

Pause/Play: Curating as Living/Aesthetic Analysis

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Abstract

What might become if teachers were asked to view themselves as curators? And, in turn, in what ways might curatorial work draw attention to how analytic spaces are continuously created as teachers and teacher educators move through pedagogical and research processes? This paper extends an invitation for readers to engage with curatorial impulses (Hofsess, 2015, 2016, forthcoming) and co-curatorial moments (Thiel, forthcoming) as living/aesthetic analysis by remixing a series of constructs and technologies explored by a cohort of preservice teachers. Finding inspiration in Nordstrom's (2017) antimethodology, the authors grapple with how curating might set up "conditions of possibility" (Barad, 2007) that offer a new way to engage in the theoretical work of qualitative inquiry—a way that begins to invite the student, the art material, the political, the affectual, etc., into the entanglement of theorizing from the start because they were always, already there to begin with.

Key words: (post) methodological process, (post) qualitative research, curating, new materialisms, diffractive practice, Instagram.

Imagine

Imagine an inquisitive space beckoning your participation and your wonder. Imagine an inquisitive space composed and recomposed in endless variations and possibilities. Imagine an inquisitive space—virtual, permeable, contemplative, fleeting, becoming. In this paper, we (Brooke and Jaye) imagine such a space by co-curating playing, pausing, playing, and.

We enfold our imagining with Guest Editors Susan Nordstrom and Jasmine Ulmer's (2016) intriguing proposition to consider how concepts, theories, and philosophies become what Manning and Massumi (2014) designate as active *research-creations*, "or theoretical practices that actively embody and create philosophical concepts within post-qualitative educational research" (Nordstrom & Ulmer, 2016). Further, we proceed with and through their considerations in order to "imagine different futures in post-

qualitative research” (Nordstrom & Ulmer, 2016). The futures we imagine become possible through our experimentations with *curatorial impulses* (Hofsess, 2015, 2016, forthcoming) and *co-curatorial moments* (Thiel, forthcoming) as living/aesthetic analysis.

In what follows, we first articulate our tentative understandings of how curating, in the context of teacher education, evokes lively and yet-unseen possibilities for generatively blurring how analysis is positioned in qualitative research traditions. Next, we invite readers into curating as research-creation (Manning & Massumi, 2014), specifically into a provocation explored between us (two teacher educators/artists/researchers) and preservice teachers situated in university teacher preparation programs. With this context laid out, we then open a space for readers to pause, play, curate, and thereby explore the curatorial as living/aesthetic analysis with us. Closing with discussion of what this process offered us and our students, we mediate how generativity threaded through our on-going entanglements as teacher educators and as (post) qualitative researchers. Finally, readers are invited to linger with these ideas and imaginings by listening to a playlist curated as part of this process.

Evocation

As Manning and Massumi (2014) observed, “A stone dropped into a pond produces a ripple pattern. Two stones dropped in the same pond produce two ripple patterns. Where the ripples intersect, a new and complex pattern emerges, reducible to neither one nor the other” (p. viii). In what follows, we plunk two modes of curating from our individual inquiries into a collaborative puddle in order to see what new patterns skitter, dance, touch, cloud, settle—and how. These two modes are *curatorial impulses* (Hofsess, 2015, 2016, forthcoming) and *co-curatorial moments* (Thiel, forthcoming).

In previous inquiries, Brooke has conceptualized *curatorial impulses* (see Hofsess, 2015, 2016, forthcoming) as following a desire to revel in the vibrant materiality (Bennett, 2010) of data, particularly in arts-based educational research contexts. Jaye’s work (primarily within a community center context) has embraced *co-curatorial moments*, or what is produced when varying bodies come together within a shared context to create-make-do-be (Thiel, forthcoming). We find these impulses and movements powerful for educational researchers seeking means of analysis that embody feminist new materialist philosophies (see, Barad 2003, 2007; Bennett 2010; Braidotti, 2013; Coole & Frost, 2010; Haraway, 1997) which seek to acknowledge all matter (human and more-than-human) in world making.

