with her to and from school, just as video calls on the iPad were part of a life shared with his father.

Figure 3. Untitled by Jaylen

Silin (2006) discusses welcoming spaces as ones where children "come to feel safe, to know that they will be heard, and to recognize that they can legitimately hold on to parts of the past even as they move into the future" (p. 3). Using the collaborative seeing approach within one classroom is a way to provide a space where children like Jaylen, whose position in the group at some moments is more marginal, might be able to introduce different parts of themselves. As identity objects (Tinkler, 2008), the photographs that he (and other children) took and shared held intense meanings for them, as well as potentialities for becoming. Jaylen's bringing images (one of which he hoped would have affective appeal as well) of his family and care network to the group meeting seemed, in a sense, to be staging his own welcoming. I observed him navigate the meeting, in which he appeared, for the moment, to let go of his hope that the meta-photo would elicit laughter, and instead turned his attention to his peers' interest in another photo he had taken. That photo, of the 1 train at the 125th-street station, was reminiscent of what the other

children knew Jaylen for (*Thomas the Tank Engine* was his favorite television show at the time). At the same time, Jaylen still did not shy away from displaying the photograph of his mother on the classroom's low-hanging bulletin board and in the photo albums. It eventually *did* become a point of conversation between he and others on a number of occasions.

To add to the larger story, I had "known" Jaylen since he was a 2-year-old. I had been his toddler-teacher for a term and had continued visiting with the group after that. I watched his transition to the preschool room and revised a year-long report written about him by another teacher. Stories written by adults at the child care center, including anecdotes to which I had access, included discussions of his developmental milestones (e.g., his increasing verbal capacity), moments of physical play, or interest in trains, for example. It was in the process of this visual research, however, that I came to see how Jaylen saw and understood himself. His presentation of self included salient depictions of his belonging to the city (Templeton, 2020) and to his family.

The notion—often an abstracted and watered-down understanding of the preoperational stage of Piaget's theory—that children are "egocentric" and thus overfocused on themselves and their own interests, is contested in and through these children's images and narratives. Over the course of this research process, I observed as children's use of the camera, their portrayals and emphases in particular images, pointed to networks of care and belonging. If children narrated their photographs of digital devices, they always discussed the pictures in relation to family. Photos and stories not described here included other children's images of iPads being used to communicate with family internationally and to play games together, "robots" that reminded them of their parents' work, and television shows shared with siblings. To be sure, it is not uncommon to see photos of family displayed in preschool classrooms, but those are often posed photos and/or images curated by adults. The pictures that the children in this study took reflected their realities and their perspectives of family and home. For Jaylen, those included having video calls with his father and eating dinner with his mother before a nightly routine which involved sitting by her as she worked. These images, situated by the children within relations of care and familial belonging, force adults like me to "recalibrate [our] assessment of what [we] see" (Luttrell, 2020, p. 82) and what we think we know about what children value and want for themselves. The pictures and narratives ask us to hold multiple notions of childhood in mind, including one that may be rooted in our fears that technology may supplant, rather than support, children's relational modes.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tran Nguyen Templeton is an assistant professor of early childhood studies at the University of North Texas. Tran studies how children construct their own identities through photography, play, and literacy practices; she also thinks and writes about how adults would better "see" children if they stopped to listen and look at what children do in and with the world. Tran has published her work in journals like *Children's Geographies, Harvard Educational Review, The New Educator,* and *Language Arts.* Most importantly, her profile photo was taken by Tulasi Cormier-Marri (who was 3 years old at the time).

What Grown-Ups Aren't Thinking About: A Response to Tran Nguyen Templeton

Wendy Luttrell

Tran Templeton opens her article "Whose Story Is It?: Thinking Through Early Childhood with Young Children's Photographs" with a compelling adult-child encounter. Tran and 6-year-old Saloma are viewing photographs taken of Saloma by early childhood teachers in the preschool classroom where Tran taught and conducted her research. Saloma offers a piercing analysis of "grown-ups" who neglect to consider children's own wishes. "Maybe the people [children] don't want you to take a picture of them when they're like that," Saloma cautions. But it isn't just that adults are taking pictures that may be unwanted; what bothers Saloma is how we as adults position children in diminutive ways. Tran registers the indignation in Saloma's voice as the 6-year-old states her objection, "Like they [adults] just think, 'Oh that's so cute' *(makes a shutter noise 'chk!')* and they [children] don't even want you to do that. What about that? Grown-ups aren't thinking about that!"

How better to honor Jonathan Silin's lifetime of work and introduce readers to critical childhood studies than to highlight Saloma's insightful critique? This exchange exemplifies the goal of critical childhood studies, a field that aims to privilege and amplify children's own perspectives and experiences and treat them as competent social actors in their own right, no matter where they 'fit' into child development discourses. Tran's article beautifully embodies this field of research that requires adults to create conditions of hospitality so that children feel welcomed and valued for who they are, not who they are "supposed" to be according to prescribed norms, standards, and performance measures. And vice versa: as Tran so importantly writes, research in this field demands "deep awareness and reflexivity. … As an inquiry process, I have to ask into what space children might be welcoming me (or alternatively barring me entry from)."

Tran's and Saloma's conversation grew out of a sustained classroom and research relationship in a multiage preschool. Tran gave digital cameras to Saloma (at age 4) and 10 other children (including Jaylen, age 3, who we meet later in the article). The cameras were theirs to take home with the wonderfully open-ended invitation to simply "take pictures." When the children returned them and felt ready to view their photographs, Tran asked each child to guide her through the images in accordance with their own pace and interest. As part of this conversation, Tran also asked each child to select five images to share with their peers at a group meeting. As she writes, "These opportunities engage both the child who took the photographs, and the children who are viewing the images, in shared identity work."

Tran generously cites my research and practice of *collaborative seeing* as influencing her study. As described in my book, *Children Framing Childhoods: Working-Class Kids' Visions of Care* (2020), I gave kids cameras at ages 10, 12, 16, and 18 to photograph their family, school, and community worlds. She and I both turned to photography because

the mobility and portability of cameras facilitates a chance to be welcomed into the emotional and geographical spaces of children's lives. We designed our respective projects to follow the kids' leads, highlighting the connections they made between their own and each other's images, which, as Tran points out, provides glimpses of children's shared identity work. I also sought to maximize the kids' opportunities to be in charge of their self representations (including having them curate exhibitions of their work for teachers and for a larger public).

Tran's article highlights key crosscutting themes that connect the pictures taken and discussed by young people in both projects. Whether at ages 3, 4, 10, 12, 16, or 18, the kids used their cameras to make visible their active participation in care networks. Among the multiple identities and shared identity work these two projects evidenced, the kids each chose to represent themselves as a "caring" and "cared for" child. Through pictures of their homes, family members, and cherished possessions, the kids emphasized their sense of self-regard, family ties, and belonging. Sharing their photographs opened up space for the kids to position themselves vis-à-vis their peers in new ways (as Jaylen did) and to skillfully navigate social differences that could bar entry into peer culture. Examining each other's photographs was an opportunity to *meet* each other on new terms, to establish a sense of worthiness, and to achieve dignity in the eyes of their peers.

Most importantly, the kids did this in ways that could easily be misconstrued by adult viewers, as Tran explains in describing her own initial misreading of Jaylen's iPad. Likewise, the kids in my project both took many photographs of TV screens, video games, and computers. In speaking about their images of screens, the kids seemed aware of adult-centered concerns about screen time, and found ways to defend against negative appraisals. Most often, they emphasized how these new media technologies cemented relationships of care and access to peer culture.

No matter how much careful listening, deep awareness, and reflexivity we use as adult researchers, there are limits to what we can come to know about young people. Tran's exemplary research and writing respects these limits, beckoning us to *meet* children *again and again*, on their terms. Learning with and from children (and for that matter, anyone) is an ongoing process; it isn't a one-off occurrence—which brings us back to how Tran opens her article, inviting Saloma to revisit the pictures she took when she was 4 years old as well as those taken by her teachers. I can't help but wonder whether Saloma would have come to her critical perspective about adults and their (mis) and/or unwanted representations of kids had she not been given her own camera and been treated with such generosity and deep regard for her meaning-making. This way of *seeing with regard* for children is a direct challenge to schooling, which is organized around a quite different way of seeing as surveillance, control, measurement, evaluation, and judgment.

I hope the cautionary title and tale of Tran's paper will linger in teachers' minds: Whose story is it? How are we seeing children? Through whose eyes? With what degree of power, privilege, and authority? Toward what purpose? And with what consequences? To paraphrase Saloma, "What about that?" Can we grown-ups think about that?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wendy Luttrell is a professor of urban education, critical psychology, and sociology. She is the current executive officer of the Urban Education PhD Program at The Graduate Center, CUNY. Her research examines how urban American schooling shapes and reinforces beliefs about gender, race, class, identity, knowledge, and power, with a focus on how systems of inequality get internalized, especially by learners who have been marginalized, excluded, or stigmatized.

What Can We Not Leave Behind? Storying Family Photographs, Unlocking Emotional Memories, and Welcoming Complex Conversations on Being Human

Esther Ohito

> You know, they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. "Floods" is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, the light that was there and the route back to our original place. It is emotional memory—what the nerves and the skin remember as well as how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our "flooding."
>
> Toni Morrison (1995, pp. 98-99)

Everyone was startled by the flood that burst forth from my previously dry tear ducts, even me. What was supposed to be an ordinary oral presentation of a culminating assignment for Wendy Luttrell's popular graduate school course on visual methodologies, Doing Visual Research with Children and Youth, had morphed into a strange waterworks festival starring me as the headlining performer. In addition to Wendy, a professor at the City University of New York's Graduate Center, the audience included Tran Templeton and several other peers who were also my fellow doctoral students at Teachers College, Columbia University.[1] The course drew on Wendy's work with children and youth in a public elementary school located in a working-class city in the Northeastern United States (Luttrell & Clark, 2018). Wendy's intent was to inspire a "need to know more stance" (Luttrell, 2010, p. 233) about children and youth, that is, to cultivate a curiosity about how young people (re)constructed their lives and represented themselves, particularly with regard to the complex intersections of social identities, such as class, race, gender, and immigrant status. The assignment directions were seemingly straightforward: Wendy asked each student to peruse her extensive archive of photographs and videos, choose a focal child, then provide a visual analysis based on a video recording of that child making meaning of their own photographs.

I cannot recall precisely why I selected my focal child Jamesha (pseudonym); perhaps it was because the sights and sounds of her vibrant world—those unveiled in her photographs and videos—struck me as both strange and familiar. Using iMovie software, I developed a short video in which I placed Jamesha's theorizing of her photographs in conversation with a photograph from my cherished archive of family albums (Figure 1). In the photograph I selected, my father, mother, and I—at age 3 or 4—are outside what I remember as my paternal grandparents' home. My mother and I are staring at the camera, and my father is holding me close to his chest, gazing at me lovingly. I am multi-tasking, busy balancing a half-empty bottle of Fanta orange soda in my small hands and suspiciously eyeing the mysterious photographer. I captioned this photograph with Lucille Clifton's (2012) poignant poem, "Good times."

1 Teachers College, Columbia University belongs to an Interuniversity Doctoral Consortium that allows all doctoral students who have advanced beyond their first year of study to take courses at any of the participating institutions.

Figure 1. Remembering the good times

my daddy has paid the rent
and the insurance man is gone
and the lights is back on
and my uncle brud has hit
for one dollar straight
and they is good times
good times
good times

my mama has made bread
and grampaw has come
and everybody is drunk
and dancing in the kitchen
and singing in the kitchen
of these is good times
good times
good times

oh children think about the good times

Lucille Clifton (2012, p. 44)

“[O]h children think about the/good times,” the poet commanded. I read these words aloud in Wendy’s class, crumpling in front of my alarmed classmates as the last few lines fell from my lips. My psyche was submerged in a wave of emotion as my tears found sanctuary in the space between my nose and my upper lip. I had not expected to cry at all—let alone so deeply, so loudly, and so publicly. Drenched in salty tears and the hot shame of embarrassment, I stilled my nerves long enough to mumble my way through the rest of the presentation. But I remained puzzled by my outburst. My subconscious was keenly aware that the moment captured in my family photograph had touched a tender spot. Intuitively, I knew that I needed to probe that rawness; I needed to remember where I had been and what valleys I had run through in order to find the source of my tears. I needed to narrate my way along that emotional route in order to find my way back to my original place (Morrison, 1995).

That moment in Wendy’s class marked the genesis of my interest in interrogating how family photographs enrich memory work and enhance narrative inquiry. Memory work can be conceptualized as “a set of practices…that help participants connect personal memories to larger social, political or economic issues and thus work through those issues in ways that engender a deeper commitment or consciousness” (Strong-Wilson et al., 2014, para. 3). My interest in memory work concerns the affordances of investigating photographs stored in family archives for “the study of narrative,” which is “the study of the ways humans experience the world” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). Subsequent to this moment, my scholarship has explored the utility of family photographs for making visible the effects of social ills—such as anti-Black racism and misogynoir (Bailey & Trudy, 2018)—that are the course of daily existence for those of us who are perceived as *sub*human in the modern world (Wynter, 2003). I continue to be intrigued by the possibilities that percolate—for the storyteller, the art of storytelling, and the audience to whom the story is being told—when photographs are *re*searched and used as keys to unlock emotional memory.

Like Jonathan Silin (2018), “a fundamental assumption of my research and writing…has been that we are all always struggling to make meaning of our experience” (para. 1). As a researcher and writer, I wrestle with what family photographs offer with regard to be(com)ing “more tolerant of the fragmentary, incoherent nature of experience” (Silin, 2018, para. 2; see Ohito, forthcoming). Obviously, photographs do not “speak” for themselves (Rose, 2011, p. 302); language and words are the tools used to tailor stories from the memories that photographs awaken. “Language has unmistakably made plain that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium” (Benjamin, 1999, cited in Assmann, 2011, p. 153). It is in this vein that I use language to demonstrate how memory work involving family photographs can invite conversations that crystallize the complexity of human nature. Those conversations—and the stories embedded within them—can irradiate the illusion of hierarchy in human relationships, such as those between professors and students, while illuminating the truth that we are all inextricably bound both to each other and to the banks of the furious river of emotional memory.

I waited until the discomfort of my embarrassment had dissipated enough for me to have a modicum of surety that I would not feel self-conscious in Wendy’s presence. Then, because I am a Black feminist—and therefore, a believer in the notion of dialogue as a site for meaning-making (Hill Collins, 2014)—I reached out to Wendy and requested that we have a conversation. She agreed, and on a warm spring morning, I boarded the C train from Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York, and sojourned to Wendy’s office, which was located 35 minutes away in midtown Manhattan. A caring and generous hostess, Wendy welcomed me by brewing a fresh cup of hot tea for her nervous guest. I sipped on that tea—ginger, I think—as we talked for about an hour, first about the class, then about my tears, and finally about the stories of my family that were entangled in that photograph. As I prepared to leave, Wendy encouraged me to reflect

further in writing. I did as directed, penning and then submitting the following reflection to Wendy on May 21, 2013:

> Reading and discussing Lyn Yates' (2010) article transformed my thinking about the possibilities for interpretation and (re)presentation of the data. I realized that approaching Jamesha's photographs and video footage as a "window to the world" (p. 283) would allow me to consider the ways in which her particular stories speak to universal experiences of relationships in various constructs. This framework also gave me the freedom to consider my particular experiences alongside those of Jamesha—something I had been doing anyway, albeit hesitantly—and more importantly, to share those experiences as a way of articulating truths about the particular and the universal. I honed in on the father-daughter relationship…However, constructing a "window to the world" turned out to be much more challenging than anticipated. I soon hit a seemingly impermeable wall, both as a person—or emotionally—and as a researcher. There are two things that accelerated my crashing into that wall: First, I couldn't investigate Jamesha's relationship to her father outside of my relationship to my own father. The longer I was immersed in the data, the more challenging it became to separate when and how I was speaking about myself, from when and how I was speaking about, to, and through the data. I heard echoes of the question posed by Mizen and Ofosu-Kusi (2010): "Who is speaking and what is being heard?" Whose truths are emerging from my interpretations? …After shedding many tears (sometimes publicly ☺) and gaining inspiration from my colleagues' presentations, I returned to the data, the assigned and recommended readings…determined to speak truths about Jamesha and me.

I admitted that I could not examine Jamesha's covetable and evidently loving relationship with her father outside of my relationship with my own father. There it was, in my own words—an introspective truism. It was cloaked in the discourse of academia and the conventions of academic writing, but it was there. Finally, I had articulated to Wendy and to myself the crux of the dilemma that had brought me to tears.

The truth is that my childhood remembrances of my father involve few recollections of good times. My father was a bruised man with a beautiful mind—an undeniable organic intellectual in Gramscian terms. The truth is that he could neither outrun the torment of his childhood nor tame the demons that, in adulthood, inhabited the dark recesses of his beautiful mind (Ohito, 2020). The truth is that he broke me. The truth is that I wholeheartedly loved the first man who caused my heart to splinter into sharp fragments. My daddy was a tornado, and what should have been a comforter-like fiction of childhood innocence was lost in the debris of his destructive path. What else, besides tears, could come from the mélange of mourning and missing manifested in that photograph?

"Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherhood, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (Kuhn, 2002, p. 125). Perhaps I cried because I was mourning and missing the ideal father—and perfect childhood—that the photograph reminded me I desire(d) but lacked or lost en route to adolescence and adulthood. Perhaps I wept because I was wise enough to know that despite the missing and the mourning, parental perfection is simply an idealized fiction, even in familial contexts far less turbulent than my own. Yet that evocative family photograph documents other truths. It tells of a rare time that my father treated me with care. It also tells of one of the only times that my mother was not carrying a child, literally or figuratively. For a moment she was free of the burden of motherhood. For just that fleeting moment, she was free.

There are many more—much more complex—stories embedded in this photograph of my father, mother, and me, but those are not mine alone to affix to language and words. The poem that I used as my photograph caption in Wendy's class allows me to tell a single narrative inspired by the visual reminder that my troubled relationship with my father included moments of true tenderness. Those moments, however temporary, were treasured, by both him and me. I need/ed to story those tales in order to salvage what I will not and cannot afford to leave behind as the sea of time churns, and my tumultuous childhood recedes, gradually becoming nothing more than a fading memory.

There are numerous narratives that a storyteller can spin from photographs, scores of tales that can be woven from the threads of memory. "Memory is, in fact, fact, fiction, and filter" (Ohito, forthcoming). Photographs, too, function similarly, sometimes portraying facts that, through the filter of memory, morph into fictional stories, or fictions that, through the storyteller's play with words, sound like facts.

