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Southern Ways: One Girl's Experience with Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Neglect

Merry Trammell

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SOUTHERN WAYS: ONE GIRL'S EXPERIENCE WITH PHYSICAL ABUSE, SEXUAL
ABUSE, AND NEGLECT

by

MERRY TRAMMELL

(Under the Direction of Delores Liston)

ABSTRACT

This autobiographical inquiry will explore my own experiences with physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. Using the method of *currere* as a lead theory. The four-step process – regressive, progressive, analytical, synthetic – helped me work towards understanding the parts of myself affected by these traumas. Investigation of my own family's generations of abuse as well as reflecting on these experiences helped me deconstruct my own story as I search for my own meaning and purpose. This study utilized aesthetics, depth psychology, and place as central themes in this work. I learned the valued of active imagination and the role it plays in psychic healing. Individuation allows one to assimilate into their own geographical place, into their own family system, and into their own psyche. This strengthens the individual's own psychological make up providing them with a stronger psyche economy.

Warning – This work focuses on the issues of childhood trauma such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional neglect, which may generate secondary trauma with readers. Please read with caution.

INDEX WORDS: Curriculum studies, *Currere*, Place, Aesthetics, Depth psychology, Sexual abuse, Physical abuse, Neglect, Trauma, Individuation

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ABUSE, AND NEGLECT

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This is for Krista because you got me before I did.

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PROLOGUE

I was born in the third month of the year, on the thirteenth day, with three strikes against me. That fact has always haunted me going forward. None of us are born knowing, we are born searching. I am curious as to why these three strikes moved me so deeply. Writers like Pat Conroy, Dorothy Allison, Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, Aldous Huxley, and Herman Hesse write about searching for meaning as they try to understand themselves with greater clarity. I draw comfort from these writers because they have all had experiences like mine, and they have helped me find meaning in my life. They became my adopted family yielding powerful influence as I matured and grew more curious about the three strikes I was born with. Conroy's work was so influential that I moved from Texas to Georgia. This move was significant because I found the curriculum studies program at Georgia Southern University. Curriculum studies can be defined as the "interdisciplinary study of educational experiences" (Pinar, 2004, p. 4). The field has a substantial focus on the humanities, the arts, and social and behavioral sciences. However, it is the only field to concentrate on educational experiences (Pinar, 2004). With this work, I would like to satisfy my curiosity by using autobiographical pedagogy, just one interdisciplinary aspect of curriculum studies. The autobiographical approach to education is a form of social justice curriculum that makes room for the method of *carrere*. Pinar's (1978) method of *carrere* is a four-step process; the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetic, that allows one to deconstruct one's past and transform it into something with meaning. These steps are not linear but are more of a guideline as I move from one memory to the next, deconstructing and reconstructing them into something that makes sense.

Social justice curriculum is a theme of curriculum studies. In *Promoting Social Justice through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (SoTL) (Liston & Rahimi, 2017), scholars work together towards social justice through various disciplines, multiple perspectives, and challenging questions. “The field of SoTL is uniquely situated to keep teachers and learners simultaneously mindful of the micro and macro perspectives needed to advance knowledge and social justice” (Liston & Rahimi, 2017, p. 331). Throughout my own pursuit of social justice, I have been asking myself the same difficult questions since childhood. ‘Why was I born into this family?’ ‘How did I survive those three strikes: my mother’s neglect, my father’s physical abuse, and my brother’s sexual assaults?’ So, when I began the Curriculum Studies program at Georgia Southern University, I found a place where this type of exploration is encouraged. I was given the freedom to explore these questions as I continued to search for and make meaning of my experiences. I came to this exploratory task with some trepidation as I have never told my story in such a unique setting. I have shared some parts of my story with close, intimate friends but never in a milieu that has felt ‘center stage.’ This feeling is not unwarranted because a dissertation is ‘center stage’ in the academic process. This is *the* place scholars ‘show’ what they know. Unfortunately, I have had more difficulty than I expected writing about my trauma, which led to a nervous breakdown chronicled in chapter three. Nevertheless, this is what curriculum studies encourage -- one’s *currere*. My *currere* is pathological. My *currere* is dark. My *currere* comes with a warning label. But my *currere* is also hopeful. I made it out of my family with a sense of purpose and meaning. My father tried to tell me I was stupid, so I am getting a doctorate to prove him wrong. My mother neglected my emotional needs by refusing to provide me with counseling even after various requests throughout my teenage years. So, I became a therapist in hope of somehow saving myself and now maintain a private practice. My brother still refuses to

take responsibility for his sexual assaults and our relationship remains strained to this day. Regardless, it was with horror that I watched his life unfold, history not only repeating itself (with sibling incest occurring between his grandchildren), but another level of pain and loss was added to our family narrative when my niece died in a traffic accident. My brother now belongs to that tragic circle of parents who outlive their children. The depth of my family's pain grows deeper with each generation. Pinar (1972) argues, "work on the individual has inescapable if not necessarily predictable social and political consequences" (p. 103). My family does not want to work on improving themselves as is evidenced by the quality of their life. Understanding oneself is not only socially relevant, but it improves the quality of your life. When I understand myself, I know how to interact with my world. When I know my purpose, my life is more meaningful. Curriculum studies and psychoanalysis go hand in hand as they share the same goal of aiding the individual to develop a greater sense of Self. *Currere* is a call "for the cultivation of an internal dialectic of ideas, beliefs, experiences, and languages that help one cultivate soul travel" (Pinar, 1972, p. 119). This work will be my soul travel; and when soul is a part of one's pedagogy, transformation becomes a possibility.

Depth Psychology and Curriculum Studies

In the field of psychology, I find myself drawn to depth psychology. As a result, I will use it as my theoretical framework. This school of thought was developed by Jung after his split from Freud. Also referred to as Jungian analysis, this thinking makes use of the term soul as it makes room for the mystical and spiritual side of life. This is a world I am very attracted to as I ask the questions, 'Where was God when I needed Him?' 'How could God be so cruel to one person?' 'Why did I get placed with a family where every member was abusive?' 'Why are there are no allies in my family?' 'Why am I so different from them?'

It does not surprise me that I am drawn to the language of the soul since I began feeding my psyche at the early age of three or four with the creation of an imaginary friend whom I called Amy. She became a fierce, conscious ally as I tried to survive in a home filled with violence, neglect, and sexual abuse. Amy became real as the abusive experiences got pushed into my unconscious. I started learning the value of soul-making as a child because I only had soul to retreat into. Jung states,

It is my conviction that the investigation of the psyche is the science of the future.

Psychology is the youngest of all the sciences and is only the beginning of its development.

It is, however, the science we need most. Indeed, it is becoming ever more obvious that it is not famine, not earthquakes, not microbes, not cancer but man himself who is man's greatest danger to man, for the simple reason that there is no adequate protection against psychic epidemics, which are infinitely more devastating than the worst of natural catastrophes. The supreme danger which threatens individuals as well as whole nations is a *psychic danger*.

(CW, v.18, par 1358)

Psychology is the youngest of all the sciences and it is the one that has served me best as I tried to make sense of my history. This curriculum studies inquiry will look at my own psychic danger as I reevaluate some of my beliefs and the things that moved me forward. What about my family's psychic danger? I will draw upon the work of Jungians such as Moore (1992, 2004, 2009, 2014); Stein (1983, 1998, 2006, 2010); Corbett (2007, 2011, 2015); Hopcke (1998); and Romanshyn (2007). I will discuss these scholars in more detail in chapters three and four because I believe they will help shed some light on my family's pathology or psychic danger –an area of interest for me as I work at deconstructing and reconstructing my story.

The field of curriculum studies is influenced by psychoanalytic knowledge as *currere* is a way to eliminate psychic danger. “Psychoanalytically, *currere* as interpretation of experience involves the examination of manifest and latent meaning, conscious and unconscious content of language, as well as the political implications of such reflection and interpretation” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 521). *Currere* is not counseling, but it is a method of self-understanding that can be transformative. Neither curriculum studies nor depth psychology conforms to rigid standards of practice as their shared purpose is individual understanding. Individual understanding does not prescribe to a standard but is subjective. I am drawn to curriculum scholars who use psychoanalysis in their work. Some of these include Pinar (1972, 1994, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2015); Grumet (1988); Morris (2001, 2008, 2009, 2016a, 2016b); and Doll (1995, 2000). I will explore these scholars in more detail in chapters one and two. The language of the unconscious is what I am drawn to; it is a language I understand just as I understood the value of my imaginary playmate and the role that she played in helping me survive my childhood. I will use the work of these curriculum scholars to better understand myself as I work at deconstructing my own story. In addition, I will draw upon the collected works of Jung and the work of trauma specialists and Jungian analysis for my theoretical framework. Some of these scholars include Perry (2006, 2010); Miller (1981, 2001, 2005); Kalsched (1996, 2013); Van der Kolk (2015); and Corbett (2007, 2011, 2015). These scholars will be discussed in greater detail in chapters two, three, and four.