Despite contemporary use of the term, curating goes beyond merely grouping objects together (Balzar, 2015; Olbrist, 2014). We articulate our evocation of a curatorial practice as inviting reverberating and generative intra-actions (Barad, 2007) to occur. For us, Barad’s intra-actions excavate the differences and exclusions created when various matter is brought together. In our teacher education spaces, this matter takes various forms as bodies, texts, art materials, affect, space, histories, futures, pedagogies, and so on, at continuous play. As contemporary curator Hans Ulrich Olbrist (2014) offered:

There is a fundamental similarity to the act of curating, which at its most basic is simply about connecting cultures, bringing their elements into proximity with each other—the task of curating is to make junctions, to allow different elements to touch. You might describe it as the attempted pollination of culture, or a form of map-making that opens new routes through a city, a people or a world.” (p. 1)

Returning to Manning and Massumi (2014) briefly, we take up Olbrist’s view of curating as functioning in various ways to activate, document, map, and experiment with tosses, ripples, and patterns in our teaching and research endeavors.

Given all this, we (Brooke and Jaye) wondered together what might engaging in these types of excavating do in the lives and practices of teachers? More specifically, what might become if teachers were asked to view themselves as *curators*? And, in what ways might curatorial work draw attention to how analytic spaces are continuously created as teachers move through pedagogical and research processes?

Provocation

A few years ago, Brooke stumbled upon a strange and wonderful book (see Golding, 1997). The author re-thinks the phenomena of otherness with over 30 artists, philosophers, filmmakers, writers, photographers, and political activists. Their task is taken up through an evocative framework of eight technologies of otherness—curiosity, noise, cruelty, appetite, skin, nomadism, contamination, and dwelling. The book left her reeling and brooding over how otherness is constructed in our lives and in our schools and she immediately wanted to design a course around this structure. The opportunity arose when Brooke was slated to teach a class called Child as a Cultural Construct, an undergraduate level art education methods course. She called upon Jaye, a teacher educator in early childhood language and literacy, to set about reimagining this course. Jaye found a group of interested students and formed a direct study course to engage in this thinking, as well. In our respective teaching practices, we began to play with decentering the course emphasis on the child, in order to open up the constructs as phenomena produced by an agential coming together of material discourse, technology, culture, society, politics, space, and so on.

Inspired by Golding's (1997) framework, and extended by our shared interests in new materialist philosophy, art, politics, culture, graphic novels, literature, and more—we began to play with activating an interdisciplinary curatorial space for learning and teaching. What we ended up creating became a series of invitations, one for each of the eight technologies. The invitations were gifted to the students inside a sleek gray envelope along with a blank sheet of luxurious white cotton paper and a letter including lists of questions for contemplation. The invitations also corresponded with reading and viewing lists comprised of children's picture books, young adult fiction, poetry, contemporary art, newspaper articles, podcasts, films, and theoretical texts that all related to the construct being explored. The students were free to pick and choose from this menu of options, following their own curiosities and interests. As one student remarked, this freedom afforded *a license to be with herself—going to deeper places of inquiry by listening and responding to her way of being*. Book club discussions took place over tea and coffee and allowed these students to engage with their questions and inquiries collectively. Embedded in each invitation was a material prompt. For example, students produced a series of zines that addressed personal, social, cultural, or environmental contaminations using a limited color palette, and made work in clay that embodied how cruelty operates in schools. Another student shared how valuable it was to go beyond reading and discussing the constructs by moving in and through studio art practice. To close each provocation, the students created illustrated letters that culled together insights that had bubbled up in the processes of reading, mulling over questions, talking in book clubs, making art with materials, and so on.

Across the semester, we (Brooke and Jaye) met to debrief, puzzle over, and refocus our understandings of these pedagogical and research processes. In doing so, our analytical processes enfolded with the analytical work produced by our students as they read, discussed, journaled, listened, created. For example, we began to notice how often the nodes of religion seemed to rise from the work we were presented though we never spoke of religion in our classroom spaces. However, it became apparent to us that religious threads are always, already there and will find their way into research-creations with or without our sanction. Not only did it seem that religion weaves itself in and out of these various

constructs but it also seemed to bypass our pedagogical movements altogether. Just like life, religion seemed to be finding a way.