My parents are now both dead. I miss them in wildly surprising and overwhelmingly sensorial ways. The loss of the family they embodied has aroused in me an insatiable and deep desire for the lost familiarity of their smiles, scents, sounds, and touch. I mourn more than their lost lives; I mourn the loss of their stories about this and other photographs—that is, their knowledge of the secrets the photographs simultaneously conceal and disclose with regard to our family, our bonds, them and me, then and now. Like what remains of their bodies, those tales are buried thousands of miles away from New York City, far below layers of soil. This particular photograph still brings me to tears. If captioning this image in the present, I would simply write,

> sometimes
> i smell my parents
> on my words
> and i weep
>
> Nayyirah Waheed (2014, p. 34)

A long time ago—long before graduate school was the direction to which my compass pointed—deep in the land of the Council of the Three Fires and the ancestral home of the Kickapoo, Fox, Ho-Chunk, Miami, Menominee, Sac, and Illinois Nations—I taught writing and reading in a public elementary school located in a working-class neighborhood on Chicago's South Side. Typically, I launched my thematic "Memoir and Memories" unit by invoking Robert Frost's provocation for those brave enough to wield a pen: "No tears for the writer, no tears for the reader." Frost's words were an entry point into a series of scaffolded writing and reading assignments that I designed. The related activities aimed to reveal the dialectic between writer and reader, and to engage the writer as a reader of her own lived experience—that is, an agentic maker of meaning of her own life.

Evoke emotion, I urged my writers and readers; resist the familiar urge to don armor; prod at the façade, and fuel your writing with the vulnerability contained in your unshielded, awakened heart (Heard, 2016). To emphasize the embodied, psychological, and spiritual elements of writing (Lockhart, 2017), I encouraged each student to remember and (re)turn to the tenderest part of her heart, the place from which her tears were sourced, as she played with voice, style, and structure in her writing.

To enhance their writing, I had students simultaneously read coming-of-age literature and gather resources stored in their family members' memories and their family archives. For example, for a memoir

themed “Before I Was, There Were,” I relied on Eloise Greenfield’s (1979) *Childtimes: A Three-Generation Memoir* and Caroline Castle’s (1993) *Grandpa Baxter and the Photographs* as mentor or anchor texts. I required that, prior to putting pen to paper, students interview at least three family members who were alive before their birth, and supplement the raw material composed of interview transcripts by taking or fetching elucidative photographs. Students then preserved the family lore shared in the interviews—that is, the distinctive (hi)story of each family—in multimodal memoirs, each a “prismatic proliferation of voices” (De Robertis, 2017, p. 8) accentuated by family photographs.

The memoirs depicted students and their families remembering not only the good times and the good days, but also the bad times and the bad days, the joys and the pains, and the unspoken, unearthed, repressed, or disavowed truths and lies. On the whole, my students crafted moving memoirs that used familial experiences of myriad events—births and deaths, emigrations and immigrations, estrangements and reconciliations, marriages and divorces, failures and triumphs—to travel to and from the crossroads of memory and visuality. Crucially, their memoirs served as records of lived experience, illustrating the unique thumbprints that students and their families were living as they navigated the world and made meaning of the complexity of the human condition.

Families are our first world and our place of origin, irrespective of the quality of the relationship we have with each family member, or the strength of our (un)attachment to the idea, ideal, and institution of family itself. Sometimes we need to tell ourselves fictional stories about our families in order to make sense of ourselves—and to make ourselves make sense. Sometimes we need these fictions to face the facts. Sometimes we need to filter through the facts and fictions in order to face hard truths about lies. Sometimes the lies are true stories, too. What I mourn now is not only my father and mother’s physical presence, but also the loss of their words—which gave form to memories of their lived experiences—and the feelings of belonging that listening to those words produced, each utterance locating me in my parents’ textured worlds, welcoming me home.

Family photographs return us to our origin, whether or not we wish to revisit that place. They remind us that we are bound to (a) place by familial bonds, however betrayed or broken. Photographs can function as glue when we find ourselves pining for the disappearing past or needing to piece together broken fragments of ourselves, our families, or those parts of ourselves broken by family (members). The poet Rumi is said to have remarked that the broken place—the wound—is the place where the light enters. Family photographs can be floodlights on the path towards that wound because they are ledgers of families’ memories, and families’ memories are an assortment of narratives—some true, some false, and all of real, soothing import for the storyteller and/or the story’s listeners. There are lessons about who and what we cannot, must not, leave behind, that we can welcome into our lives. There are ways that still images from our family albums can move us, emotionally, to remember who and what we cannot and must not let wither away and die.

Family photographs are relevant for research, writing, and teaching because they serve as visual reminders that we each carry a river of stories within us, a magnificent river of powerful emotional memories. These photographs can catalyze narratives, and narratives can emerge from conversations about these still images. The process of conversing about the family photograph featuring my father, mother, and me—first with Wendy and then with myself in the practice of self-reflection—was instrumental to my subsequent storytelling, story making, and meaning (re)making of my childhood.

“Our childhood memories can be a source of personal strength and a resource for teaching [and learning]” (Silin, 1998, para. 19)—about others, yes, and pertinently, about ourselves, too.

Each of us can learn by investigating, translating, and transforming the meanings that we make of our complex experiences as humans vis-à-vis our photographed lives, families, and histories at the nexus of “where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, [and] the light that was there” (Morrison, 1995, p. 99). Either on our own or in undefended dialogue with another—that is, in the sanctity of closeness kindled by conversing about our human vulnerability—each of us can raise the floodgates, story the emotional memories that burst forth as we remember the place from whence we came, and cathartically cleanse in the tears that fall torrentially like unimpeded bodies of fresh water.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Esther Ohito is an assistant professor of curriculum studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the inaugural Toni Morrison Faculty Fellow at the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Center of Racial Justice and Youth Engaged Research, and a 2021 Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program Fellow at Maseno University's School of Education in Kisumu, Kenya. An interdisciplinary scholar, Esther researches the poetics and aesthetics of Black knowledge and cultural production, the gendered geographies of Black girlhoods, and the gendered pedagogies of Black critical educators. Esther's oeuvre centers Black women and girls and amplifies Black voices and knowledges.

Ungrasping the Other: The Parent, the Child, and the Making of Solidarities. A Response to Esther Ohito

Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández

The child reaches forward with his toes, extending to touch the world from the comfort of his mother's lap. She smiles, wide brown eyes into the camera, left hand resting on her left knee while the index finger of her right hand clinches the child's overalls near his belly, holding him in place. He smiles, wide eyes into the camera, right hand resting on her right wrist while the index finger of his left hand points forward. He feels the warmth of his mother's chin resting on his nearly bald head, nested in the safety of her crossed legs. The blades of grass reach up like threads bracing them both to the land. A scribble behind the photo, likely in my abuela's handwriting, marks the date, 8 noviembre 1972, 48 years ago today.

This picture of my mother and me has been sitting on my dresser since 1989, the year I packed my trunk and moved away from home—and away from my mother, my family, and my country of birth, Puerto Rico—at the age of 17. It has been a source of comfort and grounding for 31 years. I have never written about this photo, but from the moment I started to read Esther Ohito's moving essay in this issue, I knew that my response would involve this picture. It is not a mirror of Esther's image, but it points to a similar way of understanding what such images of ourselves as infants with our parents can reveal for and about us.

The child and the mother both stare at me, they both reach for me; her finger holds him in place then, while his finger points toward me now; away from that place to this place, from that moment to this moment, from that self to this self. These images and the memories of the moments and places they evoke are part of the story we tell ourselves about who we are now and who we are becoming. They both guide and help us make sense of our relationships to others and to ourselves. Indeed, how we remember our parents plays a foundational role in who we are becoming, as they shape the way we love and receive love, the way we relate to and perceive others, and also our emotional wounds and how those wounds direct our affective dispositions to others.

Another way of putting this is that these images provide a glimpse into our path toward affectional solidarities, “the kind of solidarity that grows out of intimate relationships of love and friendship” (Dean, 1996, p. 17). As Jodi Dean explains, “the child’s early experiences of love and connection provide the basis for the development of a sense of self-trust and of an ability to engage with and respond to the needs of the other” (p. 17). I don’t mean to suggest that there is solidarity between the parent and the child in these images, since the child cannot reciprocate the ability (or perhaps even the desire) to care for the parent—to hold and protect the parent from harm. Yet, as Dean suggests, solidarity is not “the same as the condition under which it is learned.” In fact, what Esther’s reflection points to is precisely that our evolving capacity to reciprocate solidarity with our parents hinges on our ability to recognize them, not just as separate from ourselves, but as ungraspable and beyond our capacity to know and understand.

Esther describes the man who holds her infant body as “a bruised man with a beautiful mind—an undeniable organic intellectual in Gramscian terms,” words that I could have used to describe my own mother. Like Esther’s father, my mother “could neither outrun the torment of [her] childhood nor tame the demons that, in adulthood, inhabited the dark recesses of [her] beautiful mind.” I don’t know whether they shared wounds in common (though perhaps the deep wounds of racism and colonization connect us across lands and oceans), but I would venture that for both Esther’s father and my mother, the wounds of childhood are what animated their lifelong commitments.

For my mother, this meant a revolt against patriarchy and a lifelong commitment to women’s rights, and the pursuit of equity and social justice against sexism and the colonial legacies of US imperialism in Puerto Rico and elsewhere. These commitments were the lap on which my infant body sat and from which my own commitments emerged, but also, in complex ways, the source of the wounds that would separate my mother and me.

Following Rumi, Esther reminds us that family photographs “can be floodlights on the path towards that wound” through which the light enters. Yet, following the light in order to see inside the wound in the family photograph requires that we “attend to the queer gesture—the handshake, look, posture—that contains the past as well as a way forward” (Silin, 2018, citing Muñoz, 2009). In Esther’s photograph, I see the father grasping the child, as the child grasps the Fanta bottle; the father eyes the child, as the child eyes the photographer and the viewer. The grasping and eyeing move inward and outward.

In my photograph, the mother's body is a womb that contains the infant body, even as the child extends his toes as if to take a step. Eventually, the child would also try to contain the mother, asking, "Can men be feminists?" The question sought to fix both mother and child in place in order to stabilize the otherwise unwieldy feeling of being loved; how can I be sure that you will always love me? Yet it failed: "No, they can't;" the index finger lets go, and the child stumbles, disoriented. "But men (and boys) can be along for the struggle."

I have come to understand the ungraspability of both feminism (as a cis-gendered man) and of my mother (as her son). I can't hook my index finger on her belly to keep her in place the way she did with my infant body. It is precisely from those wounds that the possibility of solidarity comes forth, and it is precisely the wounds that create a space for creative solidarity (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012). This is a solidarity that does not seek to fix the other in place, but to create the conditions for subjects to be "otherwise." This solidarity finds freedom from the subjectifying process that grabs us and the subject positions from which we eye suspiciously. The moment when we no longer grab or hook on to the other is also precisely the moment we see them, are no longer suspicious, and are finally capable of enacting solidarity as a practice of freedom.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández is a professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning and the director of the Youth Research Lab at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. His research focuses on the relationship between culture and the production of inequality and the role of cultural production in education. His theoretical work focuses on the relationship between creativity, decolonization, and solidarity.

Keep Yourself Alive: Welcoming the Next Generation of Queer and Trans Educators

Harper Keenan

Dear new queer/trans[1] educator,

Welcome to the work of education. I am glad that you are here to take part in the wonderfully challenging task of supporting young people to learn more about how we might *be together*. I often think of classrooms and other educational spaces as something like a dance floor, where people who may not know one another gather together and learn how to interact and relate to one another in shared space.

While the word "educator" might be a new way of orienting yourself, chances are that you have been practicing a kind of education for a long time. Those who now call themselves queer and trans people have been teaching the world since before those words even existed—the acceleration of queer language development and reclamation over the last century is but one example. You have important knowledge to bring to the work of education.

Queer and trans communities have historically embodied ways of being and relating that go beyond the categories written onto our lives. To paraphrase the timeless words of Rihanna (Harris, 2011), we have found love in hopeless places. We have built ambiguous friendships in classrooms, hatched plans in hallways, studied books in library corners, lusted after each other on school trips. To do so, many of us have broken the rules.

People may tell you that your work as a queer/trans educator will be difficult. They're not wrong. Education is not easy, in part because relationships are not easy. Yet the reasons why your work as a queer/trans educator may be difficult—particularly within schools or other institutions—probably have less to do with you as an individual than with the kind of society that has been built around you and the way you are interpreted within it. Here, I am reminded of Queen's song, "Keep Yourself Alive" (May, 1973), which I include in the title of this letter:

> *I was told a million times of all the troubles in my way*
> *Mind you grow a little wiser, little better every day*
> *But if I crossed a million rivers and I rode a million miles*
> *Then I'd still be where I started, bread and butter for a smile*
> *Well I sold a million mirrors in a shop in Alley Way*
> *But I never saw my face in any window any day*
> *Now they say your folks are telling you to be a superstar*
> *But I tell you just be satisfied and stay right where you are*

What I take from this song is the importance of self-determination. As critical trans scholar and activist Eric Stanley (2014) writes, self-determination has been theorized within a variety of anti-colonial, Black freedom, prison abolition, and queer and trans social movements. Self-determination is portrayed as a

1 These words are always incomplete in their description of human embodiment and ways of being. I use them as a placeholder for an infinite galaxy. My use of the slash symbol in "queer/trans" does not suggest a separation or a conflation of the two terms (some trans people are queer, others are not). Rather, I use it as a symbol for the complex relational exchange between them.

kind of escape route out of the limited parameters of institutional recognition that demand conformity to legible categories of identity. In other words, schools, laws, institutions, and other people cannot define who you are. You do not have to, as the song says, "sell mirrors." You do not have to exhaust yourself in trying to "get better" in some essential sense by forcing yourself to be more explainable to those who do not understand you. Instead, you may find power in refusing to consent to those terms. The song continues:

> *I was told a million times*
> *Of all the people in my way*
> *How I had to keep on trying*
> *And get better every day*
>
> *But if I crossed a million rivers*
> *And I rode a million miles*
> *Then I'd still be where I started*
> *Same as when I started*
>
> *Keep yourself alive*
> *Come on*
> *Keep yourself alive*
> *It'll take you all your time and money*
> *Honey you'll survive*

In these verses, I hear the exhaustion of endless hurdles and the sweetness of giving up on them to choose a different path. Let me be clear: I do not want to suggest that you give up on education, but that you allow yourself to be creative in how you think about it. Consider that—that which is illegible to the mainstream may be precisely your gift. Who are you and what knowledge do you bring to others? What do you want to keep alive, to strengthen? What knowledge do you and your students have that seems unsayable or too complicated? What are you are asked to set aside? How can you keep your*self* alive?

For queer and trans people, the power of strategic defiance cannot be underestimated (Keenan & Hot Mess, 2020). Many schooling systems were designed for the creation of an ideal citizenry that explicitly sought to erase ways of being that resisted conformity. Though not without serious and sometimes deadly cost, queerness and transness have survived the institutions that have often been intent on their destruction. We have always found ways toward what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2010) call being "in study" with each other—the kind of self-organized fugitive learning that takes place beyond the parameters of formal curriculum and instruction.

I want to offer you a parable of survival, a wayfinding story to keep in your back pocket like a bandana. Queer and trans stories are sometimes difficult to come by (though they start to appear everywhere once you look for them). This is partly because many queer and trans people are not raised by queer or trans adults. We build networks of chosen family as we make our way into queer communities. While those connections may overlap with the family we were born into, the difference is that queer/trans communities are largely formed through desire rather than dictated by assignment. Sometimes we find these relationships in classrooms and schools. Maybe that is where you will find this letter.

In an effort toward greater intergenerational connection, I present a story of 50 years of queer and trans pedagogies. A blend of political history and a personal account of how I have fought to keep myself alive,

it is loosely organized through the chronology of the five decades since Stonewall, marked with headings that indicate the passage of decades from 1969 to the present. These are stories that have helped my queer and trans body and its future-dreams to survive. Of course, they are bound together through my own understanding and limitations. Your stories will be different and I hope I will get to hear them one day. I aim to give you this collection as a kind of anchor that has held me. Feel free to keep it, or let it go.

1969

As you likely know, the Stonewall uprising took place in New York City in 1969. The details of the event are hazy, but what we can say for certain is that the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village, was raided by the police for the stated reason of selling alcohol without a license. The police attempted to arrest many of its patrons for defiance of the New York law requiring at least three articles of "gender-appropriate" clothing. Rather than accepting such egregious treatment, the bar's patrons—a mix of drag queens, trans people, lesbians, gay men, and all those who blur the lines between these categories—fought back. In doing so, they birthed a new era in the movement for gay liberation. This was also, perhaps, among the most powerful pedagogical events in queer history: the activists who fought back taught the public that they would refuse mistreatment.

A year after taking part in the uprising, iconic trans leader and community organizer Sylvia Rivera participated in another protest. This time, the Gay Liberation Front rose up against Bellevue, a public mental hospital in Manhattan, for its tortuous treatment of queer and trans people. As a child, Rivera had been committed to Bellevue, and was subsequently transferred to another institution for electroshock treatment aimed at eliminating her queerness (Phillips & Olugbala, 2006).

Rivera sought not only to fight against the policing and psychiatric abuse of trans people, but to create alternative systems of genuine support for people who lived outside the pathologizing limits of psycho-medical definition. Together with her friend Marsha P. Johnson, who had also suffered as a patient at Bellevue, Rivera founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). STAR organized a collectively run home for drag queens and trans people living in poverty. Its top floor was envisioned as a school for youth (Gill-Peterson, 2018, p. 24). Rivera was not yet 20, Johnson was only 25. Most residents were even younger. They pooled their resources in order to survive and care for one another: knowledge, housing, food, money.

Figure 1. Sylvia Rivera at Gay Liberation Front's Demonstration at Bellevue Hospital, 1970. (Wandell, 1970)

Taken together, the actions of Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, and other Stonewall rebels serve as powerful pedagogical acts. By breaking through the rigid rules that sought to govern them, Johnson and Rivera dreamed themselves and a different world into being, inspiring a new generation to cultivate their own political imagination and form their own communities of care beyond existing systems of social control. These young activists identified a problem, built from the knowledge and experience of generations that came before them, and collaborated to develop a theory of change coupled with a plan of direct action that continues to teach the public about grassroots organizing.

The educative disruptions led by queer and trans activists have always required extraordinary resistance to the status quo. For more than a century, legal and medical systems have invested in trying to find a way to control gender through the management of trans, intersex, and gender non-conforming people's bodies and ways of being. Much of this effort has been focused on young people.