Depth psychology is not standards-based, which is why I find it so valuable. In my experience, standards are dead-end roads when it comes to self-exploration. *Currere* allows the scholar to tell his or her story. It provides the scholar the freedom to engage in an autobiographical dialogue while the reader acts as an observer taking from the biography what

moves them, enlightens them, and/or changes them. It is a transformative dialectic. Morris (2008) argues, “Intellectual work fosters soul-travel. Intellectual work is mystical. Intellectual work allows one to better understand the soul. Intellectual work sometimes heals and pains the soul” (p. 147). Depth psychology is interested in the soul of the individual and how it develops. Soul work, however, is never done alone as humans are relational; without each other, we perish. Curriculum studies can act as an agent of change for both the one writing about a pedagogy of illness and the one reading about it. I will engage in my own soul’s voyage in this dissertation using my experiences of trauma and re-storying my autobiography within the context of Jungian psychology and curriculum studies.

Writing, Pedagogies of Illness, and Healing

In the canon of curriculum studies, Morris writes about a pedagogy of illness in *Teaching Through the Ill Body: A Spiritual and Aesthetic Approach to Pedagogy and Illness* (2008) and *On Not Being Able to Play: Scholars Musicians and the Crisis of Psyche* (2009). These are works on physical trauma and its psychological effects. As with *Teaching Through the Ill Body*, my work will similarly have a spiritual and aesthetic focus. Morris suggests that *currere* is a type of soul work or soul travel where one goes deep inside themselves because “soul making happens in the dark” (2008, p. 138). *Currere* can sometimes cause a descent into darkness which is what happened to me while writing my narrative. I wrestled with demons – my demons -- and somehow survived to write about it. This is the healing aspect of autobiographical pedagogy. In a similar vein, Paula Salvio (2012) writes about illness chronicling the life of Anne Sexton a teacher, writer, and mother struggling with bipolar disorder. The theme of psychological illness is addressed in this work but from an observer’s perspective. To get a personal look at Sexton’s pain, one must simply read her poetry. In trying to understand my struggles with depression and

anxiety I too started to write poetry. I found that focusing and channeling my emotions into this one thing helped me stay focused in other areas of my life. This new coping skill aids me in self-discovery. This example of the significant value of autobiography pedagogy prompts me to include some of my poems (in chapter three) as I worked at pulling myself out of the darkness. Michelle Thompson's (2011) dissertation *Currere, Illness, and Motherhood: A Dwelling Place for Examining the Self* looks at the physical illness of a child and the psychological effects it has on her own mothering. She utilizes pathography with the belief that curriculum is about the entire human experience. Thompson (2011) states, "I find it ironic that a subject, such as illness affects every person in some way, or another has been omitted from the canon. It is my hope that my work further advances this novel area of the field" (p. 24). I share Thompson's belief, which is why in sharing my emotional illness I hope to advance the field of curriculum studies. Continuing the dialogue of childhood trauma and generational abuse will bring significant value to the field.

Social illness is represented in the field with works focusing on cultural illness or cultural complexes. Place is an important topic in the field of curriculum studies. Southern places are places we start with. Morris (2016) argues, "there is no other place in the United States that is so schizophrenic and so haunted. Terrible things happened in the South; a history that many Southerners are too eager to forget" (p. 201). My traumatic experiences did not physically take place in the South, but themes of oppression, slavery, rape, violence, ignorance, and neglect were all very much a part of my narrative. I chose the South as my adopted place and moved there in the hope it would help me work through some of my own pathologies. Because the South is 'schizophrenic' it has an enticing allure to it. The beauty of the South traps you in its web before you realize the oppression and ignorance it often breeds. In *This Corner of Canaan* (2007),

Whitlock discusses her complex feelings towards the South that she grew up in. She states, “a detached confrontation would not be honest since my fondness for the region and its people is apparent, but then, so, I hope, is my distress towards historical raced, classed, gendered, sexual, religious cruelties” (p. 19). Many born and raised in the South struggle with the complicated relationship they have with their Southern heritage. They love it, and they hate it.

Curriculum studies may explore the history of the Southern regions of the United States, but it does not stop there. Multi-cultural narratives are an important part of the canon. For example, He (2003) chronicles her struggles growing up during the Cultural Revolution in China in her work titled *A River Forever Flowing: Cross Cultural Lives and Identities in the Multicultural Landscape*. This cross-cultural narrative introduces the reader to parts of China’s cultural history while providing a personal account of some of the people whose lives were affected by the cultural revolution. He (2003) states,

narratives, about how people experience their lives, how they interact, how they shape and are shaped by the contexts in humanity that is philosophically compatible with cross-cultural awareness of humanity that is philosophically compatible with cross-cultural lives and cross-cultural identities central to multiculturalism. (p. 19)

This type of narrative cultivates varied perspectives which are valuable teaching tools.

Curriculum is collaborative, not linear. By bringing attention to her experiences, He is helping to “cultivate hope and possibilities for better lives in a multicultural society” (p. 19). Our stories can transcend narratives and make them valuable teaching tools.

Doll’s work *To the Lighthouse and Back* provides an eclectic look at her own autobiography. One sees themes of teaching, writing, family relationships, religion, and ‘mother matters’ (Doll, 1995, p. 18). To dig deeper into one’s psyche takes courage, but it is how we

come back to our Self. Doll (1995) states, “to ‘come home’ inside the text means to read subtexted lives more knowingly. It means to see a little deeper into the darkness that shines fourth, if we have the eyes to see, the ears to hear” (p. 166). I had to dig deep to tell my story, and many things I saw there terrified me. I found myself paralyzed at times, and the only thing that helped was writing. I wrote myself out of the darkness and when I finally saw the light, the world looked completely different. My own neglectful ‘mother matters’ would be the hardest aspect of my trauma to integrate.

In a similar vein, the cultural subject of the Holocaust is represented in the canon through the works of Morris (2001), Feuerverger (2007), and Spiegelman (1980). Morris (2001) writes about the Holocaust and how it affects memory and representation in her work *Curriculum and the Holocaust*. Similarly, Feuerverger’s (2007) work *Teaching, Learning, and Other Miracles* touches on what it is like to be the child of Holocaust survivors as she discusses her love of teaching. Finally, Spiegelman’s award-winning graphic novel *Maus* (1980) depicts the aftermath of the Holocaust on individuals and families. As a graphic novel, this is a powerful piece of work that provides an example of how curriculum does not just belong to standardized norms. Power comes from individual understanding. This theme is what all these works depict while shedding light on personal experiences as they relate to the Holocaust.

My work attempts to contribute to the field in a similar way; I offer a personal account of my own experience with childhood trauma. I believe this alone makes my work valuable to the field of curriculum studies as psychological accounts of pedagogy are underrepresented. Pedagogy of trauma is also underrepresented in the field, while childhood trauma is rarely addressed. In addition, no other published work located in the field has a personal narrative of three different types of abuse, from three different family members, all experienced by one

person. The work *Finding My Voice: Surviving Childhood Sexual Abuse* by Diane LaFrance (2017) addressed trauma but focused solely on the issues of sexual abuse. The value of my work comes from my willingness to be vulnerable enough to share my experiences along with the power of what readers and I can learn from my narrative. To tell one's story is to educate. What I learn through the telling of my story will be very different than what the reader learns. Is this not a main theme in curriculum studies? Individual understanding. Through exploring my trauma, I will use scholars who focus on how trauma impacts all parts of our bodies. Works like Perry's (2006, 2010); Kalsched's (1996, 2013); and Van der Kolk's (2015) came long after the works of Spiegelman and Sexton. What we have learned from these trauma specialists is how trauma affects brain function, social connections, and the overall physical health of the individual.

Trauma resides deep in our bodies. Van der Kolk states,

after trauma the world is experienced with a different nervous system. The survivor's energy now becomes focused on suppressing inner chaos, at the expense of spontaneous involvement in their life. These attempts to maintain control over unbearable physiological reactions can result in a whole range of physical symptoms, including fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, and other autoimmune disease. (2015, p. 53)

What we learn from writing and making meaning of our narratives can be of great significance to those we teach, counsel, or care for. How one works through their trauma is personal and of great value to the individual. It is "critical for trauma treatment to engage the entire organism, body, mind, and brain" (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 53). Autobiographical pedagogy requires the engagement of the entire organism and this dissertation will be an illustration of that.