Toward the end of term, we sensed how the nature of the constructs work was shifting in our respective teaching programs. Conversations became less about specific contexts and challenges presented by each technology, and more about how the very way we engage in the world—socially, politically, affectively, culturally—things seemed to be changing. It seemed as if we (us and our students) were doing more than reflecting on the readings, looking back on our pasts. We were noticing how new insights sparked differences in our thinking and perceiving. But more than this, we were also beginning to discern how the effects of these sparks were changing our patterns of engagement with the world. Drawing on Haraway's (1997) earlier work, Karen Barad (2003, 2007) calls this diffractive practice, or how awareness is not merely about looking back on something, as reflection would suggest. Diffraction refers to how we are different as a result of our relationship with and to another and seeks the differences and exclusions that intra-action makes.

Jaye explored these inklings through a shared meal with her students where students brought their visual and verbal responses for each of the eight technologies to share with the group in what was seen as an artist forum or share circle. Brooke set about a different experimentation—documenting and sharing these new insights through visual and verbal modes by co-curating a virtual exhibition using the social media platform Instagram. Some of the work Jaye's students produced was added to the virtual exhibit retrospectively. Each of these variations produced something quite different and exciting. For the purposes of this paper, we focus on the latter of these two variations—the virtual exhibition.

Each student was invited to contribute eight works to the collective exhibit. Some chose to document or remix work already made during the course, while others created new pieces. As you will see in just a minute, these varied works articulated the *curatorial impulses* (Hofsess, 2015, 2016, forthcoming) and the *co-curatorial moments* (Thiel, forthcoming) we live through: personal rituals, memories held by old photographs, literal and metaphorical scars, past and present surroundings, rites of passage, connections to people, places, and things, futures. Each work was thoughtfully curated, tagged with the name of the corresponding technology, and briefly contextualized by responding to the diffractive question: *How did you come to understand the construct differently?*

Acting as co-curators, we (Brooke and Jaye) culled eight images from this co-curated exhibition to share here, one for each of the technologies explored. These images are screenshots that reveal the students' responses to this question through words and images. Responses that we sense begin to unearth not only where difference appears, but the effects, the ripples of such interference in the way we live, perceive, act, and become. Responses that, as one student expressed, *(open) up what I have tried to keep hidden from the world and about the world.*

Pause/Play

Screenshots of this co-curated Instagram exhibition will continue to wash over as we invite you, the reader, to move with us in order to open up how these constructs come to matter beyond the limits of this project and this paper. As such, we pause here to invite you to encounter the curatorial as a living/aesthetic mode of analysis, a mode not separable from being, knowing, theorizing, doing, or making. As you engage with each construct curated by our former students, we encourage you to engage with one or more construct/technology using any form of response that compels you as you read. Possible ways to engage in and remix what we have curated include:

- Print this essay and engage in the white spaces by drawing-writing-thinking-creating.
- Listen to a playlist co-curated by preservice teachers around soundtracks of their becoming through the construct of *noise*:
<https://open.spotify.com/user/wearetechnologies/playlist/17Yh54f6jrk9AUamzGT2Sk>.
- Take a 30-minute walk and follow curatorial impulses through photography. Diffractively read your images through the constructs.
- Journal, chat, mull in, play, and dream of these constructs.
- Document your encounters with these provocations via Instagram, curating your images using the constructs as hashtags: #curiosity, #noise, #skin, #cruelty, #appetite, #skin, #contamination, #nomadism, #dwelling.

By engaging with us in this process of living/aesthetic analysis, we invite you to become co-curators of an improvised, temporary, and incomplete exhibition questioning how these eight technologies are becoming made and unmade, here and there.

#curiosity



wearetechnologi...