The work of trans historian Jules Gill-Peterson (2018) highlights the field of medicine's interest in normalizing trans and intersex children over the course of the last century, which she argues has always been a racialized project. Gill-Peterson presents evidence from the archives of early 20th-century gender clinics to illustrate how the bodies of White gender non-conforming children were seen as useful sites for experimentation in medical transition because of their potential for assimilation, whereas gender non-conforming children and youth of color were largely funneled toward incarceration and institutionalization. People like Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson refused to capitulate to assimilationists, rejecting the idea that they ought to fold themselves into boxes of legibility or appropriateness in order to resist incarceration, let alone to be heard. In turn, many people around them were mad, disgusted, cruel. While Rivera and Johnson are often represented as endlessly resilient, the broader public is rarely invited to consider how painful and infuriating it must have been to live through these conditions. They were unabashedly themselves, aiming not for heroism but for collective self-preservation. Still, even their contemporary representation continues to present a shallow understanding of who they were. *Now they say your folks are telling you to be a superstar/ But I tell you just be satisfied and stay right where you are.*

1979

Although the most well-known trans educators have worked outside of K-12 school classrooms, trans teachers have long struggled to keep their place within them. In fact, this struggle is much older than what is commonly understood. More than 20 years after Christine Jorgensen became the first person in the United States to emerge into a kind of unprecedented fame for having sexual reassignment surgery in 1952, the *New York Times* published a story about a transsexual teacher who was fired in 1971 after transitioning publicly (Hanley, 1978). Prior to her dismissal, Paula Grossman, a White transsexual woman in New Jersey, had been teaching for 31 years. In 1978, after a seven-year legal battle with the state, the appellate court ruled that she was "mentally and physically fit to perform her duties" as a teacher. The court decision stated that "the plain fact is that no school district will employ her because of her transsexual status and the feared effect that she may have on pupils" (Hanley, 1978). The court determined that she was entitled to a disability pension of approximately $100/month. Incidentally, Grossman was Meryl Streep's music teacher and Streep has publicly described Grossman's case as "animating her conscience" (Brodesser-Ackner, 2019).

In October 1976, the *New York Times* (1976) published a headline that read: "Teacher Who Underwent Sex Change Loses His Job for a Second Time." Steve Dain was a White trans man who had built a career as a

physical education (PE) teacher in Emeryville, California. A tenured, 10-year veteran of the classroom, Dain was awarded Teacher of the Year before his medical transition in 1975, an especially rare honor for a PE teacher, suggesting that he was widely respected by his students and colleagues. What little documentation remains of the case indicates that Dain's transition didn't matter much to students, but the district superintendent was horrified (Bryan, 1976; Stumbo, 1976). He sought to ensure that Dain was not allowed to stay in public education; a key part of his rationale was based in racism. He argued that the Black population of Emeryville "didn't have the sophistication to handle it," that the city was "still just a little industrial community, predominately black, filled with broken families and confused kids" (Stumbo, 1976, p. 126). Although Dain was barred from returning to his position at Emery High after a two-year legal struggle, he did not stop teaching. He went on to become a community college professor and served as a key mentor to more well-known trans icons like Lou Sullivan and Jamison Green.

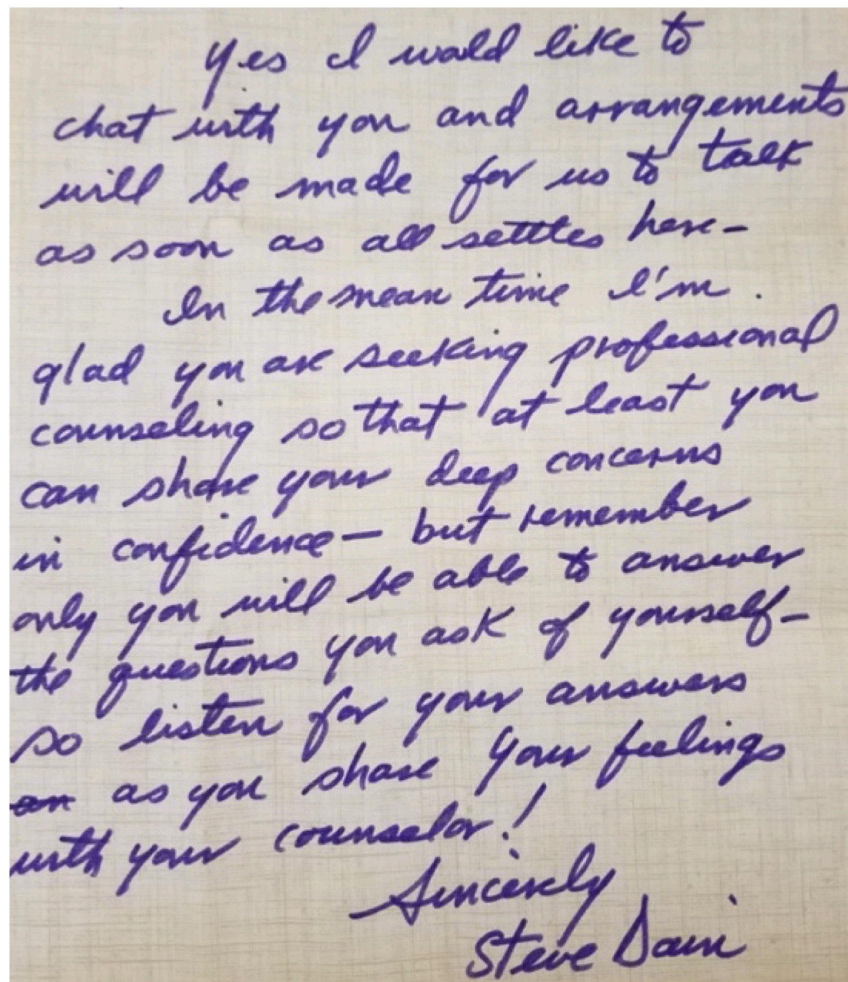
Yes I would like to
chat with you and arrangements
will be made for us to talk
as soon as all settles here–
In the mean time I'm
glad you are seeking professional
counseling so that at least you
can share your deep concerns
in confidence– but remember
only you will be able to answer
the questions you ask of yourself–
so listen for your answers
as you share your feelings
with your counselor!
Sincerely
Steve Dain

Figure 2. A letter from Steve Dain to Lou Sullivan. (Dain, 1976)

1989

I learned the word "gay" in preschool. The moment is one of my earliest and clearest childhood memories: it was 1989, I was 4 years old, and I had the chicken pox. I couldn't sleep because my skin was terribly itchy, so my parents let me stay up and watch television with them in an effort to distract me

from scratching. As I pulled at the cuffs of my sleeves in a sneaky attempt at indirect relief, the evening news ran a segment on AIDS. Images of men with Kaposi's Sarcoma flashed across the screen. "What's happening to them?" I asked. My mother, who seemed to have forgotten that I was watching, quickly changed the channel. She turned to me and explained, "They're dying. It's very sad." I looked down at the dozens of bright red spots on my arms and suddenly felt terrified. I looked up at her—"Do I ...?"

"Oh, no. Don't worry. It's a grownup disease. You won't get it. It happens to gay men."

I replied, "What's gay?"

"Gay means…that two men love each other." She paused. "Like your uncle. He's gay." I struggled to read her face—nervous, uncomfortable, maybe embarrassed. I don't remember if I said anything, or if the conversation continued beyond that. What I do remember is feeling a palpable shame.

Like so many of my age peers in the United States and around the world, my initial knowledge of gayness came largely through learning about AIDS. As the epidemic unfolded, AIDS and gayness were shadows that moved together in my childhood—perhaps something like what Derrida (1967/2016) might call "traces," an apparition of some distant-but-connected world, present in its ungraspable absence.

Meanwhile, at about the same time as I was making sense of the shadows of AIDS, a group of early childhood educators 250 miles north in New York City began to form a research collaborative to address the topic of sexual orientation and early childhood education. In 1989, Virginia Casper, Jonathan Silin, Harriet Cuffaro, Elaine Wickens, and Stephen Schultz were all working at Bank Street College of Education and their conversation began in the fittingly in-between space of a hallway. The members of this group undertook bold projects: working with teachers of young children to consider the possibility of gay and lesbian students and parents in their classrooms, analyzing how children came to understand the idea of family, organizing within teacher education programs to address gay and lesbian issues in curricula for pre-service teachers, and ultimately, challenging the conceptualization of childhood altogether.

As queer and trans communities around the world fought for survival, the research collaborative worked to build a less homophobic world. They documented their efforts in an article, "Toward a Most Thorough Understanding of the World," published in the *Harvard Educational Review* in 1996. Their work, alongside the efforts of other queer scholars of the time (e.g., Bryson & DeCastell, 1993; Britzman, 1995; Kumashiro, 1999; Luhmann, 1998; Quinlivan & Town, 1999) began to bring knowledge from queer communities to reshape the academic conceptualization of education. Put simply, they worked to build classrooms that were hospitable to queerness. *Keep yourself alive.*

1999

The 1990s saw a flourishing of queer and trans activism. Much of it was built as an alternative to LGBT civil rights efforts that tended to seek ways for gay and lesbian people to "fit in" to society. Queer and trans communities fought, instead, to change (or abolish) the rules of the game through a critique of taken-for-granted ideas about gender and sexuality. Of course, many individuals were somewhere in between. Publications by writers and scholars like Judith Butler (1990), Sandy Stone (1994), Leslie Feinberg (1993/2014; 1998), and Susan Stryker (1994) offered new ideas that shaped the continued movement for trans justice. However, published writing was certainly not the only site of

trans knowledge production and mobilization. Trans communities built power and produced knowledge wherever they could gather: in the street, on the emerging internet, at conferences, at Camp Trans and other protests, in bars and living rooms. While hardly monolithic, community-based education was a central project among trans communities in the 1990s and served as a form of mutual aid enabling greater access to life-sustaining resources and care.

I was too young to participate in most of that, so I found my way in at a bookstore. At 14, I traveled an hour and a half away from my hometown in search of Lambda Rising, the gay bookstore in Washington DC's then-gayborhood, Dupont Circle. I had learned about it through the still-nascent queer internet underground. My cheeks flushed as I tried to make myself as inconspicuous as possible moving through the aisles, likely to the amusement of the store clerks. I stopped in my tracks when I saw a copy of Stone Butch Blues by Leslie Feinberg (1993) sitting on the shelf. It seemed like ze was looking right at me, hir handsome face bent in a kind of knowing nod, a gesture of solidarity. I reached up to the shelf with a sweaty palm, thumbed through the pages, hands shaking. I put the book back on the shelf and left. Somehow, that collection of a few hundred pages was too overwhelming.

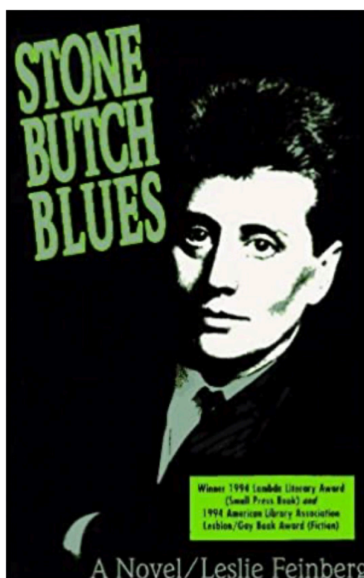

Figure 3. Cover of *Stone Butch Blues*

Three years later, when I finally returned to the text, Leslie Feinberg became my teacher and the book my curriculum. Feinberg opened the world for me, offering me a kind of freedom I had never conceived of. The book paints a portrait of the expansive possibilities between and beyond the categories of male/female/gay/straight that sometimes hold us captive (Smith & Stanley, 2011). The main character, Jess Goldberg, says, "I don't want another label [...] I just wish we had words so pretty we'd go out of our way to say them out loud" (Feinberg, 1993/2014, p.278). Although the book addresses the extraordinary violence and danger faced by its characters, it tells a story of beautiful resilience, sending a clear message that the most gratifying form of survival is one that maintains integrity to one's own knowledge, even when that knowledge seems unthinkable. *Keep yourself alive.*

2009

After finishing college, I became a kindergarten teacher in New York City. To be frank, I had no idea what I was doing. I never planned to become a teacher. I hadn't particularly liked school as a child, nor had I been especially academically successful. Two experiences led me back to the classroom. The first was a series of summers spent working at an arts-based summer camp staffed largely by queer people; the second was my time spent tutoring at a Brooklyn community center called Make the Road by Walking. Both offered a vision of alternative possibilities for ways that adults and children might relate to one another. Each experience embodied a simple idea: *being together is precious and powerful,* and we have much to learn from it. This was different from how I conceptualized school at the time, which was primarily as a place that stifled children's curiosity and restricted their freedom.

I began to reconsider the role of the educator, exploring the possibilities of the classroom as a creative space. It could be a place where, as Maxine Greene (1995) says, people might, "through their coming together constitute a newly human world, one worthy enough and responsive enough to be both durable and open to continual renewal" (p. 59). I was able to believe in that possibility because I had been immersed in queer, trans, and activist communities that were trying to build those worlds.

I was allowed to teach under an emergency credential provided by an alternative certification program, and so I had almost no teacher education until I found my way to Bank Street College. It was a tiny uptown graduate school that focused on early childhood and elementary education. Being there was like going to the preschool of my dreams—as an adult. Alongside coursework in educational foundations and curriculum theory, I took courses in movement, music, block building, and art. I wandered into the depths of progressive social studies-based education. I learned about using the city as a classroom and children's questions as the curriculum. I started to see the local pizza shop and the subway as pedagogical opportunities. I learned how to *let go* and allow my students to direct imaginative play, to gently create strategic, structured conditions for students to follow their own inquiries, and to use their questions to develop the skills necessary to sustain the communities they wanted to preserve or form. It was a far cry from the reading workbooks that I had been told to use.

My education at Bank Street did not explicitly include coursework on "queer pedagogy." Yet I did learn something about what queer pedagogy might look like in practice. The program's curriculum offered a set of tools that were complementary to what I knew of queer theory, and which allowed me to break from dominant forms of pedagogy that overlooked children's complexity in favor of standardizing instruction.

A few years later, I read Jonathan Silin's (1995) landmark book *Sex, Death, and the Education of Children: Our Passion for Ignorance in the Age of AIDS.* In it, I found more analysis of this important shift in pedagogical practice. As Silin describes so beautifully and so wrenchingly in that book and in his overall body of work, the adult management of childhood is a project of social control. It aims to cultivate a future without all the topics that adults would rather avoid—like queerness, like AIDS, like sex, death, racism, violence—just as adults worked to manage my understanding of AIDS.

Throughout his decades-long career in the field of education, Silin has invited educators into a rigorous practice of listening to and learning from children's experience—not only in order to inform our teaching practices, but to recognize that serious consideration of children's knowledge production

could transform how we understand the foundations of the social world. As Casper and Silin and their colleagues (1996) note, working toward a deeper engagement with humanity has been one of the most important contributions of queer scholars in education. *Keep yourself alive.*

2019

My life as an educator has changed over the last 10 years. My questions about the classroom led me, maybe ironically, back to school. I enrolled in a doctoral program focused on curriculum and teacher education, hoping that it would grant me some time and resources to think deeply about how adults teach children about the social world. My doctoral education was not without challenges, but it did indeed offer those things. Now, I am in my first year as a professor, in an inaugural professorship in gender and sexuality research in education.

The work that I can do today is only possible because of the many years of struggle, organizing, and community-making that came before it. I have a responsibility to carry that struggle forward in the ways that my position allows. Building from that legacy, I aim to help cultivate educational environments that are less concerned with cultivating a well-managed child and more interested in generative engagement with children's knowledge, particularly the knowledge embodied by those children who defy the controls imposed upon them (Keenan, 2017). Schools and classrooms are proxies for society—they are one place among many where we learn how to be together, how to build relationships.

We are in desperate need of finding new ways to be together. Envisioning these new ways is easier said than done. In my relatively comfortable position in academia, it is all too easy to make lofty proposals that may seem disconnected from the daily lives of teachers in school settings and whose work is increasingly constrained. When teachers have to justify imaginative play, field trips, or even going to the bathroom, how can they make room in their lives for the complex task of reconceptualizing their pedagogy? Here, I gently suggest that the work has already begun. Queer and trans communities and others who live on the margins of society are building new worlds every day.

In my work, I remember my own teachers. I hold close to the pedagogical legacy of Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, and all those queer and trans ancestors at Stonewall whose names I do not know, who refused to accept the legal restrictions enforced on their beauty. I think of Steve Dain and Paula Grossman. I think of the great lengths they and so many others went to in order to keep their full selves alive. They put their foot in the doors that tried to shut them out, and by doing so, they created an opening for you and me. Finding strength in their strength has helped me to keep my fullest self alive as an educator, to teach from what I know. I hope they might do the same for you.

> *I was told a million times of all the troubles in my way*
> *Mind you grow a little wiser, little better every day*
> *But if I crossed a million rivers and I rode a million miles*
> *Then I'd still be where I started …*

In solidarity,

Harper

2021: A POSTSCRIPT

As I write the final version of this article, the entire world is experiencing devastation from the COVID-19 pandemic. The virus has killed more than a reported two million people, 20 percent of them in the United States alone. It seems that every existing social and economic problem has rapidly deepened. The global economy is in shambles. People are hungry and too many are isolated from networks of support. The US is increasingly descending into fascist leadership and vigilante violence by White supremacists. At the same time, we are witnessing a resurgence of uprisings in support of Black life. There has been widespread engagement with mutual aid as neighbors find ways to safely care for each other. Teachers are connecting with students through the many challenges of distance learning.

These days, the phrase *keep yourself alive* takes on new meaning. Our collective survival relies on thinking about our relationships to each other. What can we do together—right now—to act toward more just and caring futures? There has never been a more pressing time to return to careful study of queer/trans histories for insight, to the ways that we care for one another through HIV/AIDS (including Jonathan Silin's urgent call in his 1995 book to respond to children's inquiries and concerns about the virus), to Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson's direct service work with STAR, to all those tiny unrecorded actions—sharing food stamps, calling a friend on the telephone, going with someone to the doctor—that have sustained us. It has never been more clear: we need each other.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harper Keenan is an assistant professor of gender & sexuality research in education at the University of British Columbia. Harper's work examines how adults teach children to make sense of the social world. His primary goals as an academic are to help shape the teaching and learning of young children and their educators and to shift public thinking about children and childhood. Harper believes in pedagogies that engage young students in meaningful and rigorous inquiry driven by social experience. Broadly, Harper's academic interests include queer/trans pedagogies, anti-racist education, history & social science education, early childhood and elementary education, and teacher education.