Using writing as a form of healing is not a new concept. It is one that has been around for centuries as we have written ourselves into existence. In fact, some have used working through

their pathology to help them find themselves and to create art. This work will be an example of such a process. We learn in *Searching for Mercy Street* (1994) by Linda Gray Sexton that Anne Sexton used her madness to help her create poetry. It was her therapist, Dr. Orne, who encouraged Anne to use her poetry to help her work through her bipolar symptoms. One result was very moving poetry. However, she continued to physically and sexually abuse her daughter, eventually choosing to commit suicide. This act left a daughter with her own madness, who similarly turned to writing to help her work her way back to her mother and herself in *Searching for Mercy Street* (1994). In this non-fiction work, she deconstructs her own story as she tries to understand her mother's mental health and find sense in her mother's abusive actions. In the non-fiction book *The Death of Santini* (2013) Conroy speaks openly about his nervous breakdown as he wrote *The Great Santini* (1976). Again, we have an example of someone using writing to work through their madness. In the end, Conroy made his father a beloved hero who continued to get fan mail until his death in 1998. Allison is another author who works out her madness by writing. In *Trash* (1994) she states,

the best fiction comes from the place where the terror hides, the edge of our worse stuff. I believe, absolutely, that if you do not break out in that sweat of fear when you write, then you have not gone far enough. (p. 217)

I have come face to face with some of my fears while writing this dissertation. I am trembling forward.

Aesthetics played a large role in helping me heal and discover new parts of myself. I have previously mentioned the power fiction played in shaping my mind and helping me feel connected with others. Literature woke me up. Greene (1978) states, "it seems clear enough that interpretive encounters with literature can, at least to some degree, lead to clarification of modern

readers' lives" (p. 38). The arts have the potential to wake those who are slumbering because they provide various landscapes in which an individual can connect with others. In *Beloved* (1987) Morrison states, "It is good, you know, when you get a woman who is a friend of your mind" (p. 273). My mind has been friends with Conroy, Allison, Huxley, Hesse, Sexton, and others. Friend's comfort, friends encourage, friends tell the truth. This is new to my world and I am starting to like it. Greene argues that "learning to write is a matter of learning to shatter the silences, of making meaning, of learning to learn" (1995, p.108). This work is my attempt to shatter the silence of family abuse that is seldom acknowledged or talked about. Learning about possible theories that explain my family will be helpful as I learn from my history.

Research About Childhood Abuse and Trauma

In the nineties, the Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) opened an investigation on the study of Adverse Childhood Experiences also known as the ACE study. This investigation looked at the overall health of children with childhood trauma and abuse from over 17,000 participants (Van der Kolk, 2015). The ACE study asks ten questions on childhood physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, domestic violence, mental health, and substance abuse. The higher the ACE score the greater the exposure to abuse, which can lead to a higher probability of mental health problems and/or physical problems. When the data of the ACE study was compiled the results were shocking. The CDC concluded that child abuse was the nation's "largest public health problem" (Stevens, 2017). The overall cost of treating this epidemic exceeded the cost of treating cancer and heart disease. Also, the CDC concluded that eradicating child abuse would "reduce the overall rate of depression by more than half, alcoholism by two-thirds, and suicide, IV drug use, and domestic violence by three-quarters. It would also have a dramatic effect on workplace performance and vastly decrease the need for incarceration" (Van der Kolk, 2015, p.

150). These numbers are staggering, making the results of the ACE study incredibly valuable. We need to continue talking about and educating others about the lingering effects of childhood abuse on individuals and society.

What is even more interesting is that brain scans of individuals who experienced trauma and/or relived a trauma found evidence of what trauma can do to the brain.

Neuroimaging studies of human beings in highly emotional states reveal that intense fear, sadness, and anger all increase the activation of subcortical brain regions involved in emotions and significantly reduce the activity in various areas of the frontal lobe break down, and people ‘take leave of their senses.’ (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 63)

I know what it is like to be scared speechless; this is how my psyche created my imaginary friend Amy.

The current epidemic of child abuse comes from what Morris terms *transgenerational trauma* in her work *Curriculum and the Holocaust* (2001). Trauma is passed from generation to generation and the ACE study provides strong evidence of this fact. Many of my family members have remained docile, unable to find themselves. This has not been the case for me as I am now writing about my childhood lived experiences amid the contemporary epidemic of child abuse. This is the power of *currere*. Pinar (1972) states, “the method of *currere* is one way to work to liberate one from the web of political, cultural, and economic influences that are perhaps buried from conscious view but nonetheless comprise the living web that is a person’s biographic situation” (p. 108).

Purpose of this Work

The purpose of this work is to research and investigate generational abuse. I will achieve this purpose by telling my story of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. As I work through

deconstructing my story and investigating family history, I will focus on constructing it into something with meaning. During this investigation, I will explore the following questions in the context of engaging in *currere*...

1. How did the stories I read of childhood abuse affect me? How did these stories help me make meaning of my own experiences?
2. What role did depth psychology play in helping me recover from a childhood of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect?
3. What role did place play in my own recovery of childhood physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect?

Limitations of this Work

Curriculum studies recognizes my experiences as a data source to be referenced. Pinar (1972) argues, “I take myself and my existential experience as a data source. The method of data generation is like the psychoanalytical technique of free association” (p. 20). The exploration of my trauma arouses intense feelings, and these subjective aspects will find their way into this work. There is no way to prevent this from happening; as autobiographical work develops, it is never formatted, standard, or predictable. This type of work has aesthetic aspects to it and the arts evoke feelings. One of my intentions is to be released from my past and find healing and transformation. Self-change is social change, and curriculum theorists find great value in this type of work.

Another limitation would be the validity of my memory. Have I remembered the past correctly? Will people think I have exaggerated these experiences or lied about them? The objective fact of these subjective questions is that the body physically changes when trauma happens. In traumatic events, the body produces more adrenaline making it easier to remember

such events (Van der Kolk, 2015). This simple, but powerful, fact helps calm my subjective questions and allows me to take comfort in this truth. The imbalance between the subjective and objective aspects of trauma is caused by the high arousal response to trauma. “As a result, the imprints of traumatic experiences are organized not as coherent logical narrative but in fragmented sensory and emotional traces: images, sounds, and physical sensations” (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 178). As a result, it would be unrealistic for me to believe my memories are intact with a coherent narrative. Therefore, I will start with four statements communicated to me by family members and deconstruct each one using the method of *currere*. I take this perspective because it demonstrates the power of words. It also illustrates the patriarchal narrative that is part of my family dynamics. This is a dangerous perspective to have because it keeps families marginalized. I will use these statements to help support the memories that I do have as I have a *complicated conversation* with myself. What will emerge? How will I feel about it? Things often emerge through a process like this. For example, my mother’s neglect is the first abuse I was exposed to, but it was the last one I recognized.

Organization of this Work

In chapter one, I will discuss the methodology of this work in more detail. Autobiographical inquiry and *currere* provide guidance for individuals who look at their story and deconstruct it into something that makes sense. The first three steps - the regressive, the progressive, and analytical - will be used as I break down my story within the guidelines of the *currere* process. I will make use of these steps in chapter three as I explore my trauma in more detail. Here I will draw upon scholars such as Pinar (1972, 1995, 1998, 2004); Grumet (1988); Morris (2001, 2008, 2009, 2016a, 2016b); Doll (1995, 2000).

In chapter two I will use the theoretical framework of depth psychology as it relates to trauma and brain function. I will include the ten ACE study questions here as I explore my answers to the questions. I will look at some of the basic concepts of depth psychology and explicate this field of psychology. Some important concepts include complexes, shadows, archetypes, myths, active imagination, and individuation. Here I will draw upon scholars such as Perry (2006, 2010); Kalsched (1996, 2013); and Van der Kolk (2015).

In chapter three I will explore my own dark night of the soul as I discuss and explore my nervous breakdown. I will use depth psychology and *currere* in action as I provide an example of how each helps in the process of understanding. I will take four statements by family members and deconstruct them through the process of *currere*. I will include journaling, family stories I grew up with, personal experiences, and my poetry as I reconstruct my story into something meaningful. Then, I will share four statements of friends and associates in the community that helped me put myself back together. Community is a part of the curriculum we live with because it is a part of our everyday life. The community, for me, has become what Grumet (1988) refers to as the ‘middle passage’ (p. xvi). The middle passage takes us where “movement is possible from the familiar to the unfamiliar, to estrangement, then to a transformed situation. The curriculum leads to transformation in the way the situation is experienced” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 549). My experiences with the community I now live in became my ‘middle passage’ to self-understanding, transformation, and purpose. I will explore and discuss this in more detail in chapter three.