Following

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24w

wearetechnologies #curiosity This is a picture of the church I grew up in. I have always found that going on walks when I'm stressed out helps me clear my mind. When I go on those walks I seem to find myself in interesting environments and situations. It was an interesting moment for me when I walked into this empty church, a place of worship and a place that is usually full of people. It was quiet and peaceful, like it was waiting to be inhabited with the people again.

♡ Add a comment...

⋮

We invite you to contemplate the cultural construct, *curiosity*. Here are some questions you may wish to mull over:

What kinds of things were you curious about as a young person?

What are you curious about here and now?

How has curiosity led you, shaped you, influenced where you have gone and what you have done?

How might a sense of inquisitiveness and wonder come to matter in education? To you as a teacher?

What are your memories of teachers who were (or were not) curious?

#noise



wearetechnologi...

Following

4 views

23w

wearetechnologies [#noise](#) Or the lack there of surrounds us. And the peaceful sound of wind in the mountains has always calmed me.



Add a comment...



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llhaUye9bWs>

We invite you to contemplate the cultural construct, *noise*. Here are some questions you may wish to mull over:

How has noise (TV, music, film, environmental sounds) influenced your construction of self?

How did the adults in your life perceive noise when you were growing up?

How was noise celebrated? Silenced?

How were you made to feel “too loud” or “too quiet”?

What comes up for you when it is very, very quiet?

How do you see noise as an element of classroom life?

How might listening and hearing become vital components of your pedagogy?

#cruelty



wearetechnologi...

Following

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23w

wearetechnologies #cruelty The biggest form of cruelty that I have experienced is self-inflicted. These scars remind me everyday of how cruel I have been to myself. Through this construct I was able to understand that sometimes the biggest source of cruelty that people face is from themselves.



Add a comment...



We invite you to contemplate the cultural construct, *cruelty*. Here are some questions you may wish to mull over:

How has cruelty influenced your construction of self?

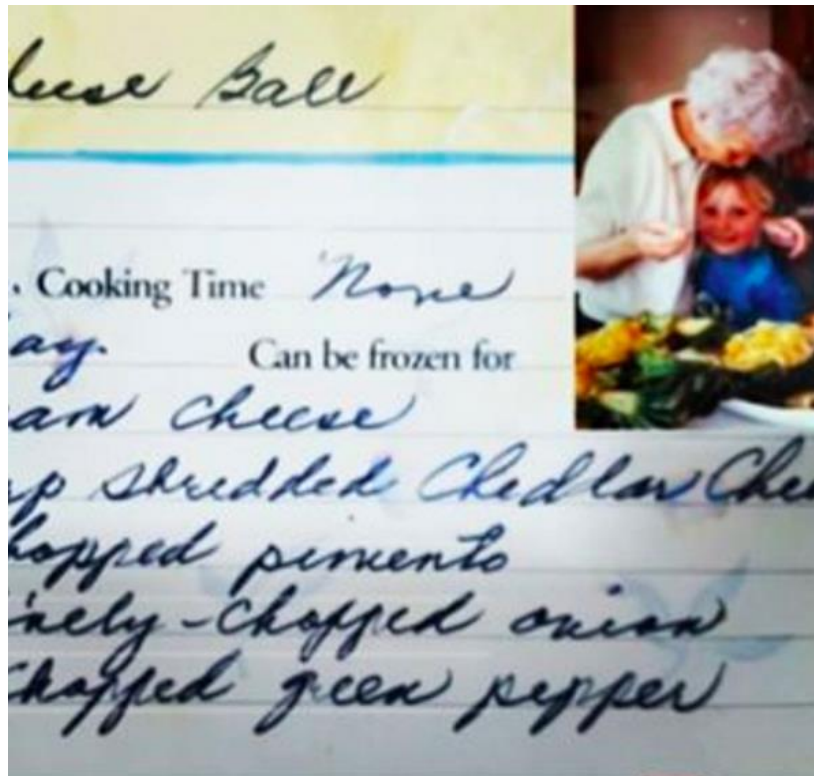
How did the adults in your life deal with acts of cruelty? How were they addressed or ignored?

How have others been cruel to you? How have you been cruel to others? To yourself?