Ambivalent Legacies: A Response to Harper Keenan

Jen Gilbert

Harper Keenan's generous letter to beginning queer/trans teachers hinges on the question: How do we stand in that impossible moment when we are welcoming newcomers while still acknowledging our debts to those who've come before? Jonathan Silin, whose work this issue celebrates, grapples with these questions of legacy in an essay that reflects on his contributions as an early childhood educator and researcher and a gay rights and HIV/AIDS activist. Silin (2020) asks:

> Is it possible to leave behind traditional ideas about legacy, weighted down as they are with commitments to social and biological reproduction, and reimagine it as something more ethereal, more queer if you will, that might lead to unthought possibilities? (p. 55)

Harper's letter is one possible response to Jonathan's question. If social and biological reproduction—what Jack Halberstam (2011) calls "straight time"—tend toward conservatism, loyalty, and continuity, then queer legacies will make room for "unthought possibilities," including the gestures of welcome, like Harper's letter, that open the door before knowing who has arrived. Harper invites queer/trans beginning teachers into the dance party and introduces them to the guests who came earlier—Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, Paula Grossman and Steve Dain, and Jonathan Silin. Harper reminds the new teachers that their welcome was made possible by all these earlier activists. Indeed, the fact that they are able to walk in the front door and call themselves queer and trans teachers was made possible by the protests and politics of activists. For Harper, activism is education.

Even as beginning queer and trans teachers inherit this rich legacy, their professional lives bear the scars of conflict, violence, and loss. Two recent special issues on queer and trans teachers trace the effects of this ambivalent legacy. In "Gay Voices Without Intersectionality is White Supremacy," editors Christian Bracho and Cleveland Hayes (2020) bring together a collection of narratives of queer educators of color that insist educational institutions are constituted through the colliding forces of homophobia and racism—even as these institutions offer spaces of refuge and revolt. In "LGBTIQ+ Teachers: Stories from the Field" (Gilbert & Gray, 2020), researchers—including Harper and Jonathan—catalog the ongoing difficulties of being a queer/trans educator in schools organized around heterosexuality and the gender binary, and the hope, joy, and revolt that give teachers' lives meaning. Beginning queer/trans teachers enter into this contested and contradictory space.

Yet these histories of activism have failed to guarantee the change these new educators deserve. When I talk with queer and trans pre-service teachers, they describe the violence they face in their practicum placements—uneven access to all-gender washrooms; put-downs from students; casual homophobia from colleagues. But they

also face a hostility that is more ephemeral—a suspicion that floats through the air, invisible, but threatening. As Harper's letter suggests, and as the research on queer teachers bears out, queer and trans sexualities and genders sit uncomfortably inside the category of "teacher" (c.f., Connell, 2014; Gray, 2013; Mayo, 2008).

Just as schools protect some fantasy about the innocence of children (Silin, 1995), the queer/trans teacher represents a potential assault on that innocence. Indeed, the queer/trans teacher too often must stand as a role model, sanitizing all the queer aspects of their sexualities and genders so they won't precociously introduce sexuality and gender transgressions to their students. For queer/trans teachers of color, the burden is double and the normativity of "teacher" even more constraining (Brockenborough, 2012). If the queer/trans teacher is now sometimes invited to the party, they must follow this very strict dress code.

It didn't have to be this way. As Harper affirms in his letter, teachers have been at the forefront of struggles for queer and trans equality. In both Canada and the United States, LGBTQ teachers' demands for employment protection were instrumental in securing early civil rights victories. But these victories came with a cost. Historian Jackie Blount (2006) argues that in the late 1970s, after several bruising fights over gay and lesbian teachers' rights, the mainstream US gay and lesbian movement abandoned the cause of gay and lesbian teachers because they saw it as too politically risky. Instead, they moved in a safer direction and sought to disrupt the idea that children are always and only heterosexual as they had been portrayed in many of these struggles. The gay civil rights movement concentrated on the "gay teen," with campaigns to call attention to and alleviate their suffering. Going forward, gay youth would carry the mantle of LGBTQ civil rights in education, and gay and lesbian teachers were, in some sense, dumped.

Queer/trans beginning teachers inherit this ambivalent history. As Emily Gray and I argue (2020, p. 1), beginning queer/trans teachers

> often enter education programs precisely because their schools have been important sites of learning about their sexual and gender identities. These students came out in high school, organized QSAs [Queer-Straight Alliances], took their same-sex partners to prom, and even if the school wasn't always welcoming, they felt a commitment to making schooling more inclusive for young queer and trans students. And so, they decide to become teachers themselves.

These beginning teachers are living the legacy offered to them by the queer/trans teacher activists that Harper documents. But that legacy is painful—as high school students, these young teachers benefited from the abandonment of gay and lesbian teachers as a civil rights project in favor of queer and trans youth. But now, entering the profession with its enduring normativity, they feel, as well, the failures of that legacy to make teaching a more welcoming space for queer/trans teachers.

Harper's letter is a beautiful attempt at repair. It connects contemporary queer/trans teachers with the histories that live inside the profession—the revolt, anger, and protest, but also the disappointment, loss, and struggle. His letter offers new teachers a place to stand, an orientation, and a vantage. They can see the history behind them and use that perspective to imagine new futures. What impresses me most is Harper's commitment to the well-being of the queer/trans teacher, a commitment he shares with Jonathan Silin.

In much of his writing, Jonathan asks teachers to connect their personal lives with their work with young children. In a well-known conversation with Didi Khayatt (1999) about whether gay and lesbian teachers should come out in the classroom, Jonathan (1999) risks a yes. But his rationale diverges from the idealized language of role models or the needs of students. Instead, coming out or being out or sharing parts of your life at school should be about being able to live in your own skin, being able to feel like yourself. Such a risk is necessary if we are to survive in the profession. To borrow Harper's image, it makes us a better dance partner, more able to "be together" in the moment—crowded as it is with the histories of those who came before.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jen Gilbert is an associate professor of education at York University. Gilbert is author of *Sexuality in School: The Limits of Education* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014) and collaborator on The Beyond Bullying Project (beyondbullyingproject.com), an LGBTQ+ storytelling and research study in high schools. Gilbert's research focuses on LGBTQ+ students, teachers, and families; sex education; and youth studies.

Vulnerable Literacies

Alyssa Niccolini

We'd find them nestled behind earlobes, amidst eyelashes, between fingers, in folds of the neck, along the scalp, behind knees, cozy in armpits, in zigzagged waistband imprints, hidden in eyebrows, or brazenly mid-chest. Who knew the body had so many hiding places?

There is always a bolt of shock when the examined spot—a speck of dirt, a freckle?—comes alive with spidery legs. Mother and child then engage in a practiced routine—a submission of the body, a pinch of skin, a tug of war with a barbed proboscis, a cold swab of alcohol. The wriggling visitor is always observed with a mixture of wonder and disgust.

At pick-up time, the teacher hands me a small piece of blue paper. A tick encased in plastic tape is attached, labelled with my child's name, the date, and time. *9.00 Uhr. 29. Mai.* It was found on the throat, and I'm told we should observe the area for a few weeks. There weren't any ticks in Brooklyn. Romantic ideas about forest kindergartens are one of the reasons I was drawn to Germany. We celebrated a fourth birthday on the sidewalk in front of our 800-square-foot apartment and then boarded a plane for fields and forests. It was intended to be a year for me to finish my dissertation and a chance for the children to learn their father's language. Best now, we were told, when the brain's still plastic and hungry for new language. Unlike my stiff graduate school-trained, word-sated mouth, unable to form the doughy German ö at the back of the throat, the children gooble up this new language and are speaking fluently to teachers and friends within weeks. I am a shockingly slow learner. I spend my mornings in a dimmed room wielding pixelated daggers like *epistemic* and *irreducibility*. Later, I blink in the soft afternoon light stumbling through basic niceties with the German parents waiting to collect their children in the damp forest.

We search the body at night. A book balanced in one hand, my free fingers pour over my child. My children speak to me a new intermixture of languages—three words in English, two in German. I find myself unwittingly responding in this hybrid language. As my fingers flip over earlobes, pick at spots, scan the scalp, I read in English. An attempt at maintaining the primacy of the mother tongue. I carefully disentangle a thread of dried moss from hair and then turn the page. The children point to a wolf and an Eule in the book and laugh at my incorrect gendering of German nouns. I tap into the pleasures of this nightly grooming practice—reading and picking, searching and scanning—as the warm boundaries of our bodies blur. Bedtime reading is a brief moment when body and text, human and animal, forest and home, original and translation, self and other gloriously tangle into each other.

But these are also vulnerable literacies. Modes of reading and translation, remembering and forgetting that are full of failure. A chubby finger points to the page, *Mama, how do you say* Marienkäfer *again in English?* How many times do our nightly body scans fail to discover a visitor who shows up the next morning in an obvious spot? Where were they hiding? *Ladybug.* Every morning, I sit at the computer and can't say what I mean. I had to leave so many books behind, and I'm certain I can't finish without them. When I search for a more apt synonym, German words start to intrude.

My daughter has a small stick with a pointed end she brought home from the forest. She calls it her *Stift*—a German word that can mean pen or pencil. She writes furiously, brow furrowed, on a slab of wood marked with the bite marks of a chainsaw. I am frequently asked with urgency, *Wo ist mein Stift?*

We keep it on the bedside table at night and transport it back and forth from the forest. Immersed in her work, I find her at pick-up time sitting against a tree, her *Stift* madly dancing on wood as a line of wiggly children beg for a turn to "write."

Once, a morning kiss is stopped in its tracks as a tick taunts from my child's cheek. I don't know the German word for tweezers and mime pinching to the teachers. I learn to pull at just the right angle, with just the right tension in order to get the body out intact. These new pedagogies wound us, cut into the skin, revealing the radical openness of the body, the specter of failure, the limits of language, the impossibility of boundaries, the riskiness inherent in pedagogical encounters. Yet as Silin (2003) posits, it can be generative to dwell in this "space that unfolds between language and experience, the object and its signifier, the means and the ends" (p. 265).

The territory of the forest creeps into our home. I empty pockets of sticks and beetle shells. I pick star moss and burrs from clothing. Feathers and beloved stones line the windowsills. An inexplicable collection of white BB pellets skitters across our apartment floors. Mud coats everything. Mimicking the teacher, I collect the visitors who follow my child home. A crude entomologist, I soon have a date-stamped collection of ticks. The children use magnifying glasses and plastic microscopes to examine the monstrous menagerie collecting in my desk drawer. We learn that they are arachnids, not insects—spider parasites. We entomb the tiny bodies in tape, like our first gift in blue paper, and can't escape a twinge of sadness as they are sealed in their plastic sarcophagi. It's a rather cruel curation, but there is a triumph I feel in capturing these intruders of my child's body, containing the wildness of the world within the temporal surety of date and hour, the safe perimeter of a sqaure of plastic. As I write about all that escapes attempts at controlling the path of literacies, my desk drawer swells with a mother's archival fever, a futile desire to contain the unwieldy boundaries of childhood.

The kindergarten is not far into the forest, housed at the intersection of two truck-width paths. One June morning, the forest buzzes with chainsaws. Loggers with spiked boots gesture to us to be careful as we make our way to the morning circle. *It's a working forest,* I'm told in German. The cut-into forest is gorgeously pungent—intoxicating with heady pine and sap. Houses with well-tended gardens are within eyeshot of the stump-lined circle area. A couple with a perfectly manicured yard hire a gardner to pull the unwanted plants that relentlessly wander over from the forest. Ticks, I learn, prefer areas like this—places of transition, of disorder, where human-disturbed landscapes shift into wild ones. *Ecotones.* Wikipedia tells me that "The word *ecotone* . . . is formed as a combination of *ecology* plus *-tone,* from the Greek *tonos* or tension – in other words, a place where ecologies are in tension" ("Ecotone," 2021).

At night we are called from sleep to scratch the red welts that line the children's backs and legs. They don't have screens in the windows here. I'm told it was too cool in the past for mosquitos. *Climate change,* we all repeat. June is already really hot. No one has air conditioners. *It never used to get this hot,* I'm told. Mice, a favorite first meal for nymph ticks, have also increased their numbers as temperatures have warmed and human sprawl has cut up the large forest territories their predators need. Traversing home and woods, city and suburb, surging armies of mice have helped spread Lyme disease into new corners (Banigan, 2017). Warming temperatures have also led to ticks thriving in areas previously too cold for them. *I don't remember having ticks when I was a child,* I'm told over and over. In Europe, ticks are moving north, spreading across country borders, reaching altitudes long thought to be inhospitable to them. They keep showing up where they're not expected to be.

Ticks look for hosts by questing—a jarringly beautiful name—patiently waiting with arms extended as if bequeathing a blessing. Through a mix of biochemical sensing, attunement to vibrations, and chance

encounter, they wait for an opportunity to hook onto the warm passing bodies of deer, mice, children. Questing does not always bring instantly gratifying success, and it may take months before ticks get a blood meal. Surely some never succeed.

The tick is not only itself. It is a vector, reliant on relationality for survival. Like human bodies, it is multiple, potentially carrying a microbial wealth to pass onto others (Schuller, 2018). As vectors for disease, ticks, of course, are feared for their capacity to pass on a range of unwanted gifts to their hosts. Most notably, *Borrelia burgdorferi,* the spiral-shaped bacterial spirochete that digs stubbornly into cells and causes Lyme disease. Lyme, named after a coastal town in my home country, where children baffled doctors with puzzling symptoms.

On our pediatrician's wall is a color-coded poster mapping Tick-borne Encephalitis (TBE) in Europe, our province bathed in dark red. We are all getting the last of the three-part TBE vaccine. The pediatrician offers it to parents as well. The room smells of isopropyl alcohol, and a flaking clown decal smiles unnervingly from the window. Sitting with my children on the examination table, sleeves rolled up, struggling to speak German with the doctor, I am also a child. I tell her about my collection of ticks. *Should I get them tested?* I ask in the German conditional I shakily command. She shakes her head and tells me she doesn't recommend it. If I understand her correctly, she is telling me that even if they tested positive for the disease, it is not a guarantee that they transmitted the bacteria to the child. Parents then needlessly worry. Maybe I just hope this is what she says.

Ticks entangle me into all kinds of new maps. Much of the educational literature on Lyme asks me to consider scale. There are sickly public service images of ticks hidden on poppy seed muffins. Can you spot the ticks? *Egg. Larva. Nymph. Adult.* The life stages are pictured next to a dime, a ruler, a pencil tip, neatly lined up along the whorls of a human fingerprint. The body of my child is also newly mapped. Rezoned into hot spots of memory. A homunculus of former bite sites. Long after the tick bite fades, the throat takes on a new importance. Is that a shadow or a bit of redness? How long has it been there? When can I forget this spot?

As a parent, I am steeped in benchmarking discourses about childhood health and development. Lyme disease is notoriously difficult to diagnose in children. Not every child will develop a red bull's eye reaction. I google what else to watch out for. *Fatigue. Irritability. The child seeming "off."* I am asked to take on a new form of literacy—reading for subtle fluctuations in my child's emotional landscape, an attunement to affective shifts, feeling out when things feel off. I am asked to confront the question, *what is a normal child?*

I have nightmares about ticks. Every inch of my child's body covered in a glittering, moving coat of parasites. I wake up crawling in my sheets.

If left untreated Lyme can lead to a dizzying array of "severe sensory, psychiatric, and cognitive disturbances ... ranging from schizophrenia, psychosis, and autism-spectrum-like disorders to more specific neural malfunctions, including auditory, visual, and olfactory hallucinations, depersonalization, neuropathy, synesthesia, and sensory activity" (Schuller, 2018, p. 55). Lyme asks me to define neurotypicality. It raises age-old specters of madness. I question my literacy skills—what if I misread the signs?

I find an infographic from the Children's Lyme Disease Network (n.d.) that reports that "children with Lyme disease are more likely to:

> Have lower grades in school.
> Have difficultly processing information.
> Have greater risk of depression.
> Have difficulty maintaining relationships.
> Have behavior outbursts or mood swings"

Under the chilling banner "A Lost Childhood," it reads "Children with Lyme disease have more cognitive and psychiatric disturbances. 41% had suicidal thoughts. 11% made a suicide gesture."

Armed with this new information, I toggle between reveling in and pathologizing my child's wild translations of experience, her startling ways of reading the world. She giggles in bed because of the bugs crawling on her legs under the blanket. She points in wonder to neon green lights only she can see on the bedroom door. She has a persistent headache above her left eye. Right here. She can't remember English words for everyday objects. She swings from elation to despair in a matter of seconds. She screams for me from under a pillow to shut the shades, the soft morning light burning her eyes. At night, I sift through the mental curation I store of her strange sensations, hilarious descriptions, uncanny feelings, surprising observations, beautiful incoherence—*what is normal childhood?*

A child we know can't smile on one side. His parents learn that the Bell's palsy is a result of Lyme.

A child we know has kneecaps that swell to the size of softballs. He gets a PICC line of antibiotics to the heart.

A child we know screams obscenities in the middle of the night. He stares blankly at walls—weak and listless. The doctors suspect Lyme, but tests are never able confirm it. After weeks of malaise, aggressive antibiotic treatment transforms him back to the vibrant child everyone remembers.

Lyme messes with a lot of things. Many people with Lyme disease never noticed a tick bite. The disease does not always follow the logics of linear or progress-staked rationalities. It can be incredibly difficult to diagnose—my friends in the medical community tell me that testing can be like trying to catch a goldfish with a tiny net in a giant pool. Lyme imitates and hides. Spirochetes can lay dormant for years and then resurface. Lyme patients can present with initial symptoms and then seemingly recover, only to become incredibly sick again later. It can wreak neurological havoc and set off debilitating complications, exacerbate preexisting conditions, mimic a range of other conditions, including chronic fatigue syndrome, chronic pain, dementia, depression, anxiety, and learning disabilities. There are all kinds of communities for people contending with the effects of chronic Lyme disease. Lyme patients battle with US insurance companies for treatment coverage. If Lyme is suspected, many recommend finding a doctor who is "Lyme literate."

Like everything, there is an intersectional politics to the disease. The white body is used as the default for diagnosis—the red bull's eye against white skin. Tethered to discourses around the "urban," people of color are underdiagnosed as they contend with racialized assumptions about who "belongs in nature." We already know that Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is overdiagnosed in black children. How might the potential mood disturbances of a child of color with Lyme be read differently than those of a white child? Women with the neurological Lyme symptoms such as mood disturbances, fatigue, depression, and chronic pain frequently have their complaints dismissed.[1]

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1 There is a range of fantastic narratives around the racialized and gendered politics of Lyme disease, including Khakpour's *Sick: A Memoir* (2018), Anderson's documentary So Sick (in production) and Schuller's gorgeous theorizations in "The Microbial Self" (2018).