In chapter four I will explore perspectives on place. In curriculum theory, place is significant and seen as a form of social psychoanalysis. I will start with the psychological ‘place’ I found myself in after my nervous breakdown. What did I discover about myself? Where do I go

from here? What does the research say about the psychological aftermath of childhood trauma? Then I will explore the South, my adopted place, and the role it played in helping me rediscover parts of myself. Pinar (2004) states,

curriculum is embedded in regions, and nowhere in the United States is that fact more obvious than in the Deep South. The American South is a ‘place’ with a distinctive history, distinctive cultures, and distinctive problems, but given its political ascendancy since 1968, its problems plague the nation as a whole. (p. 93)

It is because of the South’s pathologies that I find myself drawn to it. My love of Southern literature is what moved me to live in Georgia for many years. I will explore these experiences in chapter four. I intend to move the conversation on place to other directions; I will look at the psychic wounds that place can provide. I will explore the patriarchal family I was raised in as my first experience with dogmatic ideologies. The psychic wounds of having no voice in a male-dominated world have become more profound to me through the writing of my story. It came through as a theme of some of my poetry before I was able to connect it with academic understanding. I will explore these issues as I discuss the power of place in my own story. In this chapter, I will draw on ideas from scholars such as Pinar (1972, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2010); Morris (2016a, 2016b); Casemore (2008); Whitlock (2007).

Finally, in chapter five I will address my integration with a short story called *Welcome Home*. The idea is to untie Amy (my imaginary friend) and Merry as I take them both out of their dissociative state and try to integrate them as one. Amy holds the feelings as Merry lives someone docile and with many demons. This was our survival guide for many years. But once one is liberated the world looks and feels differently. One becomes a part of the cultural consciousness. What does they feel like? What is the psychological impact of a traumatic

experience like mine? The exploration of these questions expressed through the writing of a short story is an example of active imagination. As I have already addressed aesthetics played a big part in my healing process so ending this work with a short story seems fitting. Finally, I explore with wonder what my professors and readers might think of me now that they are aware of my history? Were they traumatized in some way by this experience? How does autobiographical pathography affect the professors who are involved in the process? How will this affect the reader? What will they take from my story? This type of scholarly work is rare in the cannon, so these issues leave room for exploration.

There is no greater work than the work we do on ourselves. Autobiographical pedagogy allows one the freedom to explore parts of the self that are unknown and work at making one's story into something of value.

CHAPTER ONE: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PEDAGOGY

Autobiographical Pedagogy vs. Sameness

Autobiographical inquiry is a powerful methodology. Pinar (2004) argues, “indeed, autobiography is the pedagogical political practice for the 21st century” (p. 38). With the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the standards of education have become more fixed and unchangeable. Current educational practices force sameness: it is an educational Act that has powerful consequences for individuals, and for our democracy. Our democracy lies in balance with our current educational practices which is why curriculum theorists believe the education of the self is of such great value. When one knows who they are, they are better equipped to engage in their world, participate in the democratic process, and live a more meaningful life. The field did not start here, it progressed here. It was reconceptualized because it disagreed with the Tyler Rationale (1933/1949) which places measurable objectives as the pinnacle of curriculum making. Pinar suggests changing the way we approach curriculum by viewing it as a verb instead of a noun. “Put simply, one’s work resides, inescapably, in historical and biographic context” (1994, p. 40). Perhaps the best and only real freedom one can find is the ability to think for oneself. Autobiographical pedagogy opens the door for this possibility.

Sameness in education is a form of oppression because it does not open the door for free thinking to emerge. The apathy of students towards current educational practices is not surprising when they are forced into standards, remote learning, and other practices that promote groupthink. The psychological damage this has on students can be profound if they graduate without a sense of who they are as a person. This type of education forces one to exist within a vacuum where there is no collaboration or connections to help them find their voice. Being able

to find meaning in one's life by examining lived experiences is one of the greatest values of autobiographical pedagogy.

Autobiographical Pedagogy

The reconceptualization of the field opened the door for the development of autobiographical research. When one writes autobiography, reads other biographical works, and thinks about autobiography as a valuable educational practice, one enters a world of collaboration. Through that collaboration, the psyche is open to the possibility of greater awareness, as heightened consciousness is rooted in curriculum theory. With autobiographical pedagogy that awareness is centered on the self. Pinar et al. (1995) state there are three different forms of scholarship in autobiographical pedagogy: autobiographical theory and practice, feminist autobiography, and understanding teachers biographically and autobiographically. All these discourses make room for lived experiences as data sources. Because our experiences are so personal and life can be complicated, these three forms of scholarship often overlap one another. To prescribe to just one goes against the basic notion of curriculum studies which is a plurality --not *a* curriculum study. Besides, autobiographical pedagogy does not prescribe to statistical data gathering or statistical data analysis. This is one of the biggest critiques of this type of pedagogy; it does not conform to research that only provides statistical outcomes. The focus is on individual connections, individual analysis, and how these findings can further educate the self while expanding the scholastic field.

Other works in the field using autobiography include Mary Doll's (1995) *To the Lighthouse and Back: Writing on Teaching and Living*. This feminist autobiography looks at Doll's personal experiences and the various roles she plays as mother, daughter, teacher, and sister. She makes use of her poetry in this scholarly work as she deals with her 'mother matters'

and the painful, traumatic death of her brother. With depth psychology being her theoretical framework, she provides a Jungian perspective while exploring parts of herself in this glimpse into her most intimate relationships. Doll is one of the few curriculum theorists who utilizes depth psychology in her work, providing a more spiritual focus to her exploration. I will also be using depth psychology as my theoretical framework because of its focus on the spiritual, dreams, imagination, and myths. This aspect of my work will bring value to the field because few scholars have fully recognized the contribution of this psychology.

Morris (2009) also uses a Jungian approach in her work *Teaching Though the Ill Body: A Spiritual and Aesthetic Approach to Pedagogy and Illness*. This autobiography recounts her struggles with gastroparesis. Her book *On Not Being Able to Play: Scholars, Musicians and the Crisis of Psyche* (2008) also deals with trauma. Both scholarly works look at personal physical traumas and how Morris was able to deal with them. Using psychoanalytic theory, she explores parts of her selves in these works with the understanding that self-exploration is a valuable form of scholarly work. Morris argues, “a traumatic autobiography that deals with illness is called a pathography and there aren’t too many of these in curriculum studies” (2016a, p.197). A pathography is “the study of a person’s illness or psychological disorder” (English/Oxford Dictionary). Childhood trauma can lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) a diagnosable psychological illness. While working on this dissertation, my PTSD has been constellated many times. While I will address this in more detail in my theoretical framework, I simply make the connection here as my work is a pathography.

Autobiographical inquiry continues to develop and by its very nature will continue to have its own life form. Pathography’s are rare in the field of curriculum studies, while issues of childhood trauma are even rarer. However, is this not what “running the course means” (Doll,

2000, p. xi)? It is to tap into the thing that gives your life purpose and meaning. My trauma has helped me find meaning in my life. I already know what it is like to live inside the dark unconscious hollows of trauma. Can there be light in the middle of a traumatic experience? Can one find hope and experience peace after being psychically abused, sexually abused, and emotionally neglected? I believe one can find those moments, but scars like these leave tremors that last a lifetime. Autobiographical pedagogy is influenced by phenomenology, existentialism, and psychoanalysis. Comingling these disciplines allows us to examine lived experiences as we continue to form ourselves, with only death stopping the process. Pinar states, “to imagine it a finished product, a doctrine, is to miss its point. What is essential about the reconceptualization – as the literal definition of the word denotes – is its constant redefinition” (2004, p. 73).

Redefinitions of the self is a lifetime practice and are rarely done in isolation. Autobiographical research develops; it does not come formulated. Is this not what gives it value? At the beginning of this dissertation process, I did not know I could write poetry; I had never tried. But through writing my story and wrestling with my demons, poetry was the only way I could find my way back from the unconscious hollows I rolled around in. It is not great poetry, but it is the cathartic process that I am most interested in. Powerful research such as this can un-silence marginalized voices by giving them freedom of exploration. My poetry allows me to channel my emotions in another way as I try to find my voice. I know with this kind of pedagogy that what I understand now will be different from my understanding once this work is complete. This can be a scary journey because one is unaware of the outcome until the final word is written. However, one should not avoid being afraid; it should be studied, explored, and somehow understood.