How do you see cruelty as an element of schooling?

How is cruelty an element of childhood? Does it have to be?

#appetite



wearetechnologi...

Following

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33s

wearetechnologies I photocopied a recipe that my great aunt hand wrote and gave to me at my wedding shower. Now that she has passed away I cherish this. I added a photo of my great-aunt and me on the front of the recipe card for the illustration. I thought that this image of us in the kitchen was the best-suited way to "illustrate" the meaning of this cherished family recipe. #appetite

 Add a comment...


We invite you to contemplate the cultural construct, *appetite*. Here are some questions you may wish to mull over:

How has appetite influenced your construction of self?

What comes up for you when you think of appetite?

What were meals at home like for you growing up?

What do you remember about eating at school?

Do appetite and hunger differ? How so?

#skin



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Following

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23w

wearetechnologies Our skins are died blue because our hair was died "badass." Skin is identity and self evolving, not just a pigment or category. My roommates and I do everything together, breaking boundaries and exploring the human condition, together, as girls should. Whether its dying our hair unnatural colors or going on roadtrips, there is something powerful in discovery of the self through the physical body, changing and manipulating our environment to realise our true colors over and over again. #skin

♡ Add a comment...



We invite you to contemplate the cultural construct, *skin*. Here are some questions you may wish to mull over:

How has skin influenced your construction of Self?

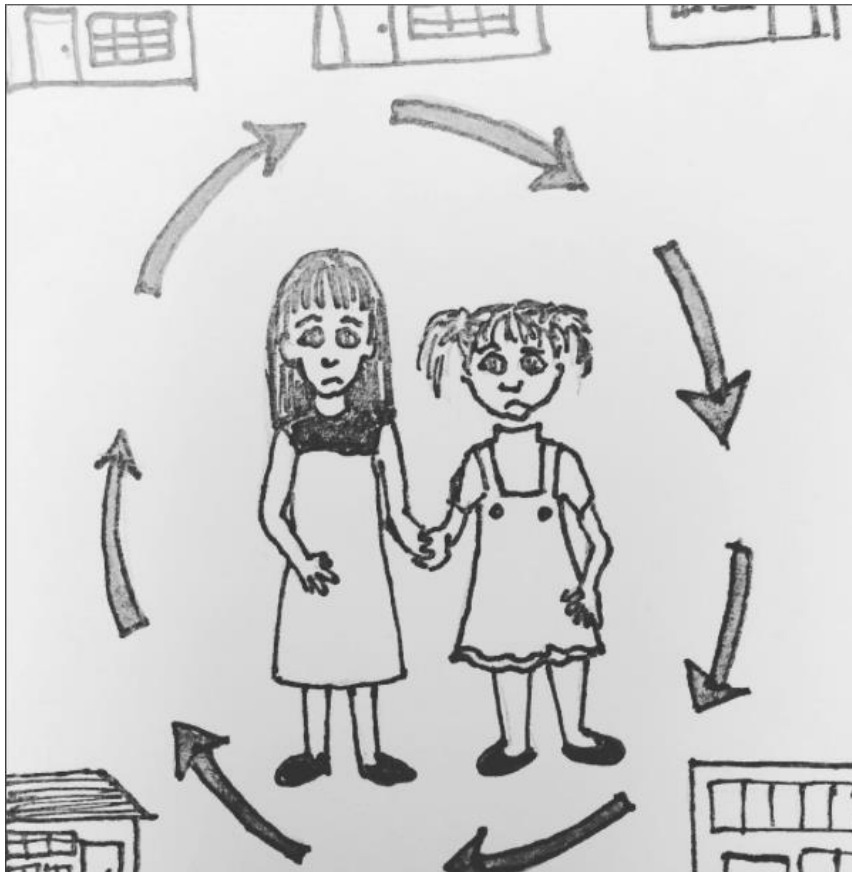
How comfortable are you talking about skin color, race, and/or racism?

What questions do you want to ask about skin color, race, and/or racism that you have held back from asking?

How is colorblindness problematic?

How does it feel to be in, live in your skin?