I am anxious to get writing as we walk up the forest path. My child's hand is warm and sticky. There is a verdant lushness to this June morning, a teeming trill of birds and insects, a damp waft to the forest that signals that the forest is bursting with life. Fragrant wood chips, mementos from the loggers, offer a soft bed for our feet. I hold my child's impatient body still and spray her shoes and legs with the natural tick spray that doesn't work. Her Stift is safely stored in her backpack. She breaks away from an attempted kiss, calling Tschüß, Mama! without looking back.

The collection of ticks sits in my desk drawer as I write. These visitors I've cruelly killed—or even more unnerving, that perhaps still live—force me to confront the uncomfortable in pedagogy, in childhood, in myself—the unintended, the dangers that burrow in and linger. I am forced to learn one of the lessons my dissertation is trying to teach—the body is implicated in education, open, porous, woundable.

In an age of human-based environmental devastation and a global pandemic, the creatures in my drawer underscore the pedagogical consequences of human interference. They disturb the humanist figure of my child as self-contained, as developmentally sequenced, as rationally knowable, as having clear boundaries I can map, mark, and control. They reveal the vulnerability of literacy—the limits of what can immediately be read, communicated, translated, understood.

But it is these vulnerabilities—these spaces of warp and wound, openness and instability—that can usher in new possibilities. As Silin (2003) urges:

[P]arents and educators need to honor the satisfactions of the unarticulated experience. Not [as] a romantic eschewing [of] the accomplishment of language . . . [but] to clear a space in which children and adults can move back and forth, a space that recognizes the value of linguistic incompetence as well as fluency, verbal insufficiency as well as communicative competence. For some, the rush to literacy, to fill the void with words and texts, reflects fears of a time when emotions were less modulated, bodily functions less well controlled, and desires less well socialized. Then, language represents the only way forward, and unarticulated experience is consigned to the past. (p. 264)

As I labor to scratch meaning into the page each morning, perhaps I should take a cue from Silin's words and my daughter's wooden pencil and revel in the play and movement, rather than in the etched finality of writing. Perhaps I should welcome, rather than fear, the unexpected way the wild pedagogies of the forest enter our home, our bodies and disturb our entrenched ways of reading and knowing the world.

What do I do with these new pedagogies that halt and cut into what can be said and immediately understood, that entangle us with the histories and bodies of others, that confront precarities that demand new forms of attention and new grammars of care? As Silin (2003) reminds us, "Pedagogy is unpredictable, incomplete, and immeasurable in its impact" (p. 265). Vulnerable literacies ask us to be willing to learn from what evades language, what digs into our skin, hides in our body, leaves traces we can't eradicate, what resists immediate reading, waits for later to reveal itself, sets off effects we can't contain. I must learn to welcome these vulnerable literacies—relinquish my hopes of a final reading, let go of fear, attune to new scales of noticing, commit to slow practices of care, wait patiently with arms extended to the unpredictability and wildness of the world.

And I must learn to give up my child to the forest.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alyssa Niccolini's work looks at intersectional issues in education drawing from English education, cultural studies, feminist new materialisms, and affect theory. Her past studies have examined how gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and race intersect in controversies over challenged texts in secondary schools. A former high school English teacher, she received her doctorate in English Education from Columbia University. Her work has been published in a wide range of national and international journals and collections and she is co-editor of *Mapping the Affective Turn in Education*. She currently lives and teaches in Germany.

Mapping Common Grounds Between Mother and Child: A Response to Alyssa Niccolini

Jennifer Rowsell

... *Who knew the body had so many hiding places?*[1]
... Who knew the mind could move so swiftly into darkness?

Stories of mothers and daughters, of vulnerabilities, of literacies said and silent, lost and found, provoked and placated.

In *Early Childhood, Aging, and the Life Cycle: Mapping Common Ground,* Jonathan Silin (2018) reflects on his initial reactions to moving from New York to Toronto: "I found myself repeatedly ambushed by surprising emotions, often sparked by mundane events that spoke to the deep sense of emotional and social displacement I experienced" (p. 75). In a twist of fate, I found the very same repeated ambushing of surprising emotion when I moved from Toronto to Princeton in 2005—the same deep sense of emotional and social displacement that gnawed at me in my first couple of years in the United States. What I recognize now in my older self are the reverberations of grief over my mother's death to cancer a year earlier, in 2004.

But it is these vulnerabilities—these spaces of warp and wound, openness and instability—that can usher in new possibilities.

Alyssa Niccolini's deceptively simple allegory about ticks on her daughter's body is a cautionary tale as much as it is a raw portrait of a mum's primal attachment and visceral fears about her child. It dislodged my own mother-daughter story, the potent, hardwired force that runs between mother and child jointly experiencing the circuits and flows of anxiety and fear. *At night, I sift through the mental curation I store of her strange sensations, hilarious descriptions, uncanny feelings, surprising observations, beautiful incoherence—what is normal childhood?*

I remember her hands, rough to touch and smelling of cigarettes. So wise that you could actually feel the wisdom coming off of her. I hungered for her attention. In *The Bean Trees,* Kingsolver (1988) says, "sadness is more or less like a head cold—with patience, it passes. Depression is like cancer" (p. 173) Actually, depression becomes cancer. Depression became cancer. When I read Kingsolver's description, I was ambushed by surprising emotions. This is what vulnerable literacies do: they resonate, they vibrate, they have vitality (Boldt, 2020). Living with someone who experiences depression makes you put it on like a familiar coat. It makes you aware of vulnerable literacies because they are never far off, and any sniff of them in text form and content renders them live, dense, and felt.

I have nightmares about ticks. Every inch of my child's body covered in a glittering, moving coat of parasites. I wake up crawling in my sheets.

Vulnerability gives fluency to literacy. In whatever form or composition, vulnerability can open up expressive flood gates. Leonard Cohen recognized its capacity and he

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1 Unless otherwise indicated, sentences in italics are quotations from Alyssa Niccolini's article, this issue.

carved out a career splitting open vulnerabilities. When asked about the inspiration for his iconic and ubiquitous song, “Hallelujah,” Cohen said, “I wanted to stand with those who clearly see G-d’s holy broken world for what it is, and still find the courage or heart to praise it” (Wieseltier, 2016, para. 1). The broken understand vulnerability, everyone does really, but perhaps it is more acute for the broken. Cohen understood brokenness and refused to view sin, vulnerability, or weakness as failures. To be human is to sin. To be vulnerable is to feel.

To suffer and be vulnerable leads to expression.

> *Even though it all went wrong/I’ll stand before the Lord of Song/With nothing on my tongue but Hallelujah* (Cohen, 1984).

As a kindergarten teacher to Black, White, Asian, Indian, and Middle Eastern children in the Jane-Finch corridor, purportedly Toronto’s toughest neighborhood, for over 20 years Sunny Rowsell made literacies for children in her classroom real, human, and felt. Through her words, actions, songs, and play, children experienced what Silin describes as honoring “the satisfactions of unarticulated experiences” (2003, p. 264). Sunny Rowsell’s work with children was embodied and palpable. It carried an abundance of care and belonging. Every child in her room belonged with her in each moment.

In an age of human-based environmental devastation and a global pandemic, the creatures in my drawer underscore the pedagogical consequences of human interference.

This deeply personal response to Alyssa’s article comes from a place of vulnerability. There is something deafening about the pandemic. Equally, the opening up of vulnerabilities witnessed in children and teenagers’ artwork, poetry, writing, photographs, and films during lockdown “perform sensations that something is happening—something needs attending to” (Stewart, 2007, p. 5). There is absolutely no doubt that this moment in time has exorcised vulnerabilities and that these vulnerabilities have steadied, sustained, and calmed the young and the old.

Bedtime reading is a brief moment when body and text, human and animal, forest and home, original and translation, self and other gloriously tangle into each other.

My mum’s favourite poem was “Stop All the Clocks”—a melancholy tribute to W. H. Auden’s lover, who spurned him.

> *The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;*
> *Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;*
> *Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;*
> *For nothing now can ever come to any good.*

Words put together like this, in this precise order and methodical rhythm, pierce through you and furl around your senses. They stop you in your tracks.

Just as mother frantically searches for ticks, so too daughter obsessively phones mother. Searching, scanning, picking warm boundaries for ticks; caressing, hugging, longing for a connection. Mothers and daughters cleave to each for life and limb. These are vulnerable moments that pass. These are vulnerable times that pass. Vulnerable literacies move us to new places.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Rowsell is professor of literacies and social innovation and deputy head of school at University of Bristol's School of Education in the United Kingdom. Her research interests include multimodal, makerspace, and arts-based research with young people; digital literacies research; digital inequalities; and adopting post-qualitative approaches to literacy research. She is co-editor of the *Routledge Expanding Literacies in Education* book series with Carmen Medina (Indiana University) and co-editor of *Digital Culture and Education.*

Playing Through Tragedy: A Critical Approach to Welcoming Children's Social Worlds and Play as Pedagogy

Cassie J. Brownell

"Look out! I'm the coronavirus and I'm going to kill you!" exclaimed a second-grade boy as classmates rounded the final staircase banister. His hands raised high, curled in monster-like claws, the 7-year-old roared as his feet picked up pace and he chased his peers from the school stairway into the warm outdoor air that mid-March afternoon in 2020. His peers shrieked in delight and took off running in all directions across the primary school's outdoor play yard in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

The following evening, I recounted this moment of play to the students enrolled in the graduate course I taught on elementary literacy. Most of the students were classroom teachers. While some laughed in surprise, others shared that "Corona Tag" had become a popular game in the weeks leading up to school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Soon, our graduate classroom was abuzz with stories about the play of kindergarten children related to COVID-19 alongside descriptions of intermediate learners' curiosities about the virus.

Our conversation that evening—the last face-to-face meeting of our term—bridged many of the readings and discussions we shared in previous weeks about children's play (Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Wohlwend, 2011) and the ethical imperative of tending to children as individuals who live lives beyond school walls (Boldt, 2009; Campano, 2006). Included in this was an understanding that children, like adults, live lives fraught with uncertainty, loss, and trauma (Dutro, 2019; Farley, 2018) and that teachers must make space for discussing these issues with them (Vasquez, 2004).

We read several accounts from early childhood researchers and teachers that discussed critical literacy and offered concrete examples of young children who were not only interested in reading the world with a critical eye, but capable of doing so. Across these readings, children used play as a tool to "devise narratives that help them sort through their experiences" (Silin, 2013, p. 20). We understood play as representative of children's perception of the world and, in many ways, as an invitation for others—child peers and adults—to be a part of their world-making (Buchholz, 2019; Yoon, forthcoming).

The importance of play for children's sense-making was something I had first felt in my bones as an early childhood educator in post-Katrina New Orleans, Louisiana, United States. As a first-year teacher in August 2008, I remember watching two young girls playing at dismissal. Their pencils (or, at that moment, "people") moved in wave-like motions as they were "washed away" by the invisible waters of an impending storm—Hurricane Gustav, the first major storm to threaten the city since Hurricane Katrina. Gustav's approach coincided with the three-year anniversary of Katrina ravaging the city and it was expected to make landfall just two short weeks into the 2008 school year. Although none of the children in my class had yet mentioned the approaching storm during formal class time, the girls' play demonstrated that the threat presented by Gustav was forefront in their minds. The following day, I did my best to feel out how my students were dealing with the new storm while assessing their experience

and the emotional impact Hurricane Katrina had had on each of them. Much of our class time in the rest of the week was spent commemorating Katrina and discussing how the community was preparing for Gustav.

As a teacher, I understood I had the task to "help children make sense of their experience" (Silin, 2005, p. 89), but I felt hesitant to do so as a *new* teacher. As a newcomer to New Orleans that year, the children had far more expertise when it came to hurricanes and to the kinds of loss associated with them than I did. Many of the second-grade children in front of me had been displaced due to Hurricane Katrina when they were just 4 years old. Some shared with the class that they had only recently moved out of the hotel where they had been living, and a handful of others said they were living in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailers. The children had experienced firsthand the impact of "the storm" (as it was known by locals) on their schooling, families, and daily life in a way I would never fully be able to wrap my head around.

In late August 2008, as local and national news outlets offered predictions about how New Orleans would fare in the impending storm without safety provisions like fully repaired levees, I worried about whether the children in my class would evacuate and if any or all of them would return in the time after Gustav made landfall. In the days leading up to the mandatory evacuation for Gustav issued by city leaders, children's sharing of their expertise quickly turned to questions about their safety and goodbyes. After sending off the last of the young learners in my class, I hugged my colleagues—the only people I knew in the city at the time—and we offered each other wishes to "be well" and "stay safe." Shortly after, I left the community I had only just been welcomed into for the safety of an acquaintance's home in Alabama.

In preparing this essay, I returned to reflections I wrote during those days; it was a period filled with much uncertainty. In part, this was because after Gustav made landfall on the Louisiana coast, a second hurricane, Ike, loomed just behind it in the Gulf of Mexico. As I wrote in my journal in early September 2008, I had a mix of feelings as I encountered the first hurricanes of my life:

> *I do not know the condition of my school following the storm and I do not know when exactly I will be able to return to New Orleans and to work. Life feels utterly conditional on the weather and the kindness of people I barely know. I want to get back to work. I want to see my students. I want to help them to understand what has happened in their city and in their own lives.*

Thinking back on the time now—over a decade later—my heart rate escalates and I can clearly recall watching television and witnessing newscasters wading in high waters across wind-blown streets in New Orleans. I had only been in New Orleans for a month before evacuating, but the city had already started to feel like home. In large part, this was due to the hospitality provided by my new colleagues—a group of seasoned Black educators of and from, not only the city of New Orleans, but the neighborhood around the school.

Although the school was small (one teacher/one class per grade), the whole of the faculty took no time to welcome new teachers. They immediately went to work in helping us to set up our classrooms and to understand the various school traditions. This same group of individuals assisted me in understanding the language used to discuss hurricanes and how I might best prepare myself and the children in my class for the approaching storm. As survivors of Hurricane Katrina, they knew no subject was too taboo for discussion with the children and that, ultimately, children's talk and play related to the storm offered "generative possibilities embedded in moments of disorienting loss" (Silin, 2013, p. 16).

When we returned to school following Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the tensions the children felt played out in different ways. Many children were worried about the economic stress their families faced after some had spent a month's rent on the costs of leaving the city. These children often snuck snacks left behind by others into their pockets. Throughout the year, these storms, especially Hurricane Katrina, resurfaced in varying ways. On days of heavy rain, for instance, I would meet children's worried eyes as they asked if Katrina was coming again. On a field trip that included a ferry ride across the Mississippi River, children talked about how the river once carried dead bodies.

Amid some of the most exciting moments we shared as a class, the ongoing grief children experienced following Hurricane Katrina continued to linger. These experiences in my first year of teaching made clear the need for a critical pedagogical approach. Following Vossoughi and Gutiérrez (2016), I understood this approach as one wherein I, as a teacher and community member, consistently analyzed "the relationship between education and oppression in order to help bring about social transformation" (p. 142). As my colleagues taught me, children must be understood as what Freire (1970) describes as social actors, or more simply, as active co-constructors of our shared knowledge and learning. This meant I needed to create space for children to share *their* hi/stories of the storm in every aspect of my teaching. Ultimately, it was from this cadre of seasoned educators that I learned to do so with deep care for the complexities of children's subjectivities.

In later years, as I cultivated my skills as an educational researcher, I came to understand that the role of play in my classroom was not an uncommon phenomenon. Many scholars, especially in early childhood education, have documented instances wherein children use the freedom associated with unstructured play to "imagine the world otherwise" (Silin, 2018, p. 99) and to make sense of socially produced traumas. Many have documented how children's play occurs as embodied acts of the fantastical (Paley, 2005; Wohlwend, 2011; Wargo & Alvarado, 2020). Scholars have also found playful acts integrated into children's schooled writing (Brownell, 2018; Boldt, 2009)—from imagined birthday celebrations and superheroes (Dyson, 1997, 2013) to fictional encounters with horror icons (Yoon, forthcoming).

In the heavily standardized, physically distanced, and even virtual classrooms of today, the potential for young children to engage in play perhaps looks different than it once did, particularly as mathematics and "literacy takes precedence over life" (Silin, 2003, p. 260). Over the last two decades, the arts, physical education, science, social studies, and even recess have become activities relegated to whatever minutes remain after children have completed their "work" (Boldt, 2009; Wohlwend, 2011, 2018). As adults responsible for ensuring there is "no child left behind" in the ever-persistent "race to the top," how can educators even dream of allowing children to play during the school day? When pundits discussing school reopening plans for Fall 2020 focused only on "fixing" the extended "gaps" in learning due to Spring 2020 school closures, how would play be possible? My own answer is simply that whether or not children's social worlds or play are given devoted time and space in the curriculum, their play is important and it will happen.

Researchers, educators, and caretakers who have spent any time observing, listening to, or being in relationships with children know that children's play knows no bounds. It barrels ahead despite top-down limitations. When necessary, children and teachers alike take their play underground, hidden from the pervasive eye of educational authorities. One of my favorite examples of this finessing is a story Wohlwend (2013) shared from a kindergarten writing workshop. She detailed how a small group of kindergarten boys transformed their teacher-approved electric eels into "illegal" paper lightsabers (e.g., weapons) whenever their teacher turned her back or stepped away.

More recently, some early elementary teachers have incorporated play into their classrooms through makerspaces, wherein children are invited to use makerspace technologies and tools to specifically connect practices of making with literacies (Marsh, Arnseth, & Kumpulainen, 2018; Wohlwend, Buchholz, & Medina, 2018; Wood, 2019). "Mediated by mediums of imaginative play, centered on social activism and produced through community building," makerspaces offer educators and children a newly sanctioned opportunity for play (Wargo & Alvarado, 2020, p. 14). For instance, in classrooms where I engaged as a researcher in the Midwestern United States, a group of Black third-grade girls in one class used diverse media materials to make sense of contemporary (im)migration policies of Republican Donald J. Trump's Presidential Administration. The girls fashioned "backpacks" made from boxes and carried the backpacks in their role-play as (im)migrants in a series of child-produced videos (Brownell, 2020b). As a collective, the girls used play as a tool to make sense of the social issue.

Likewise, the girls' White peer, Ian, designed two tools to ease the burden of access to water and food that many modern-day (im)migrants face as they journey from one country to the next. Specifically, Ian made prototypes of a water filter cup and a fishing tool he anticipated could support families whose lives necessitated such travels (Brownell, 2020a). In both examples, the young children did not need to be protected from seemingly "adult" topics. Instead, they demonstrated that they had the capacity for engaging in what some term "difficult knowledge" as they used their play to promote calls for social action.