Therefore, I will focus on the motifs of each of the three disciplines and how they intersect with the work I will be doing here. My themes of focus will be on *currere*, reclaiming the self by

finding your voice, place, collaboration, myth, dreams, imagination, aesthetics, and (post)colonialism.

Currere

The method of *currere* means to run the course. Mary Doll argues, “the work of the curriculum theorist should tap this intense current within, that which courses through the inner person, that which electrifies or gives life to a person’s energy source” (2000, p. xii). To move from Texas to Georgia, in large part because of Pat Conroy’s work, is tapping into a deep energy source that had larger control over me than my ego did. Is this considered pathological? Maybe. However, my story is filled with pathology and trauma so significant that it moved me to another part of the country. Perhaps moving was my saving grace. This is just one of the experiences/decisions I would like to explore through the *currere* process.

While *currere* has psychoanalysis as a foundation, it does not act as therapy nor is it meant to take the place of therapy. *Currere* does not “attempt to draw material from the student’s resistance” and it cannot provide the same “transference and countertransference characteristics of the psychoanalytic process” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 523). The free association that occurs during the process of *currere* acts as a mirror for the student to reflect on while using it to enhance and intensify their educational experience. *Currere* is not meant to treat or alter complex personalities. I have complex personalities that are a part of my narrative, and although psychological pathology is a theme in my story, it is not the only thing that defines me. My *currere* is still evolving because I desire it to and because I have found purpose which provides my life with meaning. Pinar states:

the method of *currere* reconceptualizes curriculum from course objectives to complicated conversation. It is a conversation with oneself (as a ‘private’ person) and with others

threaded through academic knowledge, an ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engagement in the world. (2004, p. 47)

The past has answers if we can engage in complicated conversations with ourselves to help find those answers. This is the ongoing effort one has with curriculum and using *currere* as a verb -- an action to be taken. This process guides you through the following four steps: regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical.

Regressive

The regressive step is the first step of *currere*. Here one returns to the past, viewing past events and discerning the effects these may have on one's behavior. The attempt is to simply observe the past and take stock of what might be interfering with current functioning. This can be the most challenging step for someone using the methodology of autobiographical pedagogy. Examining a past where physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect have occurred can retraumatize the individual. Pinar argues, "to the extent one is unconscious of the past one is caught in it. One is arrested, temporally, and developmentally" (1994, p. 57). I do not want to be arrested by the past anymore; curriculum studies provide me with a forum in which I can write myself out of the darkness I have experienced. I provide the memories, as I remember them, of my three strikes here.

1. The worst beating I ever received from my father was because I could not read. I was in first grade, so reading was something new to me. The climate of fear that already existed in my house was deep and heavy. His presence alone was terrifying. Any additional behaviors such as yelling, name-calling, or a backhanded slap only emphasized the terror I felt in my soul. My unspoken fear was validated this day when my father's violent rage broke one of my ribs, blackened an eye, and split my

- lip open. As a continuation of his sadistic behavior, he called my mom at work to tell her how ignorant I was and then gave me the phone so she could hear me cry.
2. According to my mom, this is the incident that got her attention and propelled her to find the courage to leave my father. This was the early seventies when divorce was uncommon. She was brave, scared, and worked all the time, resulting in me and my brother becoming latchkey children. Her physical absence meant I was looked after by a much older brother. This absence was the beginning of many emotionally neglectful years. It was a neglect that would take me years to comprehend.
 3. My brother is five years older than me, so he was like another parent to me. He cared for me like a parent at times, and at other times he was more like a brother. Eventually, he sold me to a friend and watched as this friend raped me. This went on for about a year. He later bribed me into silence by convincing me that it was my fault and that if I did not do what he wanted, he would tell my parents what happened. I only needed to reference my father's anger to understand the climate of terror he was subjecting me to. In time, he sexually assaulted me himself. In total, the abuse lasted thirteen years.

Progressive

The progressive step of *currere* allows one to imagine what could be, what otherness can be found in the memories you discover during the regressive step. What is possible after remembering these events? Is a future relationship possible with my father, my mother, or my brother? What about my relationship with myself? How will I change after writing about these experiences? These questions will be explored in chapter three as I provide an example of how *currere* can work.

Analytical

The analytical step, step three of *currere*, is an intellectual exploration in which we try to understand the events we pondered on during the progressive step. Here one engages in a complicated conversation with oneself as curriculum becomes an action word, a verb, one that becomes “the product of our labor, changing as we are changed” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 848). I make use of my grandmother’s journals, family folklore, community, aesthetics, and dreams, as I work at ‘doing philosophy’ while writing about it (Greene, et al, 1998). I will look at generations of abuse while speculating on my own ‘family narrative’ that kept generations of oppression and abuse alive and rampant in the Trammell family.

Synthetical

The final step of *currere* is one where we reach a complete understanding of the self as it relates to the experiences we have analyzed. We analyze the fragmented parts of the self as we work into making a cohesive self. It is not a cohesive self as a complete self but a cohesive self as it relates to the part of our biography we are exploring. What will I learn about myself after I have completed this work? What will this work tell me about my family? All these questions will be explored in chapter three.

In chapter three I examine four different statements communicated at different points in my life to me by my father, my mother, and my brother. My purpose for this is three-fold. First, it illustrates the colonization of my family’s narrative. I will talk more about the psychological scars of my experiences with colonization in chapter five. These statements are simply meant to illustrate my family’s colonial dialogue. Secondly, because childhood memories are often foggy, I wanted to start the process of *currere* with a factual statement. Then I will use the regressive step, progressive step, analytical step, and synthetical step to deconstruct each statement and see

what emerges. One thing that developed through this process was that I was able to recover some lost memory. I also learned to channel some of my emotions into writing poetry making it easier for me to focus on the scholastic aspect of this work. A pathographic elicits a lot of emotions and I had to find a way to channel mine into something with meaning. But is this not the nature of autobiographical pedagogy? Development, growth, and social reform (self-improvement is social reform). Finally, I include some of my poetry as it helps illustrate my point. Chapter three will also illustrate *currere* as a process and not a four-step process to be followed.

Place

Place is an important theme in curriculum studies. In the United States, the South is often a place we study. The South plays a large role in my own story because of similar motifs and themes of oppression, violence, rape, slavery, and ignorance. Significant books written about the South which touch on my own story include *Bastard out of Carolina* by Allison (1992), *Black Boy* by Wright (1945), *The Prince of Tides* (1986), *The Water is Wide* (1972), and *The Great Santini* (1976) all by Conroy, as well as *Beloved* by Morrison (1987). Whitlock (2007) discusses in *This Corner of Cannon: Curriculum Studies of Place and the Reconstruction of the South* her southern heritage and the influence it had on her socialization. Place is a powerful aspect of one's autobiography and Whitlock uses queer theory to help express and frame her methodology. Old Southern ideologies are still prevalent in the South, which is why its traditions need to be explored. Have we moved very far from our Southern backgrounds? Southern sentiment is seductive; southern seduction is treacherous. I believe Southern places should be entered with caution.

Casemore (2008) also discusses the importance of southern places in his work *The Autobiographical Demand of Place: Curriculum Inquiry in the American South*. Through

psychological theory, he explores race and gender in the South. However, Casemore expands the notion of place to other levels including psychic place. He argues, “place (is) not merely a physical dimension; it is also a psychic terrain, one that has already been tilled and cultivated by a border myth and that can be examined in a range of discourses” (2008, p. 49). Place makes our autobiographies more complicated, especially if the South is a part of the narrative. I will elaborate more on the concept of psychic place in chapter four as I look at my current psychological place after writing about my nervous breakdown. To analyze and assess my current psychological place is a process of *currere*. I will also discuss my adopted Southern place and its impact on my narrative.

I will look at my psychological place after having wrestled with my demons. How does one feel on the other side of psychological warfare? What was it like growing up in a home with a patriarchal ideology? There is not much in the cannon on the psychological fallout of being traumatized by family institutions. I would like to add to the conversation by discussing my own pathology of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideations, and addictions. The psychological aftermath of marginalized experiences is the most difficult to integrate.