#contamination



wearetechnolog...

Following

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21s

wearetechnologies #contamination As people we are contaminated by life experiences. This artwork shows my contamination I experienced through being in foster care. Contamination is not just negative though, and this construct has challenged me to think about how I am contaminated positively, and how I can positively contaminate others.



Add a comment...



We invite you to contemplate the cultural construct, *contamination*. Here are some questions you may wish to mull over:

How has contamination influenced your construction of self?

What comes up for you when you think of Contamination?

How do cultural, political, social, or environmental forces potentially encroach, impinge, or otherwise impact childhood?

#nomadism



wearetechnologi...

Following

ricalongo and nomadicentrepreneur 24w
like this

wearetechnologies #nomadism This is the first photo I took, when I first moved to Boone. I had just gotten settled into my apartment when I sat down on my unmade bed and thought "now what?"

♡ Add a comment...



We invite you to contemplate the cultural construct, *nomadism*. Here are some questions you may wish to mull over:

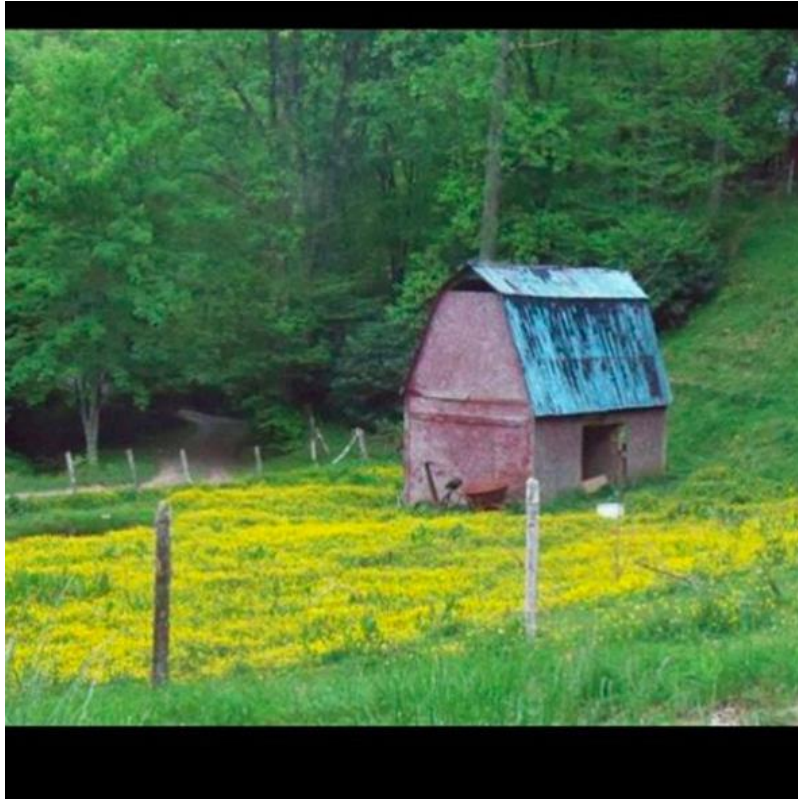
How has nomadism influenced your construction of self?

What comes up for you when you think of nomadism, wandering, travel, and journeys?

How have you traveled? Consider how you may have moved between summer camp and home life, back and forth in the care of different parents-caregivers, commuting to school from your neighborhood?

*How do you navigate both of your identities
as artist and teacher?*

#dwelling



wearetechnologi...

Following

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23w

wearetechnologies #dwelling This is my view in my front yard at home in the late spring time. This is my home and I will always want to go back, but I have learned this year that you can take a little piece of your home wherever you go. It's embedded in you--whether it be a place, a feeling, or a person.

♡ Add a comment...



We invite you to contemplate the cultural construct, *dwelling*. Here are some questions you may wish to mull over:

How has dwelling (as thinking, sitting with, mulling over) influenced your construction of self?

How have dwellings (as home or shelter) influenced your construction of self?

How do the spaces in which we inhabit influence our childhoods?

Where do children go to think, to daydream?