In another class I worked in as a researcher, a young White boy, Cory, created a counter-narrative about a tragic house fire. By combining recyclables with craft materials, Cory fashioned a "fire" he could hold in his hands. Because Cory could hold the fire, he could control it and the story associated with the fire. In this way, Cory both shifted his role in relation to the fire, and, through his play, he invited an alternative narrative (Brownell, 2020c).

Similarly, in their research with first-grade children in the Northeastern United States, Wargo & Alvarado (2020) shared the story of Roberto, a child whose family in Puerto Rico was impacted when Hurricane Maria made landfall. Wargo & Alvarado (2020) highlighted how Roberto used clay and LED lights to design a plan not only to bring power back to the island, but to reimagine how his community could have been alerted to the impending storm via a buzzer. Like Cory, Roberto used play with materials in the makerspace to make sense of an unpredictable tragedy and to invite others into his personal experiences.

As Silin (2018) has noted, "for children repair begins in play, in the work of trying to understand difficult life experiences by trying on different roles, by reversing outcomes, and addressing fears and anxieties" (p. 13). Across each of these examples, but especially in the personal stories of Ian, Cory, and Roberto, play was "critical to children becoming socially informed citizens and politically active members of their communities who can participate in creating alternative and more equitable futures" (Semann, Davies, & Silin, 2013, p. 3). Additionally, through their play, children invited adults not only to think about preferable futures but about how to make these futures possible (Dunne & Raby, 2013).

The play of the young children described in this research and that of children I taught in New Orleans reminds me of stories about children's play in New York City following the 9/11 tragedy. One example I refer to often in my role as a teacher educator is from a kindergarten classroom at the Bank Street School for Children, described by teacher Lisa Edstrom (2003), a prominent early childhood educator. In her

essay, Edstrom (2003) detailed how children in her class used blocks to build their own versions of well-known New York City structures, including the Twin Towers, in the weeks following the tragedy. She outlined how children reimagined safety features to alert individuals to danger—play quite like Roberto's warning buzzer (Wargo & Alvarado, 2020). Children also offered ideas about how to better prepare for future hardships, such as devising escape routes, reinforcing beams, or stockpiling emergency provisions—play that mirrored the prototypes developed by Ian (Brownell, 2020a).

However, Edstrom (2003) wrote that the children did not only use block play to reimagine a past tragedy—play like Cory's counter-narrative. Instead, their play paralleled scenes that appeared on television screens, including discussions about the "bad guys" or about bodies falling from buildings. This sort of chatter and role-play, Edstrom (2003) suggested, offered children the chance to explore matters of life and death, loss and destruction—patterns of play that mimicked the ways the pencil-people of my students in New Orleans were "washed away" by hurricane waters. Each play act, Edstrom (2003) argued, was representative of how children were coming to understand what unfolded in their city. Moreover, new opportunities were presented for "teacher and student to come to know each other as they explore[d] a reality outside of themselves" (Silin, 2003, p. 262).

During the time of COVID-19, expressions of children's play have filled my social media feeds. Friends and colleagues have shared images of their children's play that clearly connect to the virus's impact on our social world. For example, in early April 2020, just a few weeks into the recommended practice of physical/social distancing in the United States, my friend Erin posted a picture of her 5-year-old daughter's doll play on Instagram (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Socially distanced doll play

The dolls' bodies were arranged with adequate space between them in a formation likely familiar to readers who ventured to grocery stores in the early weeks of COVID-19 precautions being implemented. Additionally, in doll-to-doll conversation, Erin overheard the question, "Did you wash your hands?"—an important and recurrent refrain in Spring 2020. While Erin was not surprised to hear her daughter repeat a question she was often asked, Erin was surprised to see the dolls distanced from one another, noting they had not watched the news recently nor had they left the house in days.

At the close of April 2020, a picture depicting similar doll play appeared on my Twitter feed (Figure 2). Unlike the dolls in Figure 1 which were out gathering necessities, the dolls in the latter photo were together for a social purpose. As noted in the tweet from the child's mother, sociologist Jess Calarco, the dolls were allowed the opportunity to play together if they kept a safe distance from one another. In many ways, the evolved doll play of Jess's child mirrored the shift in what were deemed socially appropriate forms of social/physical distancing as more states relaxed stay-at-home orders.

Figure 2. Socially distanced doll play. (Calarco, 2020)

In both cases, the images of children's play reflected the current moment and children's current reality (Semann, Davies, & Silin, 2013). From the children's comments about their doll play, we, as adults, cannot deny their play was informed by the social issue at hand. The children, like the adults around them, were melding what was with what is and what is yet to come as their everyday lived experiences were, in many ways, upended.

As more structured play activities like organized sports or school-sponsored play were put on hold due to COVID-19, ideas for community play spread quickly across social media. Whole neighborhoods welcomed play from children and adults as they displayed teddy bears in windows (for "bear hunts"), chalked obstacle courses on sidewalks, and declared particular sections of the street for "silly walks only." In my neighborhood in Toronto, families spent more time outside—on bikes, playing basketball, and having water fights—and they continued to connect (at a distance) with their neighbors through their outdoor play. In community moments such as these, play offers hospitality, it offers hope, and "hope belongs to all of us" (Silin, 2017, p. 96).

Play also affords an opportunity to critically consider how the world operates. Play can help children not only speculate about, but actually design new realities that foster space and forward social worlds that dismantle oppressive systems rooted in White supremacy. For instance, in Spring 2020, community members across the world organized to assist their neighbors by providing them with support and ensuring the most vulnerable had access to everyday necessities as new public health and safety measures were implemented due to COVID-19. In my former home of New Orleans—a city whose majority Black population was hard-hit by COVID-19, members of the Red Beans and Rice Krewe (a playful group of locals that annually march in handmade costumes to celebrate Lundi Gras during the Carnival season) banded together to "Feed the Front Lines" (e.g., essential workers). They supported local restaurants by placing orders for food paid for by donations. Following the success of this venture, the Krewe paired older, venerated culture-bearers (e.g., musicians and artists) with their younger counterparts to provide contactless food delivery during the pandemic in an effort known as "Feed the Second Line."[1]

Others across the globe continue to take to the streets to protest the sustained assault on Black lives. In the wake of the abhorrent killings of unarmed individuals like Breonna Taylor and George Floyd or the paralyzing gunshots Kenosha police fired into the back of another unarmed Black man, Jacob Blake, the enduring legacy of White supremacy, settler-colonialism, and systemic racism are being challenged in the streets and, more recently, in city halls and state legislatures. While changes to school mascots, public buildings, or street names as well as the banning or removal of Confederate statues and flags are—at best—superficial band-aids on a wound more than 200 years in the making, so too do such changes signal that change is possible. Still, the inequities, stresses, and traumas that people of color, but especially Black communities, face are historically and continually situated; arguably, much like the educational injustices and social inequities that were laid bare as the flood waters receded from New Orleans, COVID-19 has only exacerbated such issues.

In closing, I want to invite educators and caretakers alike to critically consider the responsibility we have to explore with children "how our society is responding to these difficult events" (Silin, 2005, p. 90). As displayed in the instances of children's play in this essay, from Corona Tag to socially/physically distanced dolls, children are tuned into the "adult" issues of the social world. More than that, children are actively working to make sense of them. For many educators and caretakers, engaging with children about such issues feels as if it is a momentous task, wrought with difficult emotions and seemingly unanswerable questions. And as Silin (2013) pointed out, such work is "never easy, always complicated" (p. 22).

However, as evidenced in the stories shared in this essay, play and critical pedagogy grow in and out of one another; they are inextricably intertwined. Through play(ful) experiences, children cultivate their understanding of, and sometimes gain a sense of mastery over, ideas and events that may at first appear confusing, fear-inducing, or represent significant loss. By inviting children to re-enact or play out troubling events, there is the possibility for children to restore hope and gain agency as they reimagine the world with their own resolutions. We must take children's play as a starting point for the critical work and care associated with our roles as educators and caretakers, especially when the world feels dark and filled with loss. For, as children have taught us, it is in such moments that our imagination may be nurtured in ways we never dreamed possible.

1 To learn more or to donate, visit: https://www.feedthesecondline.org/

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cassie J. Brownell is an assistant professor of curriculum, teaching, and learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Her research takes up issues of educational justice and equity in early childhood.

Welcoming Play in Times of Trauma: A Response to Cassie Brownell

Karen Wohlwend

I'm honored and delighted to welcome Cassie Brownell to a growing community of early childhood play researchers. In one sense, welcoming implies an unequal power relation where an established member of a community introduces an unknown newcomer. This feels a bit disingenuous. Cassie is already a rising star in our field and really needs no introduction! Her work is part of an exciting new trend in literacy research that blends play with social activism and community building.

Cassie is a part of a group of emerging scholars who see and build upon brilliance that is already there: Children do not need to be taught to play or to take play seriously.[1] In this special issue, the notion of welcoming is greatly enriched by Jonathan Silin's scholarship, which invites an opportunity to open up our thinking, as well as our arms.

Welcoming activates the generosity, unflinching self-criticality, and openness that permeates Silin's work. This kind of welcome reaches outward toward newcomers—whether young children or emerging scholars. A welcome can be a compassionate gift and the beginning of a connection. We feel this in Cassie's reflection on her first year of teaching when a group of Black teachers embrace her as a new member of their school community and New Orleans neighborhood. We feel the impact of their care and support.

After Cassie evacuates to safety, she expresses her longing to return to her month-old teaching position in a hurricane-torn community that she already considers home. We feel her grateful appreciation of the teachers as professionals and scholars with accumulated experiences that deeply inform their teaching. This welcome is ethical action, infused with respect for learners and teachers and empathy attuned to both their pleasures and their pain from "losses [that] mark our lives from the earliest years" (Brownell, this issue).

A welcome is also an opening of self that reaches inward, an act of making oneself vulnerable to the world. Through Cassie's narrative, the teachers' respect for children's realities is palpable; children are welcome to bring traumatic life experiences into the space of the classroom. This is no small thing. It requires adults to recognize and acknowledge their own discomfort and to realize that welcoming play invites children to narrate their pain. Play invites children's sense-making of trauma and brings the raw realities of their lived lives out into the open, engaging taboo topics that often make teachers uncomfortable.

1 See also the work of these emerging scholars who take a critical perspective on play: Beth Buchholz, Nicholas Husbye, Julie Rust, Jaye Johnson Thiel, Jon Wargo, Christy Wessel Powell, Annette Wood, and Haeny Yoon.

Cassie points out how play simultaneously engages joy and pain. Her poignant examples of children replaying the global pandemic with physically distanced Lego figures and dolls lining up and staying apart show how children mirror the world outside. Anthropologists have long chronicled examples of children replaying the global disasters of their lifetimes, from the Titanic to World War II, to building and knocking down wooden blocks simulating the collapse of the New York World Trade Center twin towers in the September 11, 2001 tragedy (Beresin, 2002).

Death is a topic that is rarely welcomed into early childhood classrooms (Silin, 1995). Cassie notes that teachers in her school did not squelch children's play imitating floating bodies in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This work aligns with early childhood scholars Gail Boldt (2002) and Stephanie Jones (2004), who honestly and self-critically acknowledge their own discomfort when children play or talk about taboo topics in the classroom. These scholars look beyond what's safe and familiar to focus on building a safe space where children are trusted and supported to work through the uncertainty in their worlds in times of pandemic or natural disasters.

Welcoming is an opening of possibilities that anticipates what is wished-for and improvises on what is already present. Cassie notes that whether or not play is welcomed at school, children find a way to play and play finds a way to leak out, to transverse and transgress classroom norms. Cassie illustrates this with the example of children's pretend duels with paper light sabers that suddenly turn into "electric eels" whenever the teacher comes around (Wohlwend, 2013). Through play, children flex their imaginative prowess and become adept at making the most of opportune moments to sneak play into school, "under the radar."

To open educational spaces in this way necessitates a critique that justifies time for play and views young learners' diversity and developing abilities as strengths and resources. "Accept children where they are" is a familiar adage for early childhood professionals that aims to build on children's current abilities as strengths rather than needs. This strength orientation recognizes that learning cannot be confined to a universal lock-step sequence of developmental stages but takes many paths (Gregory, Long, & Volk, 2004). To create welcoming spaces in schools, we must move away from testing and monitoring of both children and teachers that sees differences as deficits to be corrected. Instead, as Cassie so powerfully illustrates, welcoming spaces allow children's and teachers' creativity to thrive and honor the diverse cultural and linguistic resources children bring to school.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karen Wohlwend is a professor of literacy, culture, and language education at Indiana University, Bloomington. She studies young children's play as an embodied literacy that produces action texts made with moving bodies in dramatic play centers, video games, digital animation apps, or live-action filmmaking. Current literacy playshop projects focus on play in early childhood classrooms, makerspaces, and children's museums. Her books include *Literacy Playshop: New Literacies, Popular Media, and Play in the Early Childhood Classroom* and *Literacies that Move and Matter: Nexus Analysis for Contemporary Childhoods.*

Enlaces in Reflections and (Re)memberings as Latina Border Crossers: Journeys of Childhood and Professional Un/Welcomings

Ana Carolina Díaz Beltrán, Paty Abril-Gonzalez, Cinthya Saavedra, and Michelle Salazar Pérez

We are humbled to be part of this special issue honoring the life work of Jonathan Silin. His scholarship and activism have opened spaces for future generations, like our own, to share our testimonios. We are straddling between being former early childhood teachers and current teacher educators—between our profe lives and our everyday lived experiences as Latina border crossers. Testimonios, which we engage in for this piece, have herstorically captured intimate tellings that connect individual struggles and strengths to the larger collective (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012; Latina Feminist Group, 2001). It is in these testimonios that women of color (and in our case, Latina) scholars have felt hospitality and welcoming. Although our tellings may be painful to write and read, Lorde (1984) and Anzaldúa (1987) remind us that we must write for survival and tell our stories in our own words. In that way, we acknowledge the deep intergenerational wounds felt by Latinx peoples and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), while providing a means for conocimiento/healing.

The testimonios we share are intimately tied to the special issue's theme, touching upon layers of welcoming and hospitality. To provide insight, Cinthya and Michelle came to this writing space as mujeres who have supported each other through a sisterhood for over 15 years. They met when Michelle was in graduate studies and Cinthya was early career faculty and immediately found a sense of welcoming and hospitality in each other. They shared interests in women of color feminisms and how these ways of knowing and being can inspire anti-oppressive and anti-colonial imaginaries in early childhood studies. This sisterhood has guided Michelle and Cinthya through the ups and downs of life, generating lessons and reflections as teacher educators and scholars of color. They have been honored and delighted to meet and welcome (and be welcomed by) new Latina colegas, Ana and Paty, co-collaborators of this piece. It gives us all great joy and hope to work together, share and learn new insights, and suggest recommendations for the future of early childhood education and care, particularly by centering culturally sustaining praxis to support historically minoritized children.

We begin by briefly describing the genre of testimonios. Then Michelle and Cinthya share their testimonios, providing a bird's-eye view into their early childhood educational experiences with linguicide, the invisibility of schooling, and be/longings. They share their experiences as teacher educators and scholars in a field that has been historically whitewashed, both in how the field was conceptualized and the knowledge that shapes it (Pérez & Saavedra, 2017). Next, Ana and Paty share their testimonios and (re)memberings as border crossers from the Global South in Colombia (Ana) and back and forth from Mexico to the United States (Paty). Their testimonios are situated as reflections spurred through reading Michelle and Cinthya's testimonios. We welcome you as readers to find *enlaces,* joining us in further contemplating, (re)membering, and reflecting upon new possibilities for welcomings and hospitality in early childhood education and care.

TESTIMONIOS

Testimonios are likely most recognized as a literary genre in Latin America (Beverley, 2005), as well as part of the US Chicanx and Latinx experience. According to Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodríguez (2012), testimonios are part of a long tradition of "reflexive narratives of liberation used by people throughout the world" (p. 525). Sharing one's story can be a powerful experience and a way to find solidarity with Others, in addition to being transformative and healing.

Testimonios are a cultural way to express experiences of oppression and marginalization, as well as pass down consejos. More recently, testimonios are a Chicana/Latina pedagogical and methodological tool for critical qualitative research. In fact, Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona (2012) point to the proliferation of testimonios scholarship in the field of education. For many, testimonios help to connect the "I" with the collective "we" in the struggle against oppression (Elenes, 2000).

The power of testimonios is clear in *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (Latina Feminist Group, 2011), a groundbreaking work that highlights the plight of Latinas of diverse backgrounds in higher education. Although the mujeres who share their testimonios are privileged in some ways (e.g., being on the journey to higher education), their privilege is complicated by intersectional identity markers, such as class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and language. Thus, testimonios are embodied experiences (Saavedra, 2019) that must come to light through speaking or writing. Testimonios are stories from within that serve to produce knowledge about our lives as physical, metaphorical, and spiritual border crossers and about our struggles and navigations through oppressive systems.

Testimonios are also pedagogical tools used as learning and teaching approaches, passing down consejos and stories from our communities and our families, transmitting important cultural herramientas to navigate and maneuver oppression and life in general (Delgado Bernal, et al., 2012). They are political and personal. As we see it, testimonios serve to reflect, mediate, and heal the wounds that run deep due to tragedy and oppression. They are also a testament of our sobrevivencia. In many ways, they're a retelling or putting ourselves back together like Coyolxauhqui, the Aztec moon goddess who was cut up into pieces by her brother Huitzilopochtli, the Aztec sun and war god. Anzaldúa (2002) retells this patriarchal myth to make Coyolxauhqui a symbol who "personifies the wish to repair and heal…and with intelligence, imagination, and grace, solve your problems and create intercultural communities" (p 563). Testimonios have the potential to heal and be personally and collectively transformative.

MICHELLE Y CINTHYA POSITIONALITY TESTIMONIOS

Michelle: To look back on my childhood educational experiences, I must start from the present, since our present-day lives are always connected to our pasts (Anzaldúa, 1987). I've recently returned to *Tejas,* to lands that have historically belonged to Indigenous peoples, but who've had their territories and livelihoods stolen and colonized.[1] Tejas is now home to Latinx, Black, and Indigenous Peoples; Other People of Color; and those with White-European settler-colonial heritages (the majority of the state population). Within the current Tejas terrain, some have found solace, struggle, and healing through

1 The Committee on Land Acknowledgment and the Program in Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) at the University of Texas at Austin have written the following land acknowledgement: We would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on Indigenous land. Moreover, we would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Carrizo and Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Caddo, Tonkawa, Comanche, Lipan Apache, Alabama-Coushatta, Kickapoo, Tigua Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas, here on Turtle Island.