Reclaiming the Self Through Voice

In feminist autobiographical theory, the focus is on the “meaning of community, collaboration, voice, and the middle passage” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 525). These motifs are often found in scholarly works that focus on reclaiming the self. My community aided my self-understanding and became the ‘middle passage’ to my transformation. Transformation comes from the middle passage. Grumet helped launch this type of inquiry in the field of curriculum studies. Her work weaves together autobiography and various other discourses. In *Bitter Milk: Women and Teaching* (1988), Grumet brings autobiography together with feminist theory. Here

she looks at the lives of teachers and mothers to bring awareness to “the experiences of women that has been banished from curriculum discourse” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 549). Most of the experiences I had as a child were banished from my family’s discourse. However, through the field, I have been able to reclaim my voice and find my purpose. Grumet argues, “When we refuse to reduce the educational process to training, the assembly line production of skills and socialized psyches standardized to society’s measure, we must forsake the statistic and consult the educational experience of one person” (2015, p. 48). The reconceptualization brings education back to the self for the purpose of self-awareness and self-understanding. A challenging and noble goal. Grumet makes room for women’s voices to be heard through autobiographical writing. Finding my voice as I complete this work has been liberating but laced with shame and guilt as I sometimes feel I am betraying my family by talking about them.

Janet Miller (1990, 2005) also offers a feminist perspective in her work. Miller has interest in biography as she writes about others in her quest for understanding. She argues that individuals who tell their stories need safe spaces for exploration and understanding. In her work *Sounds of Silence Breaking* (2005), she focuses on marginalized voices in education and offers a venue for them to share their stories. By engaging in a dialogue, an opportunity opens for marginalized individuals to find a voice. Breaking the silence can be a terrifying thought for a child who has experienced abuse. Shame has been my longtime companion and finding a way to free myself from it has been a longing since childhood. I have told parts of my story to family and friends along the way as I searched for understanding, but this venture came with mixed reviews. Many ignored it because it seemed so unbelievable; others just moved on. This is not a new experience for me; as a child, most of the neighbors knew about my father’s violent rages and parents refused to allow their children to come to our house. Only one person stepped in to

intervene on behalf of my brother and me. Nevertheless, community has been the middle passage to me for many years. It is where I have learned more about myself than I was able to at home. In breaking my silence I have been met with bipolar responses. This work will be an exploration in finding my voice as I attempt to discover a way to share my story without traumatizing others in the process with its horrific details.

I discuss my psyche's breakdown in chapter three. I have been fighting against neglect, ignorance, and abuse for as long as I can remember. Psychic illness is all I have ever known; I have had a death wish since I was a teenager. Autobiographical pedagogy and feminist theory are strongly connected, and it is through these two that I move into the unfamiliar. First, I can speak freely as I explore parts of my silenced selves. Articulating my experiences of neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse help in discovering what can be possible after experiencing a childhood such as mine. What will that voice sound like? What identity do I have now that I understand the colonial narrative of my family system? All these issues will be explored in the chapter on place as I continue the discussion on southern places, psychological places, and as I work at finding my voice after a traumatic childhood.

Myths, Dreams, and Imagination

Myths, dreams, and imagination are the language of the psyche. These are the things that can move one into action because of the emotions they evoke. In the canon, Doll is the scholar who writes most frequently about dreams. She states,

dreams can heal, prophesize, compensate, illuminate. Their power is immense... Dreams can remind us of what we need to put back into our minds. If we are, as I propose, to educate the imagination, what better way to do this than to dream the dream forward.

(Doll, 1995, p. 543)

Dreams have played a significant role in my development and understanding. I will discuss dreams in more detail in chapter three as I analyze what fueled my soul. For instance, the biblical story of Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery had a powerful effect on me. His story is similar to mine. It was his ability to interpret dreams that became his lifeline out of jail. This childhood Sunday school lesson stayed with me because if Joseph could dream his way out of his jail, then I should be able to dream myself out of mine. Dreams are the road in and out of the psyche. We dream a dream, and through the interpretation of that dream, one can find a way to 'dream the dream forward' (Doll, 1995). Dreams can also help a trauma survivor climb out of the darkness of the dungeon they are caged in. Metaphorically, I am speaking of my psychological jail. Myths are of great value to the learning process. Joseph Campbell states, "myths are clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life" (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 5). They aid us in self-understanding. Using literalisms with myths results in their losing power. The value of the myth comes from its individual interpretation, much like autobiographical pedagogy. Campbell encourages us to study a variety of myths as we study and learn about ourselves. Myths are not invented, they are experienced. "Mythic tales illustrate what happens when an archetype has free rein and there is no conscious intervention on the part of man" (Samuels et al., 1996, p. 95). Archetypal themes are found in myths and are a useful tool that helps widen human consciousness. Archetypes are replete with meaning; they hold psychic energy and the power to influence our will.

Myths and dreams help educate the imagination. There are no standards or rote learning that come with myths or dreams, which is why they help educate the imagination. Fiction, as I have already elaborated, educates the mind. Allowing our imagination to 'play' is the best

research one can do for themselves. It allows ideas and new possibilities to form; everything is born in the imagination.

Collaboration

Collaboration is an important foundation in the field of curriculum studies. Collaboration and autobiographical pedagogy go hand in hand as one without the other weakens the foundation of curriculum studies. Collaborative autobiography allows teachers to share common experiences while acting as co-researchers for classroom development, personal enlightenment, and social justice. These themes are addressed in *Personal, Passionate, Participatory Inquiry into Social Justice in Education* a collaborative work edited by He and Phillion (2008). Here, the contributors work as coeditors explaining, “The principal aspect of this work that distinguishes it from other work is that the researchers are not separate from the sociopolitical and cultural phenomena of the inquiry, the data collected, findings, interpretations, or writing” (2008, p. 1). The researchers are researching their lives and their work to improve the social narrative and the direction of our current educational practice. Another example of collaborative autobiographies can be found in *The SAGE Guide to Curriculum in Education* (2015) edited by He, Schultz, and Schubert. This work is multicultural, encompassing a vast range of topics. The book looks at four ‘commonplaces’ of “subject matter, teacher, learner (student), and milieu” (p. xxv). Finally, with *Daredevil Research* (2006), Jipson and Paley provide another example of collaborative work that uses “alternative modes of representation including performance art, personal conversations, nonobjective artistic practice, asignifying presentation, journal entry, dream narrative, deep subjectivity, and fictional production” (p. 3). These examples of collaborative work also depict the interdisciplinary aspect of curricular studies. I will discuss these scholars in more detail in chapter two where I compare curriculum studies with depth psychology.

In *Creating Spaces and Finding Voices*, Miller (1990) continues to focus on themes of voice, collaboration, and autobiography. Inspired by this work, I am finding my voice in telling my narrative. My work is also one of collaboration as I make use of *currere*, poetry, fiction, place, and research on trauma. The ‘teacher as researcher’ is a way to empower teachers who work in a marginalized environment. Creating a safe place for exploration can lead to Other ways of knowing. When people come together as a community, conversation develops making way for knowledge to form. I share my own experiences with community in chapter three as I discuss my nervous breakdown and how community experience aided in my recovery.

My work will similarly be a work of collaboration drawing from aesthetics, personal experiences, journals, dreams, place, family folklore, spirituality, and work experiences. I have discussed fiction as my lifeline and foundation as it comforted and connected me to others with similar stories. I reference my personal experiences as sources of data as I research my history and try to learn from it. Through this process, I learned to channel my emotions by writing poetry, and I found the process cathartic. My grandmother’s journal helped me understand parts of my family; similarly, family folklore aided in understanding parts of my father. Together these supported my grasp of the regressive and progressive steps in my own *currere*. Through a Jungian lens I analyze my pathographic with a language I, and hopefully the reader, can understand. The purpose of my work is to change my social narrative from victim to victor. I do not want to be defined by my past, but I want the past to help me understand why I am the way I am. This personal enlightenment can help me change the social narrative of the world I live in. I am a better therapist when I engage in exercises that elicit personal enlightenment. Is this not my ethical obligation? I believe it is all our ethical obligation to work towards self-improvement. This is what Jung meant by psychic danger. When one does not work on self-improvement, they

behave in unconscious ways, often contributing to the world in a negative manner. It is also what Pinar meant when he advocated for the reconstruction of the private aspect of ourselves before we can reconstruct the social aspects of our society (Pinar, 1978). An ongoing ‘complicated conversation’ is a must for self-understanding, and self-understanding should be a must when one engages in the democratic process.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics are value commodities to these pedagogies because they make room for the creative to stir our emotions. Art, literature, music, poetry, and folklore are some of the areas that evoke emotion and bring value to our selves because of the way they make us feel. We feel our way into consciousness. Eisner (2002) argues, “the senses are our first avenues to consciousness. The absence of consciousness would render us incapable of distinguishing friend from foe, of nourishing ourselves, or of communicating with others” (p. 2). According to Greene’s *Releasing the Imagination* (1995), aesthetics allows one to open themselves up to varied perspectives and this makes empathy possible. An engagement with the arts releases imaginative play; imaginative play opens our world to Other perspectives. Greene (1995) affirms, “Aesthetic experiences require conscious participation in a work, a going out of energy, an ability to notice what is there to be noticed in the play; the poem, the quartet” (p. 125). The intention of the arts is to move the cynical into action, relieve the bored from the mundane, and/or help the lost make connections to their soul. The arts wake us up in our quest for meaning and help us feel alive in the world (Greene, 1978). Curriculum studies makes room for this individual quest because it considers the value of self-understanding priceless. No one can teach me the meaning of my life; that is my quest. However, creating a soul-centered curriculum provides me with the forum to achieve my own wide-awakeness. Moore states,

emotions like desire, anxiety, attraction, love, disgust, and longing are the fuel of learning. The content moves or stalls, depending on how you respect these emotions. They are all aspects of eros, of course, and on the principle that psyche follows eros, the only way to a soul-centered education to honor desire and all of its positive and negative offshoots. (2009, p. 11)

The value of aesthetics in education is that it is education with soul in mind, as is autobiographical pedagogy.