Play/Pause

How might drawing-writing-thinking-creating in the white spaces of this paper, listening to the embedded playlist, posting to Instagram, walking, photographing, diffractively reading, or otherwise journaling, chatting, mulling in, playing, and dreaming of these constructs have incited you to imagine new futures for analysis? As you have experimented with us through *curatorial impulses* (Hofsess, 2015, 2016, forthcoming) and *co-curatorial moments* (Thiel, forthcoming) as living aesthetic analysis, what else becomes possible? For us, we found these curatorial modes of *research-creation* (Manning & Massumi, 2014) opened generative spaces, especially as they enmeshed and multiplied. Through these particular curatorial processes, we learned more about the construction of children, students, ourselves, and our pedagogy. Yet, what became generative for our co-curators, our students?

As we (Brooke and Jaye) met and debriefed across this project, our chats often involved sharing with each other the many lively conversations witnessed between our students as provoked by working through the constructs. For example, our students were invited to share how working in and through these technologies provoked new ripples and wrinkles to occur in their understandings of teaching-learning spaces. Inspired by Manning and Massumi's (2014) "propositions" (p. 83), in what follows we (Brooke and Jaye) remix our students' responses in order to begin enflashing *conditions of possibility* (Barad, 2007) made possible through this work. This move aims to be invitational rather than flatly interpretative. Further, it is our hope that the following set of propositions might function as a way to keep inviting you (and potentially your students) to engage with us.

Possible Conditions

Design a community of teacher-learners-artists-researchers.

Play in and through the constructs separately and collectively.

Experiment with new forms of communicating.

Seek complexity of self and other.

Brace for vulnerability.

Interrogate assumptions about people and lifestyles.

Attempt escapes from comfort zones.

Dismember perfection- again and again.

Embrace the multitudes of experiences brought into classrooms that are mostly ignored.

Explore the bits and pieces of how you/matter/life are put together.

Dwell somewhere new, in somehow new ways.

Yet-Unseen

Data are lively. Swarming. Swirling. Calling. Beaconing. Propositional. As qualitative researchers, we believe analytical spaces are always, already here and there. Images and insights are constantly culled together by the evocation of *curatorial impulses* (Hofsess, 2015, 2016, forthcoming) and *co-curatorial moments* (Thiel, forthcoming) as living/aesthetic analysis. Here, we turn our questioning of generativity towards research-creation (Manning & Massumi, 2014) asking, what becomes generative for us as not only teacher educators, but in our on-going entanglements as (post) qualitative researchers?

Here, our intonation dips—we hesitate to call this a methodological process, as it is neither governed by rules or procedure. Nor is it orderly. Yet, we realize a need to articulate how we are creating in addition to what we might be resisting or letting fall away. Perhaps *curatorial impulses* (Hofsess, 2015, 2016, forthcoming) and *co-curatorial moments* (Thiel, forthcoming) set up something more akin to a (post) methodological process, a play, a trial, a movement that stutters (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) rather than repeats.¹ Perhaps this moves us toward something more like what Nordstrom (2017) theorizes as an *anti-methodology*—plugging into concepts (such as the eight technologies and curating) rather than methodologies.

For example, we found that using modes of curating as a theoretical and methodological provocation pushed against the staticness of simply classifying by tuning into the curatorial movements of the more-than-human, such as a tree dancing in the wind, bugs crawling, sounds of laughter, or the crack of a bat against a ball, and the taste of a cheese ball. Here, theorizing pulsates with lively energy that is both fluid and mucky at times, offering glimpses into the making and unmaking of these phenomena that simply classifying won't give us. Moving *with* and responding *in and through* these pulsations allows researchers to resist “stabilizing interpretation—instead choosing to dwell at the intersection of visual and verbal imaginations, culling imagery and text together, inviting an encounter between the reader and the written” (Hofsess, 2015, p. 7). Like antimethodologies (Nordstrom, 2017), curatorial analytic work cannot be replicated from study to study but rather produces a different vibratory pattern each time we dive in.