Anzaldúa's notion of mestizaje, or "a consciousness of the Borderlands" where a "hybrid progeny" conflates "racial, ideological, cultural, and biological cross-pollinization" (Anzaldúa, 1987, as cited in E. Pérez, 1999, p. 25).

Returning to Tejas after many years away has resurfaced many contradictions and un/welcomings from my early years. Professional and personal life journeys have been guided by these beginnings, and therefore, my past is enmeshed in my present-day knowings, as corporeal and spiritual (re)membrances of violence that also provide sustenance, healing, peace, love, and hope. My past familial and educational experiences growing up in Tejas have also been the backdrop for contemplation about how the field of early childhood education might move forward towards anti-racist, culturally sustaining praxis for young children with minoritized identities.

Through my Chicana/Latina identity, with which I most identify, and mixed-raced, White identity and Black heritages, my family and I have lived experiences of both trauma and privilege that aren't neatly compartmentalized (Saavedra & Perez, 2012). And while I physically crossed the Tejas/Matamoros and Reynosa borders regularly during my childhood, I was born in San Antonio, lived in Brownsville briefly, and then spent most of my childhood in Corpus Christi. Therefore, the childhood and profe testimonios I share are metaphorical border crossings and based upon my early childhood educational and professional experiences in the United States. My testimonios reflect a closeness to what Anzaldúa has expressed as being "a border woman" (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 19). Intergenerationally, I am/we are constantly straddling metaphorical, metaphysical, and physical borders, both privileging and oppressing us. I am *both* colonizer *and* colonized (Collins, 2008). I feel a sisterhood with Anzaldúa (2007) when she writes, "It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions" (p. 19).

Cinthya: I live in the intersections of language, identity, and race. I often struggle with claiming one identity or another. My experiences as a first-generation immigrant from Central America and being part of a mostly Mexican American community in Tejas adds complicated layers. I can't really claim Nicaraguan American when there was no constant and vibrant connection and community in Tejas of Nicaraguans. So here I am, in the literal and metaphorical borderlands of identity (Anzaldúa, 1987). I have a complicated past as someone born into ethnic and linguistic privilege in Nicaragua but who is now an ethnic minoritized mujer in the US—one who is very light skinned, born on stolen lands, and who migrated to another stolen land.

Gloria Anzaldúa, photo by Robert Giard, used with permission of Jonathan Silin

When I read *Borderlands/La Frontera* (Anzaldúa,1987), all of this uneasy existence was validated. No resolution occurred, yet I began to understand what it meant to embody hybridity, transnationality, and to be a border crosser. I understood that I was part of a Central American diaspora. I was displaced as a little girl from a war-torn country into another country that is also wounded and brutalized by 500 years of colonization. I come back to hybridity and transnationality and the comfort these words provide me. Hybridity has no one thing that dominates. Transnationality is beyond nation-state. Border crosser means that I can't really pull out the Nicaraguan "American" and Mexican American influences. I'm not sure I really want to.

Anzaldúa has given me the inspiration to find comfort in the ambiguity and uncertainty of being. I am reminded of a question asked of me when traveling deep in the heart of Mexico, "Y tu que eres?" Wasn't it obvious that I was "Latina"? I realized that identity is constantly shifting, never constant. "Latina" did not satisfy the person asking the question. She really didn't know what that meant. And I realized I don't either. It might mean something only in the US, with its insidious categorizing. There is no one word to describe me. And I'm okay with that. Labels box us in or, as Anzaldúa says, "Who, me, confused? Ambivalent? Not so. Only your labels split me" (2009, p. 46).

MICHELLE Y CINTHYA'S TESTIMONIOS ON LINGUISTIC TERRORISM, THE INVISIBILITY OF SCHOOLING, AND CHILDHOOD (BE)LONGINGS

Michelle: My early educational experiences in the 1980s were in many ways influenced by my mom's experiences growing up in San Antonio in the 1950s and 1960s. My mom's schools and teachers were un/welcoming to languages outside of the English of the ruling class and to any culture that didn't fit the white-streamed curriculums and philosophies that guided and continue to encompass early years' education. As a child, my mom was regularly punished for speaking Spanish[2] and shamed for embodying or exhibiting any aspects of her Latina heritage. Others from this generation have shared similar painful stories of being forced to take mandatory accent reduction courses during their childhood in Tejas.

With Spanish as my mom's first language, going to school in San Antonio meant being unaffirmed, not only by institutional and everyday language oppression, but also by intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2008), racialized, gender, and class oppressions. As Anzaldúa (2007) explains, "if you want to really hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself" (p. 81).

Such all-encompassing "linguistic terrorism" (Anzaludúa, 2007, p. 80) takes a toll on a child and a community's spirit and fortitude to resist the stripping away of language and culture. It produces a state of being and un/welcoming that continues to permeate future generations like mine, causing irreparable damage to our cultures, languages, and herstories of our elders and ancestors (Ndimande, forthcoming). Importantly, many Indigenous scholars and scholars of color have contributed their life's work to unveiling how education has been used as a colonial tool that persists in contemporary educational contexts all over the world (Nxumalo & Cedillo, 2017; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Skerrett, 2017; Viruru, 2001).

My mom's childhood experiences in Tejas are intimately intertwined with mine, a sort of intergenerational entanglement. When my mom had her two children, she intuitively knew—at a cellular level—from her own childhood experiences that our language and cultural ways of being and knowing and maintaining connections to them would not be valued in schools. And she was right. I had close connections to friends of color in my early childhood years. But living in a city just three hours from the Mexico/US border, I have little memory of school life being connected to my Latina heritage or affirming my mom's first language—preventing her from feeling comfortable to pass Spanish on to her daughters. What are the consequences of this form of un/welcoming?

Cinthya: I was invisible during my schooling experience in the US. And because of this, I intensified this invisibility and hid my cultural heritage and language (Saavedra, 2011). I stored them away and began

2 I write this with the acknowledgment that Spanish is a colonizing language in many Latin American countries, erasing important Indigenous languages, cultures, and knowledges.

a process of quickly assimilating. Before I knew it, the English language took over and strong ties to my culture were severed. I didn't know it then but denying these parts of myself sped up the assimilation process. Yet, something happens, and before you know it, roots start calling you home.

Slowly, what is very private wants to burst out and be known. This happened to me during my late teens and early 20s. I realized I no longer could hide half of myself and I needed to reclaim and grapple with duality and the messiness of identity. Dancing helped me to connect to my old and new roots. I made Puerto Rican friends in college, and going salsa dancing with them was a reminder of a world that resembled my early years in Nicaragua and Honduras. I longed to be reconnected to that world.

Becoming comfortable with, and proud of, being bicultural and bilingual was not fostered in schools. It was fostered in relationships with people who were proud to be Puerto Riqueñas/os. It's infectious to be around people showing pride and acceptance of who they are. After that, I saw my education in a new light. When I went to graduate school, I opted for a master's degree in bilingual education, recognizing that school is often the first place where millions of children have their language subtracted (Valenzuela, 1999) and where they become vivisected from their precious relationships with culture and language. I wanted to address this immense injustice and brutal colonizing tool.

Graduate school was somewhat more sensitive, especially in my courses dealing with diversity. Yet even here, there was an indifference to epistemological and theoretical perspectives that stem from marginalized and oppressed peoples—Brown and Black lives. There was no body, soul, or homeland. This led me to gravitate to Chicana feminism. My reading of Dolores Delgado Bernal and colegas, Cindy Cruz, C. Alejandra Elenes, and Sofia Villenas, was a lifeline. For the first time, I understood how powerful and complicated our communities of color are (Villenas & Moreno, 2001). I saw tremendous survival skills, as well as the capacity to draw from our families and communities to contribute to theory, methodology, and pedagogy. I never looked back.

Michelle: I had an awful relationship with reading in my early years and throughout my childhood that lasted well into my adulthood. I truly loathed the exercise. Upon reflection, I wonder if this disdain had anything to do with a lack of connection I felt to the content of books I was required to read. It wasn't that I didn't like books; I was fascinated (and still am) by the sheer volume of written words, part of endless aisles of books in libraries on countless subject matters, too many for one to read in a lifetime.

My love for the concept of books and storytelling (but not reading), summons one of my fondest memories—of Ms. Sánchez, my elementary school librarian. She was one of very few Latina teachers I had through high school, college, and graduate studies. When I got into trouble, which happened on occasion, I would be sent to the library to be supervised by Ms. Sánchez. My teachers and principal required me to write lines as a punishment: "One hundred times, you'll write, 'I will not [insert unacceptable behavior].' " No wonder I've struggled with writing in my later years.

Writing lines was never a fun or exciting endeavor, but when I was finished, I got to help Ms. Sánchez. She tasked me with putting away books, and, as I made my way through the stacks in our school library, it was obvious that what was available to read rarely reflected my Latina heritage. Culturally responsive children's literature was not common in schools in the 1980s—and unfortunately, much work still needs to be done to center Other people's her/histories (Dávila & Souza, 2013). I knew Ms. Sánchez respected me, always asking, "¿Cómo estás Michelle, how's your mom doing?" I felt at home with Ms. Sánchez. As

I write this, I feel a swell of emotion and gratitude for her, for the care she provided on so many levels without her even knowing how much it meant and still means to me.

I and many people of color have had to unlearn hegemonic knowledges coming from colonial and racist educational systems (hooks, 2010). From women of color theorizing, I and Others have found a home (Saavedra & Pérez, 2012). Cheruvu and colleagues (2014) and Bryan and Milton Williams (2017) have written about the importance of diversifying our educator workforce and elevating teachers of color—not as vehicles to reify white-streamed education (which many have had to do to survive), but to transform how children of color experience early childhood education. Women of color-embodied approaches to early childhood education (Rideaux & Perez, 2019) have completely changed and expanded the possibilities to conceptualize curriculum and pedagogy. They have also transformed how children, who are minoritized are viewed, not as deficit or disconnected from our heritages, but as brilliant and capable (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Muhammad, 2020).

CINTHYA Y MICHELLE'S PROFESSIONAL UN/WELCOMINGS

Cinthya: Being a Latina interested in social justice issues in academia has been a complex journey. Starting from the fact that I have centered Chicana/Latina feminisms in my teaching and research, my academic journey has been a space in which I have to keep trying to fit in, as well as justify my existence. I think I fit the call for diversifying faculty or membership in professional academic organizations. What I have come to realize is that academic institutions and organizations love the physical diversity people of color bring. We are a check mark on the list of "make sure to have so as not to look bad." However, when people with this check mark try to challenge sacred conventions of research, epistemology, methodology, and research, the welcoming quickly fades. The welcome and acceptance are unveiled for what they are—a shallow understanding of diversity and a weak attempt at inclusion.

Academic institutions and organizations hold onto dominant theories and beliefs because people who maintain these views do not want to seem obsolete. They think that if their conception of research, theory, or methodology is challenged, they will be irrelevant. Yet when we bring up new approaches based on people of color epistemologies in order to be accepted to present to a professional organization or publish in a journal, we must tie our work and ourselves to dominant theories and beliefs. But this never happens the other way around. Conversations with colegas like Mónica González Ybarra and Grace Player have made me realize that I will no longer let these institutions tell me how to present my work. I push back so that using Gloria Anzaldúa as a stand-alone theorist is perfectly fine, in the same way that White people can use just Deleuze (or insert another White man or woman).

When Michelle and I get to host and be program chairs of a conference and attempt to center women of color scholars and work, the whispers come back that there was too much focus on race—oblivious to how race shapes the lives of White, Black, and Brown peoples. Or when White women conference attendees ask me to bring them water as if I were some sort of personal assistant to them, I realize these spaces are not for me. Not because I don't belong, but out of pure self-preservation. What has made these journeys more palatable, encouraging, and inspiring have been my colegas y amigas and, of course, amazing White allies. My own spiritual journey has also aided me and allows me to see these acts of aggression from different angles. It lessens my antagonistic energy in hopes of moving towards post-oppositional politics and consciousness (Keating, 2013).

Michelle y Cinthya: We can understand how early childhood educators of color resist pursuing associate or bachelor degrees, to study at the graduate level, or to seek membership or leadership positions in historically White professional organizations. Thinking back on our time as students in higher education (Saavedra & Pérez, 2012) and learning about the often traumatizing experiences of students of color enrolled in teacher education and graduate programs over the years (Lucero, Araujo, & Pérez, 2020), we and our students are troubled about not being represented in the research or theoretical perspectives that guide early childhood studies. When we are represented, it's often to explain how to fix us. So many students in our programs ask, "Why are we just now learning about Chicana feminism and Black feminist thought?"

There is a push to "professionalize" the child care workforce, which is comprised of 40 percent women of color in the US (Austin, Edwards, Chávez, & Whitebook, 2019) and who are the majority of early childhood professionals in a border state like New Mexico (New Mexico Early Childhood Development Partnership, 2020). As teacher educators, we're determined to make undergraduate and graduate studies a more welcoming space for educators and future researchers of color. We've made concerted efforts to teach from and through minoritized positionalities, so that students see themselves in the curriculum and are encouraged and inspired to change whitewashed approaches to early childhood education and care (Pérez & Saavedra, 2017; Saavedra & Pérez, 2018). We know these efforts can't be made alone—an important reason why we've formed a strong bond and sisterhood, a comunidad.

While at times we've felt unwelcomed by our profession, whether as students, educators, faculty, or researchers, we've also found collective healing in working through our wounds together and with incoming generations of educators, teacher educators, and scholars, such as Ana and Paty. We also need what Bettina Love (2019) describes as co-conspirators who are instrumental to structural and everyday transformative praxis.

The complexities of welcomings must be acknowledged in order to avoid inducing arbitrary approaches to diversifying the many strands of our field. Power and privilege afforded to us (ourselves included) through the intersectional aspects of our identities must be forfeited—and a willingness to learn and make room to evolve in multiple directions must be central to our efforts. In our contemporary times, we've seen new her/their/histories of resistance unfolding before our eyes. So, in this moment, we believe and have hope that change is possible.

ANA Y PATY'S REFLECTIONS AND (RE)MEMBERINGS

When our mothers sit down to crochet and knit, they "enredan pensamientos" (Ana's mom's words) y "tejen oraciones, imaginación, y sentimientos" (Paty's mom's words) into every fiber of their weavings. They have simple herramientas—hilo y aguja—to weave unlimited and complicated strands or cadenetas, evolving into the multiple directions and possibilities that Michelle and Cinthya present.

Grounded in our own mother's theorization of knitting and Chicana feminist notions of testimonios, we counter oversimplifications of children's experiences by enlacing our own reflections and (re)memberings alongside those of Michelle and Cinthya. Tejemos juntas our stories, finding "solidarity with Others," sharing "transformative and healing" conocimientos y consejos. As we read and respond to Michelle and Cinthya's testimonios, we appreciate the simple yet complicated power and privilege of stitching our experiences into broader narratives of US injustice as "border women" (Anzaldúa,

2007). Although our experiences are unique and individual, we carry within us a collective heart of our identities—connected to our families, culture, and language—and crossing geographical, physical, metaphorical, linguistic, and spiritual borders.

LOS AGUJEROS

As Michelle and Cinthya state, we've personally felt these tensions from un/welcomings in education, from our earliest memories as young children, through our journey to adulthood, and as teachers and researchers. We have experienced subtractive schooling tied to the same corrupt, oppressive system functioning to disconnect us from essential deep-rooted aspects of who we are (Valenzuela, 1999). The system attempts to unravel our communities, our families, our relationships, and our love of our culture and language, creating agujeros or holes in our bodies, minds, spirits, and psyches.

Ana shares schooling experiences centering Western ways of knowing, aspirations to become another, and complicated experiences of becoming a perpetual foreigner. Paty describes border-crossing un/welcomings while growing up bilingual in Colorado and regaining a sense of self through teaching. We share our cadenetas, only a first chain stitch of our testimonios, and then pull together our separate pieces, filling agujeros; it's that simple and that complicated.

Ana: As a Colombian blanca or light-skinned Mestiza far from experiencing racial, ethnic, or linguistic marginalization, I've experienced the privileges of occupying social locations that were centered and normalized. Yet, at my private bilingual school in Colombia, the Global South was often presented as deficient, underdeveloped, backwards—the Third World. My identity as an educated woman was formed by learning European languages and reading Western literature, dismissing Black, Indigenous, Creole, and Rom languages and epistemologies. Aspirations to leave the country were nurtured early on in my schooling, teaching me to ignore the value of people, places, and knowledges as possible futures.

Being in the United States away from family in Colombia has been very hard. In my interactions with Latinx youths in the US, I have learned how anti-immigrant rhetoric places us in different precarious positions, always reifying that we will never be enough. For the youths, questions about origin that seem harmless to others are weaponized in public discourse, in the media, and at school. "Where are you from?" becomes a loaded question that doubts belonging, threatens the right to be, and silences inquiries about identity. I explicitly remember one of the youths asking, "How do you call people who have been around some Spanish but can't speak it?"

I am constantly waiting for visa documents, affecting my ability to sign work contracts and rental leases on time, forcing me to move almost every year. I grapple with the tensions and contradictions of being a foreigner and the privilege of being a faculty member at a major research university. I move across pensamientos and questions, across borders of privilege, xenophobia, bilingualism, and across being a perpetual foreigner.

Paty: US-born to Mexican parents, I moved back and forth across the border until age 5. Similar to the experiences of Michelle and her mother, I encountered un/welcomings in Colorado. I have recuerdos of teachers reprimanding my Spanish speaking, and students mocking the pronunciation of my name. Except for a cartoon Mexican rat that shared my name, I had no positive cultural and linguistic role models at school. I didn't feel reflected in the curriculum. I was constantly shifting my identity, growing the chasms between home and school. Marching to school to correct these un/welcomings, my Mexican mother advocated for me more than once, unfortunately inciting more embarrassing taunts from peers.

Like Cinthya, I hid in my light skin, erasing my Mexican culture and language at school. Although it lessened hurts, it created holes in my identity. Elevating my English, and through my Whiteness, I became the preferred Mexican at school. Tracked into honors classes, with educational access, I enrolled as an undergraduate at the University of Colorado. For the first time, I had Latina role models, one a bilingual educator. By honoring my Mexican identity and bilingualism, these Latinas helped me bridge communities with others. Because they saw me, I was inspired to become a bilingual teacher myself, with hopes of seeing my future students.

ANA Y PATY KNITTING TOGETHER

Meditating on the future, our moms' knittings are moments of imagination as they weave warmth, protection, love, and care for the people and children receiving their woven creations. In our testimonios, teachers, friends, authors, and institutionalized multicultural spaces helped us fill and pull together agujeros unraveled by subtractive schooling. We continue filling holes, knitting lifelines of protective survival skills, epistemological and theoretical perspectives. Tejemos juntas to provide love, support, and care for our students, our colleagues, and for other mujeres in our present and future.