Southern Ideologies

Southern ideologies run deep in our individual and collective psychologies. I am referring to ideologies that are predicated on the oppressions of individuals based on class, gender, and race. As you read this work you will see this mentality continues within my family. Even today, as grown men, as grandfathers, as great grandfathers they still believe they are the patriarchs of this family with no accountability for their actions. “The reason parents think that they can abuse their children is because they think children are inferior to adults” (Morris, 2016b, p.219). The psychic wounds of oppression and marginalization are the foundation of my family’s existence. My father’s father taught him how to create, and live, in a climate of fear. He then taught his family to fear him, each other, and authority. My mother’s language is filled by fundamentalist Christian doctrine allowing her to believe in a universal Truth. But these Truths are prevarications.

Having been mis-educated by my family’s doctrine, I had to learn the hard way that fathers do not hit, brothers do not rape, and if that does happen mothers stop it. Mothers also comfort their children with a touch or a look of concern. Morris (2016) states, “ideology plays a role in colonialism whereby the dominating culture’s ideas get embedded in the colonized

country” (p.210). In southern ideologies male dominance is paramount. The south struggles to make peace with its issues of slavery; it stays haunted by its past and lost in its psychological darkness which continues to perpetuate individual ideologies. The south is lovingly committed to its confederate ways by displaying the confederate flag/symbol in whatever capacity deemed fit. The most disturbing image I have seen to date is a confederate flag with President Obama’s profile in a circle in the middle with a line drawn through his profile. The message was clearly racist, but few in the community found anything wrong with such propaganda. This type of education keeps my family ignorant and this fuels my anger; my anger runs deep inside over social injustices such as this and motivates me to speak. In finding my voice, I must speak out about my experiences. My family has tried to hush me most of my life. To take someone’s voice away is the greatest injustice of them all. To speak for oneself is the most powerful tool a person has.

The Value of Studying Others’ Lives

If telling our stories educates others, then studying others’ autobiographies is likewise of great value. Teachers provide powerful experiences; they can instill value and provide confidence, and they can also devastate. My early teachers, my father, my mother, and my brother, all relayed devastating messages which have had a lingering effect on my life, and to some extent, always will. Fortunately, I also had other teachers -- Conroy, Allison, Huxley, and Wright. Fiction educates the imagination, and I have always had a very active imagination. It was my safe place. Anne Sexton was a writer and teacher whose sense of professional boundaries was often blurred by her mental illness. In Salvio’s (2012) book *Anne Sexton Teacher of Weird Abundance* we learn how profound her mental illness was; eventually leading to suicide. Salvio states,

The indirect routes the chapters in this book make into psychoanalysis, feminist pedagogy, and ethics generate a ‘weird abundance’ of rhetorical tactics and stargates for teaching and writing, raising specific questions about the extent to which our histories – both personal and social – exert their influence on our teaching lives in uncanny ways. (p. 11)

Despite her mental challenges, Sexton made significant contributions to her students’ lives. She encouraged them to look at the other madness, and marginalized women (Salvio, 2012). Not all autobiographies need to be about nice people or nice stories. Some curricula can devastate; devastation can paralyze or empower one to action.

My own ‘weird abundance’ of tactics and stargates comes in various ways. One, the topic of childhood abuse (psychical, sexual, and neglect) is rare to the canon. Having these experiences happen to one person by three different family members is another rare aspect. I bring a unique approach to the deconstruction of my experiences by starting with a family statement, an objected point, and then move into subjective observations through the process of *currere*. I make use of poetry to help process the many feelings I have about what I discovered. Fiction fuels my soul and helps me tap into my life source providing me the power to move onward. The Jungian perspective I use as my theoretical framework is also unusual in the field of curriculum studies. Curriculum is an action word and I have made use of a variety of tactics to help me understand the strange darkness I have carried around for decades.

Studying teachers’ lives is of great value to the field of curriculum studies. We learn from others and their stories. Maxine Greene is a teacher from whom I have learned much. She has contributed to the field for several decades and made a significant contribution to the canon. However, in this area, I am mostly focused on the works that were written about her and her

teaching and educational philosophies. In *A Light in Dark Times: Maxine Greene and the Unfinished Conversation* edited by Greene, Ayers, and Miller (1998) we learn the value of “doing philosophy: becoming more intentional and aware; confronting issues as they emerged on our own consciousness and our lives; integrating our situations carefully and responding thoughtfully to what we uncover and discover” (p. 5). Being more of a generalist in educational lore, Greene brought a variety of different genera into the classroom. She “broadens and opens the conversation by engaging works of literature, the arts, and philosoph(y)” (Morris, 2016a, p. 170). In *The Passionate Mind of Maxie Greene: ‘I am ...Not Yet,’* edited by Pinar and Pinar (1998), we see her continual quest for a generalist education by encouraging one to open themselves up to conversations that help develop varied perspectives. Greene brings a lot of literary work into the conversation and brings more to the canon in this area than any other educator (Morris, 2016a). Doll (2000), in *Like Letters in Running Water: A Mythopoetics of Curriculum*, uses literary references stating, “fiction – more than fact – teaches wisdom about the human condition precisely because fiction connects readers with what courses within them” (p. xi). Greene and Doll make significant contributions to the cannon through their literary connections.

In *Teaching, Learning and Other Miracles*, Feuerverger (2007) discusses her experience of working in the classroom and what it means to be an effective teacher. Her work focuses on teaching in Canada while also remembering her family’s experience with the holocaust. Ming Fang He (2003), in *A River Forever Flowing: Cross-Cultural Lives and Identities in the Multicultural Landscape* discusses her personal experience with the Cultural Revolution in China. This is her practical account of an event, told in narrative form, as she tries to convey the trauma she and her family went through.

How my Work Will Contribute to the Field

First, this work is an autobiographical inquiry into childhood trauma; a pathography – a rarity in the field of curriculum studies. With the method of *currere*, I will analyze my past as I look at alternative perspectives and deconstruct those into something with meaning. I bring one person's experience, with three different types of abuse, from the hands of three different family members, into the conversation. This is not a nice story about family, it is not a nice story about one person's lived experience, but we should not hide from things that are ugly. Contributing to the conversation with my pathography will hopefully open the topic of childhood abuse for further discussion and healing through *currere*. How many others have pathography to tell but do not because of fear? What should a teacher do if they encounter a student with a history of trauma? How can they best help? Should they approach that student differently than others they teach? This is just the start of notable topics that might engender further exploration.

Secondly, I will look at transgenerational trauma as I look at family history and patterns of behavior. I will explore the idea of (post) colonialism and how it has affected my family's narrative -- a family narrative that keeps abuse as part of the conversation. I will also use depth psychology as my theoretical framework making this another rare contribution to the field. It is underrepresented in the cannon and I would like to further the conversation with this work. This area allows me to discuss the topics of dreams, myths, and the power of the imagination.

Third, this will be a work of collaboration as I work to find my voice. It will be a collaboration of experiences, statements, and memories that have helped me find understanding in the broken parts of myself. The works of fiction by various authors also contributed to the development of my narrative. My grandmother's journal helped me understand my father by giving me a glimpse of who she was. I go into more detail about this in chapter three. I make use

of my poetry as a cathartic exercise that helped me heal. In addition, I make use of my work experiences and my community experiences as important contributions to this work.

Finally, I intend to continue the conversation about place. I will discuss southern places and the role they played in helping me find parts of myself. I will also look at psychic places in the aftermath of trauma. What are the physical aspects (anxiety and/or depression) after one experience trauma? What addictions does one walk away with? What is the psychological feeling inside after one has integrated their complexes? And what is it like to return home after embarking on a 20-year journey? All these questions will be explored in chapter four as I discuss the topic of place. Overall, this work will be valuable to the field for all these reasons, but the most valuable aspect will be the self-understanding that I will gain through the process.