¹ We extend our sincere gratitude to our generous reviewers and editors for helping us to clarify and articulate our understandings of this resistance.

We believe this is an awful lot like the work teachers do every day and we cling to the idea that educators (and possible pedagogy itself) have been engaging with the curatorial to co-construct spaces of learning long before we took notice.

All of this troubles and digs at our question about generativity. As teacher-researchers we have often found it troubling that we co-create a space with students, objects, affect, politics, etc., but then tend to disregard most everything but the researcher (or our subjective selves) when it comes to the “so what” of a project. We find the inattentiveness to be questionable at best when contemplating ethical research practices and as St. Pierre (2016), MacLure (2013), Koro-Ljungberg and MacLure (2013), Jackson and Mazzei (2012), and many others have called us to do, we are looking for new ways to consider what it means to engage in (post) qualitative research. We feel not only is it important but also quite necessary that we begin to invite the student, the art material, the political, the affectual, etc., into the entanglement of theorizing from the beginning because they were always, already there to begin with. Therefore, it is our hope to continue to engage as a curator might (Olbrist, 2014) —to explore, to make differences touch, to produce the yet-unseen, to seek the ever-unfolding new in our research endeavors. Will you continue to pause/play with us?

Postscript: Linear Notes for a Co-curated Playlist²

“Come on Eileen” Dexy’s Midnight

My mother was a big fan of 80’s music and I think my love for 80’s music comes from her and this one CD she would play in the car that had this song. It was my favorite when I was younger.

“Landslide” Fleetwood Mac

Fleetwood Mac was my first concert I ever attended. I share my love for this band with my dad, and I can’t help but to think of him whenever I hear this song. When I listen to it, it automatically brings me back home.

² The playlist is available on Spotify, and can be accessed here:
<https://open.spotify.com/user/wearetechnologies/playlist/17Yh54f6jrk9AUamzGT2Sk>

“Wide Open Spaces” The Dixie Chicks

The Dixie Chicks always bring me back to a time where I would run around my backyard with my cousins and neighborhood friends. This song specifically. When I was in the 4th grade I sang this song auditioning for my school singing group...I didn't make the cut. But I still love this song. Even to this day I almost only listen to the Dixie Chicks when I go on long car rides by myself.

“I Walk the Line” Johnny Cash

This song reminds me of listening to records with my dad when I go home. One of my favorite memories of home is sitting on the floor with my dad thumbing through his record collections.

“Valentine” Fiona Apple

Over the past year I have overcome a handful of struggles and this song represents this time of growth in my life.

“Angelina/Zoomba Zoomba” Louis Prima

I come from a huge Italian family. When we have family gatherings we literally listen to

this song on repeat and dance for hours. It never seems to get old. It reminds me of my grandpa and his restaurant he opened in the 60's. when I listen to it I can smell his pipe tobacco and aftershave.

“Boyfriend” Best Coast

This song comes from my boy crazy times in highschool when it seemed like I fell in love at least 100 times a day. When I first got my driver's license my friends and I would blare this album and pretended we lived in California.

“History Eraser” Courtney Barnett

This song sounds... like being a 19 year old girl that has no idea what she's doing and I love that. My best friend and I used to clean our apartment on Sundays to this album and it always brings back carefree memories for me.

“Coffee” Sylvan Esso

This was the playlist that described [last] year for me. It still hasn't gotten old to me and I don't think it ever will.

“This Must be the Place” Talking Heads

This song sounds like falling in love for the first time, then losing it.

“Till it Happens to You” Lady Gaga

This song is important to me because it embodies things I went through last year, and comforts me because it raises awareness and support of important topics.

“The House that Built Me” Miranda Lambert

This song was pertinent to me my junior year of high school, and embodies how I felt when my parents got separated and we had to move out of my childhood home.

“Act Naturally” Buck Owens

For as long as I can remember, my dad has played guitar really well and would play most nights while my sister and I sat on the floor and played with the dogs. I do not have any recordings of him playing currently, so I chose this song to represent that because he would play and sing this all the time.

“Star Witness” Neko Case

This song is a new start.

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