Ana: I was first aware that I was read as a person of color in graduate school. This allowed me to join a dynamic community that purposefully disrupted Whiteness at a predominantly White institution (PWI). We organized public events, encouraged critical dialogues at the Office of Multicultural Programs, and read and referenced BIPOC authors in our own work. New cadenetas were created with conocimientos that I spent my entire schooling cutting away from. These experiences made me confront my early aspirations to be White. I learned about historical anti-Black and anti-Indigenous stances associated with a mestizo identity, and raised questions about adopting a Brown identity without questioning my relationships with Black and Indigenous communities back home.

Paty: Teaching in the district where I learned English, I worked with Latinx bi/multilingual students. Reflecting on and (re)membering my experiences as a child, I established a welcoming classroom community, where no student had to renegotiate identities across home and school. Instead, they could feel pride for their culture and languages or when parents came in to advocate for them. Each year, we shared similarities and differences, countering the invisibility I felt as a young girl. I amplified the visibility of my students' and their families' unique stories, filling holes in my heart.

This coming together to honor our identities came with challenges, as our lived experiences as Latinx students and their teacher were at odds with pressures of standards and exams. This need to desperately shift education brought me to research, becoming a comadre with other Chicana Latina scholars. As we share testimonios of subtraction and erasure, we create and gain community by weaving together stitches for collective healing.

COLLECTIVE ENLACES

Con un hilo y una aguja, our mothers and communities weave metaphorical blankets, chales, sweaters, and manteles out of essential herramientas. In the simplest way, the caring people in each of our stories have created endless possibilities of welcomings, manifested in hospitality and gestures, making us feel that we belong. By inviting us to dance, asking us how we are doing, and creating a warm gathering place, our communities have crafted the world, countering experiences of exclusion that we constantly

negotiate. Coming from their own conocimientos and experiences, our communities have had the intuition of what we've needed.

We are guided by these collective metaphors of simple tools—agujas e hilo—and the Coyolxauhqui imperative to knit together, to repair and heal. We are also guided by the caring people who did not question our presence, but, on the contrary, desired to learn more about us and with us became ejemplos to follow. Together, we have found ways to collaborate, through our individual and collective lived experiences and through authors who have talked back/made faces (Anzaldúa, 1990) to deficit perspectives. Although these gestures seem simple, these essential tools stem from a complex wealth of knowing how to tejer relationships of respect, have the will to communicate and connect with Others, and understand how to create possibilities as difficult circumstances present themselves.

It is in our curiosities and hospitality (stemming from our communities) where we meet Others' needs and make sure they are fulfilled—finding simple ways to ensure we belong, filling holes, utilizing resources for the collective good, and learning how we can co-create and contribute. Some days we will be cared for and some days we will care for Others.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ana Carolina Díaz Beltrán is a clinical assistant professor of multicultural education at Texas A&M University and a former social studies teacher. Her research focuses on the living experiences of citizenship of transnational Latina/o/e/x immigrant youth to inform teaching practices and curriculum. Dr. Díaz Beltrán engages narrative forms of inquiry and autoethnographic research to complicate, historicize, and counter oversimplified, abstract conceptualizations of children's experiences of citizenship and belonging that are void from experience. Her work is informed by the work of decolonial, postcolonial, and Chicana feminist scholars of color.

Paty Abril-Gonzalez is an assistant professor in the Bilingual Bicultural Education program at the University of Texas at Austin. She centers spoken, written, and artistic testimonios of Latinx bilingual students, pre-service teachers, and their families. One of her research commitments involves creating spaces and times for seeing and hearing multiple and differing perspectives, working through the tensions alongside community. In order to do so, she considers the importance of meaningful and long-term relationships in bilingual education through multimodal arts-based research approaches.

Cinthya Saavedra is professor and associate dean of the School of Interdisciplinary Programs & Community Engagement. Her research centers Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology in the investigation of emergent bilingual, immigrant, and borderland experiences in education as well as spirituality and critical research methodologies. Her work can be found most recently in journals such as *Equity & Excellence in Education, Review of Research in Education, Language Arts,* and Research on *Teaching English.*

Michelle Salazar Pérez is an associate professor of early childhood education at The University of Texas at Austin. She uses women of color feminisms to inform her community collaborations, research, and pedagogy in early childhood studies. These perspectives not only critically orient her work, but they also foreground the urgency to re-envision the field to support culturally sustaining practices and programs for minoritized young children. Her work has been published in *Teachers College Record, Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood,* and R*eview of Research in Education.*

Quintessential Jonathan

Virginia Casper

It was only a year ago, but many worlds away, Jonathan and I took a few hours off from a conference to hike in the hills above Las Cruces, New Mexico. The conversation wandered around people we know in common, those we have lost, and ideas we shared over 25 years as friends and colleagues. We kept returning to the topic of legacy, however, based on Jonathan's recent reconceptualization of the term (Silin, 2020) and my interest in thinking more about it. As I listened to him explain his more generative version of this venerable notion, I remember thinking how these ideas were so quintessentially Jonathan.

Jonathan's life and work traverse many historical moments and social-historical movements. Born Jewish at the end of World War II, he came of age as a member of the "Stonewall Generation." Throughout his adult life, he has been a male teacher and teacher-educator in a female-dominated profession. He is a gay activist who was especially engaged during the turbulent decades of the HIV-AIDS pandemic and a queer theorist in the decidedly straight world of early childhood education.

With these multiple lenses, Jonathan alerts us to the ways in which social and biological reproduction weasel their way into seemingly simple and too often accepted concepts of our world. In the case of legacy, he rejects that one's body of work is the passing on of static ideas for another generation to use unexamined.

Shaping an unknown future around ideas of the moment is a bit like trying to predict who a child will become based on their current behavior. For example, when queer ideas first broke into the field of early childhood, many psychologists—for whom prediction can be a specialty—gravitated toward a determination/diagnosis of what it meant to be a young boy who enjoyed dressing in what were seen as "girls' clothes" or whose play activities were those traditionally categorized as female. In fact, such a child might become gay, straight, trans, or one or more of these over time. The multiple possibilities surrounding gender fluidity across the lifespan took a long time to come to light. Of course, Dewey advised against premature categorizations of children and encouraged adults to observe and help children to be in the moment (Dewey, 1897).

And legacy, too, is about the process of "becoming" along life's path and need not embody notions of mortality. Rather than focusing on passing the torch to another generation, Jonathan, throughout his career, has enacted reciprocity through intergenerational dialogue, validating new voices and welcoming "newcomers" of all kinds into a larger community of thought. Such a broad and global concept can be molded and reshaped as necessary in the future. I have marveled at the way Jonathan can pull together a seemingly disparate crew, helping them see the ideas they share by animating a topic or a symposium to synthesize what might otherwise remain only singular voices. Each person is challenged to plumb the depths of their own thinking, as well as create a whole enterprise of ideas that is most definitely greater than the sum of its parts (Casper, et al., 1996).

As someone who has benefited more than once from this generative process, I can say how much I learned from others along the way. In my individual thinking and writing Jonathan always pushed me and opened me up to the next level. In sharing his own struggles—from learning to read (Silin, 2003), to

taking care of a dying friend (Silin, 1995), to caring for his aging parents (Silin, 2006), to “stewarding” the photographic art of his late partner Robert Giard (Robert Giard Archives)—Jonathan helps others find authentic meaning as they grapple with their own life issues. Linking biography to the world at large and the world of the classroom using different ways of knowing—outside the canon—is a decidedly feminist, queer, and phenomenological stance.

What is it that provokes people to go deeper in their thinking? There are many paths, of course, but Jonathan’s is to raise questions about children, often from his own life, and to draw out predicaments early childhood teachers bring from their practice. They are the wonderings and contradictory thoughts that keep educators up all night—the very same ones they may be afraid to mention in the light of day. Unearthing what children are thinking, saying, and what they want to know regardless of adult fears has been a touchstone of Jonathan’s contributions that will indeed endure to be recast. He has helped so many understand that avoiding/resisting the heart of any “difficult” issue (whether it be sexuality, poverty, racism, illness, or gender identity) actually ends up distancing adults from children rather than “protecting” them from what they already know or have a sense of knowing.

At first glance, Jonathan’s early childhood world can seem dark, especially in relationship to society’s predominant emphasis on a developmentally graded portrayal of young children as adorable. But despite a world of increasing pain and anxiety, Jonathan leads us to see that it is actually hope that draws us to children. Being hopeful always involves risk (Silin, 2017). Drawing from Jose Munoz (2009), Jonathan writes that our hope for children, families, and education cannot be a empty hope, but can be an educated one.

Walking back down the trail that brilliant fall day, a huge tarantula crossed our path. Its sudden appearance in the middle of the trail stopped us in our tracks. This extraordinary, primitive creature had slow robotic movements and prickly legs. We didn’t even know what it was at first, which only emphasized that this creature was out of our daily experience and culture. A family from the area came by and among them was a tarantula expert, so we learned a bit about them. I intuitively viewed it as a foreboding omen. But we learned that in Southwest native cultures, there is a belief that this spirit animal encourages us to look beneath the surface of things and use what we find to raise up our life for examination and action in order to serve our true purposes. As the tarantula disappeared into the brush, oblivious to our focused attention, we were gifted with a new idea with which to play and find purpose.

Quintessential Jonathan.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Virginia Casper has been a developmental psychologist and teacher educator for over 35 years. She served in instructional, administrative, and clinical teaching roles in the Bank Street Graduate School of Education, specializing in infant, toddler, and family development. Virginia has published in *The Harvard Educational Review, Zero to Three,* and numerous other journals. She also spent 10 years working internationally in early childhood education doing capacity-building professional development in China, Bulgaria, Bangladesh, Liberia, and South Africa, specializing in community-based research and learning. She is (also) a co-author of *Gay-Parents/Straight Schools: Building Communication and Trust* (with Steven Schultz), and a text on early childhood education (with Rachel Theilheimer) entitled *Early Childhood Education: Learning Together.* Since her retirement, she has returned to artwork and environmental activism.

The Times of Our Lives

Deborah Britzman

I recall a remark Anna Freud once gave around the age of 85. She said there are two ages that are most challenging for the human and require the most strength: the times of early childhood and the times of old age (Sandler, with A. Freud, 1985). Within these bookends of life, Anna Freud exchanged the ideality of strength as might for that of care for vulnerability. Strength becomes the capacity for tolerating, as in living with bodily fragility, care, and dependency. Here, perception of time, or our feelings in time, are other to the function of time. It is, after all, no small act of courage to link together early and late time.

A few years ago, my mother's 82-year-old friend Gigi told me that when you get to her age, everyone looks 20 years old. I suppose the opposite is also the case: by the age of six, everyone looks 80 years old. The idea I am exploring and the one that brings me to think with Jonathan Silin is that everyone has difficulty with narrating time because we are in the world of others. We can feel both young and old, and this brings to the telling of time an emotional situation of development as uneven (and as opposed to linear progression). It is here that the capacious writing of Jonathan Silin opens the pedagogical crypt and dusts off the erasures. How may we in education learn to know our own time? Silin might reply, Let's posit the life of the mind as always in relation to the life of bodies with the lives of other bodies. Let's welcome any body in illness and health, for this is the human condition.

It must be said that for the field of education, time is felt as a terrible harried matter and a time of anxiety. If having to tell time grates on our nerves, it is mainly because the body and its pleasures and dangers tend to be ignored, and then because we feel time as lost before our time can even occur. Indeed, it is typical for students and teachers to worry there is never enough time, that we are too late, that we wait too long, and that we are unprepared. We may worry that knowledge comes too early before we know how it may be handled. We are urged to consider a future we do not yet know.

If one could magically blow away the concept of development which, after all, keeps time running in place, the entire edifice of schooling would crumble. Our way of telling educational time does seem to be a Foucauldian matter of discipline and control, even as telling time must still belong to situations of transience, say, the time for conception and birth and life and death. Of course, a great deal happens within each of these events and Jonathan Silin's (2018) *Early Childhood, Aging, and the Life Cycle: Mapping Common Ground* carries time into its relationality. He thinks of common ground as holdings of soft situations made from being with others in vulnerability, dependency, curiosity, and care. This common ground might overtake our passion for the disavowal of bodies, so operative in education. Scenes of both recognition and disavowal continue to be his major themes; they can all be traced back to his 1995 groundbreaking book, *Sex, Death, and Children: Our Passion for Ignorance in the Age of AIDS*. One can even go back even further to the ways Silin's other work returns to his New York Jewish childhood, his parents both young and old, his young adult self, his longtime loves and losses, and his creative work with teachers and children in early childhood education. We learn there is no division, for narrative is able to tolerate the streams of ongoing life.

Within his books and many essays, consultations, and community projects, Jonathan Silin's writing signifies the courage and warmth needed to bring into discussion the care and regard for wide-ranging

personal experience that we all lean upon to create meaningful relations with friends, lovers, and strangers. They are, however, experiences not usually admitted—even as personal experience calls us to narrate what most of the field of education tends to ignore, such as emotional situations of love and loss, the teacher's grief, and the situation of being an adult under the sign of uneven development. Silin's insistence begins by opening new terms for our earliest choices of loving, caring, and protesting. His focus is also a desire for weird continuity, since while we cannot remember our infancy, we still carry on its signs, traces, and gestures.

Perhaps more than any other psychoanalyst, it was Melanie Klein who insisted upon the infantile roots of the adult mind and the fate, over the course of our lives, of feelings of helplessness, dependency, and care. Klein was able to hold in mind both the early and late problems of our emotional situations that accompany learning to live from infancy to maturity. Indeed, for Klein, the mind is our emotional situation. She argued that mental life and the fantasies that render it urgent are deeply influenced and formed by our earliest situations with others, made from not understanding yet needing to know without knowing why. These scenes, where Klein saw our reaction to having to learn as calling on the defense of confusion, have a second life in adulthood. Both confusion and the surprise of realization characterize what learning is like for teachers and students, specifically in times when the learning mirrors difficult knowledge and hard topics that require us to change our minds.

One of Klein's (1959) last essays, "Our Adult World and its Roots in Infancy" argues that infants begin their emotional situation as a relation to the object world of others, that the baby expects (anticipates) love and understanding, and that quite quickly the baby creates from the breast a prelinguistic frame of good and bad, of presence and absence that eventually, over the course of life, provides not only an aesthetic frame, but also a desire for beauty. Learning is also an embodied experience and involves time to tolerate ourselves as subjects of feelings of anxiety. We are also lifetime delegates of our ego defenses and so do communicate our hostility and fear. Klein wrote, "Both the capacity to love and the sense of persecution have deep roots in the infant's earliest mental processes...Mutatis mutandis these emotions are still operative in later life" (1959, 249). Because beginnings are an emotional situation, attachments and separations from our first others are our fundamental means to tell time, lose time, remember time, and of course, both imagine time and, dare I say, dream of developments. We narrate time as already gone: "Once upon a time" and "Long ago and far away." We speak of killing time and also of fearful time when we are apt to project experience as anxiety with conditions of "what if?" There is also an unconscious self that is driven, timeless, and without contradiction or negation. The unconscious may be the basis of our imagination and of dreams, fantasies, wishes, and fleeting impressions of things not known. The inner psychic world is complex and wondrous. And Jonathan Silin's gift is to explore the agentic dilemmas of early age and old age. He shows us why we are so complicated and so affected by the larger world of others.

In Jonathan Silin's hands, the story of development is one of consideration, retroaction, deferral, protest, and of working through as working within the deeds and imaginative acts that give us purpose, as well as the pain of incompleteness. I can go so far as to say that the idea of working through serves as an opening to stories we could not have known at the time. In this awareness of loss, working through must also recognize and repair what has been denied and unclaimed.

I hold deep personal ties with Jonathan; we have been friends for more than 30 years. And we have both been affected by good and bad education. I know what it is like to be a writer at work, and I can say that Jonathan is a writer's writer. It is indeed high praise and, while I'm not yet 70-plus years old, a few years ago I became a senior citizen and can now think of feelings I could not anticipate or even worry about when I was young. Now, I think, how terribly strange and funny that old and young can mean so many different lively experiences. How fast and slow time has become. Still, I have retained my infantile life and know I am never so far away from my infantile roots and the depths of emotional situations that bring pathos to love and loss. I appreciate Silin's idea of being "hailed" or addressed and wonder, as he does, which self will answer or which story will be heard and told, which stories will be remembered and retold, and which stories will be denied.

What persists, and Jonathan tells us why, is the history we have found and feel that we have made. You see, Jonathan and I grew up in the beginning of gay and lesbian rights, in the AIDS pandemic, in feminism and civil rights, and in dramatic and sometimes maddening challenges within our field of education. We have both tried to urge the ways in which education and selves may be rethought. From another perspective, Raymond Williams (1961) described these generational emotional situations as structures of feelings, or the special generational events, sounds, songs, smells, sights, and thoughts that say, "Yes! I, too, was there. What a time we had." And because we were both there, because of this common ground that is after all so hard to share, I think we hope to communicate to younger generations of educators and their students something of what it is like and something of what has happened to us. I think we both hope to convey how we learned to care.

To return to the writer's aesthetic, I appreciate how long it can take to write an evocative sentence that opens onto the times of our life and the lives of others, such as the one Jonathan Silin (2018) wrote in his last chapter on aging: "I grew up in a worried world…but every world is worried in its own way" (165). And in Jonathan's writing, readers are challenged to think of why we do worry in our own way. Given his grace and generosity, we are invited to think, but this time with feeling. Indeed, we are invited to think as feeling. To be affected is our only choice lest we become subject to the passion for ignorance that still plays so strongly in our field. With Jonathan Silin, we are requested to think on purpose with what chance has created. And that thinking renews the ways we can narrate our own time, as if it could become a gift to those who come after and a gratitude for those who are no longer here.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah Britzman is the distinguished research professor at York University in Toronto, fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, holder of the York University Research Chair in Pedagogy and Psychosocial Transformation, and a working psychoanalyst. Author of nine books and over 100 articles, Britzman's scholarly area of expertise is in psychoanalysis with education and the Freudian and Kleinian histories of psychoanalysis, both applied and clinical. Recent books include: *Freud and Education* with Routledge; *Melanie Klein: Early Analysis, Play and the Question of Freedom* with Springer Press; *A Psychoanalysis in the Classroom: On the Human Condition in Education* with SUNY Press; and *Anticipating Education: Concepts for Imagining Pedagogy with Psychoanalysis* with Myers Educational Press.

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Contact
Kristin Freda, Director of Library Services,
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