CHAPTER TWO: TRAUMA AND DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

Depth psychology's purpose is to help individuals bring contents of the unconscious into consciousness. It also provides a better understanding of trauma and its impact on the individual's psyche and body. Trauma is "any experience that causes the child unbearable psychic pain or anxiety" (Kalsched, 1996, p. 1). Integrating parts of the self that have been shattered due to trauma is referred to as individuation. Stein argued that,

individuation is an imperative that drives us forward and, if successful, releases us from the trap of endlessly repeating the patterns that have conditioned us. The fundamental conviction is that human beings are evolving in consciousness, individually and collectively, and that we can participate in this process and give it energy in quite specific ways if only we know how to do so. (2006, p. xvii)

As it is my theoretical framework, in this chapter I examine various aspects of depth psychology that aided me in my individuation process. The individuation process is a,

circumambulation of the self as the center of the personality which thereby becomes unified. In other words, the person becomes conscious in what respects he or she is both a unique human being, and at the same time, no more than a common man or woman.

(Samuels et al., 1996, p. 76)

Some of the basic concepts used and/or defined by this process are psychic energy, complexes, the collective unconscious, archetypes, dreams, synchronicity, and active imagination. All of these helped me decipher the fragmented parts of myself and integrate them into a more complete personality. But first, I provide an overview of depth psychology and discuss how it is similar to curriculum studies.

Depth Psychology

There are many forms of psychoanalytic theory, but the one I am most drawn to is depth psychology. It opens the door to psychic phenomena and the value they can bring to one's life. According to Kirsch, Jung believed the libido referred to "psychic energy in general, inclusive of sex and aggression and considering of other primary drives as well, such as the nutritive and the spiritual" (2000, p. 60). Within depth psychology, it is Jung's theories of psychic energy and spirituality that I am most drawn to. Jung's rationale is not exclusively academic, but "from experiences which have forced themselves on me during ten years of serious work in this field" (CW 4, p. 86). Is this not a form of autobiographical work? Jung did not only theorize based on his academic knowledge, but also from his experiences. In curriculum studies, lived experiences are a powerful data source one can use to help make meaning of one's life. In *The SAGE Guide to Curriculum in Education* (2015), we learn that curriculum can come in the form of subject matter as curriculum, teachers as curriculum, students as curriculum, and milieu as curriculum. "The experience-based curriculum invites direct engagement in the process of active problem solving through shared deliberation and empowers participants to be agents of progress, creating solutions for practical dilemmas" (Thomas & Hilton, 2015, p. 11). Learning to use one's lived experiences to problem solve is an educational lesson that can last a lifetime. Having the individual as subject matter opens the door for imaginative work by providing various perspectives on personal experiences. Greene states, "the act of critiquing requires an authentic self-reflectiveness, a thoughtfulness that informs knowing in the many contexts of everyday life" (1995, p. 6). Having three strikes against me at birth, I only had the psychic world to rely on for comfort and guidance. With the creation of an imaginary friend I called Amy, I learned to tap the current within (Doll, 2000) long before I formally studied its value. It would take several decades

of living in this unconscious realm before I obtained enough information to deconstruct my own story and reconstruct it into something that makes sense.

Psychic Energy

Psychic energy is the term Jung gave to the libido. Jung stated, “libido for me means psychic energy, which is the equivalent to the intensity with which psychic contents are charged” (CW 7, par 201). Psychic energy is charged when we make an emotional connection to something or someone. That energy gains strength by our emotional connection to things. This was one of the biggest areas of disagreement between Freud and Jung. Jung’s definition was broader than Freud’s which remained focused on sexual desire. This broader definition opened the door for psychic exploration that continues to grow. The psyche gets its energy from desire and emotion, which is why a broader definition is needed. It is also a very personal aspect to the individual because what motivates my psychic energy will be very different from what motivates others’.

Complexes

Complexes are the foundation of Jung’s theory, and Jungian theory is sometimes still referred to as complex psychology; however, it is more commonly known as analytical psychology. Complexes are usually formed after experiencing trauma and are personal to the individual. In fact, Jung considered the complexes, not dreams, to be the ‘via regia’ to the unconscious (CW v 8, par 210). Complexes are replete with feelings; these are what gives them energy and life. In addition, each complex has an ego, with emotional pulls and ties, that can further complicate the psychology of the individual. Every complex has an archetypal component to it, hence its own ego. Once a complex has been triggered, individuals often feel that they are in the “grips of a demon, a force stronger than one’s will creating a feeling of

helplessness” (Stein, 2010, p. 43). A complex controlled by its ego leaves the individual operating through their shadow or unconscious.

Collective Unconscious and Archetypes

The archetypes are the language of the collective unconscious, so it is difficult to address them independently because they inhabit the same realm. The archetypes and the collective unconscious share universal aspects known to every human. For instance, the archetype of the mother has varied aspects and possibilities such as nurturer, destroyer, and/or creator. It is our experiences that connect us to the archetypes, and the images of the archetype are brought into conscious awareness as complexes. This is how one might develop a mother complex or a father complex. Hopcke (1998) explains Jung’s view of the collective unconscious to be the ultimate psychic source of power and transformation. The archetypes are filled with meaning, emotion, and are pure essence.

The personal unconscious is one aspect of the collective unconscious and is unique to each individual because it is based on personal experience. It is the repository of “memories of everything the individual has experienced, thought, felt, or known, but is no longer held in active awareness through defensive repression or because of simple forgetting” (Hopcke, 1998, p. 14). These things lay dormant until something comes along and triggers them. Not all triggers lead to complexes, but things lying dormant in the personal unconscious have the potential to develop into a complex. With layers of personal complexes and generational complexes passed from both sides of my family, I have had several complexes to work through. The most difficult is my inferiority complex. Jung states, “complexes are the lens through which we see the world” (CW 8, par 198). The heartbeat of complexes is the feelings we have about them. For me, I have been carrying around guilt and shame for most of my life. These feelings manifest themselves in

anxiety and depression which came to a head during the writing of this dissertation. I discuss this in more detail in chapter three. My complexes have been constellated throughout this process forcing me to find new ways to cope.

Dreams

If complexes are the road to the psyche, then dreams can be the exit ramps, tunnels, and overpasses that help us get to the desired meanings. Dreams emerge from something, often things going on in our waking life. The purpose of dreamwork is to “arrive at an interpretation or a set of interpretations that united conscious understanding and conscious process in a way that was intellectually, emotionally, and intuitively satisfying” (Hopcke, 1998, p. 26). Dreams help one bring an inner situation into conscious awareness for the purpose of individuation. Learning to make associations to your dreams and dream content, bringing these to consciousness, takes practice and can serve as a valuable tool for those who make use of it.

Dreams can also act as muses. I have used my dreams as guidance for my personal development since I was a child. I relied on what I could not see because what I did see, and experience, was so terrifying. For example, I had many dreams about college campuses and being a college professor, and now find myself here, working on a doctoral degree. I listened to my psychic world because it was safe, and I was the only one in my family who seemed to be aware of its existence. Prospective dreams show us what is possible. These are the dreams that can propel one forward because they provide hope and possibility. Many artists have ‘dreamed an idea’ into existence. Dreams can be powerful muses for the creative personality, and they can provide useful guidelines for those who desire to make meaning of their life.

Synchronicity

Synchronicity can be defined as a meaningful coincidence that alters one's reality. It is one of Jung's more controversial concepts because it requires a "way of thinking that is almost entirely foreign to Western culture, a way of thinking that does not separate the physical world from inner psychic events" (Hopcke, 1998, p. 72). These meaningful coincidences are not always equal. For instance, I might accidentally meet someone whom I have a strong reaction to (positive or negative), but it may not mean anything to the other person. The meaning is mine, and one I must make sense of. These events can be helpful in the individuation process if one can open one's mind to the power of coincidence.

Active Imagination

Active imagination helps us dream our dreams forward. Jung's intention was to use active imagination to "straddle the border between passive, receptive awareness of inner unconscious material and active, elective responding to this material in whatever form" (Hopcke, 1998, p. 34). The imagination is the image-producing part of us, and it can be very valuable in helping us make meaning of our lives. There are powerful healing qualities in fantasies that allow them to serve a transcendent function. The power of the transcendent function is that it connects the unconscious with the conscious. It brings the two bipolar opposites into one cohesive, manageable thought. Active imagination serves as a stimulant to help cure neuroses and is seen as successful if integration occurs (Samuels et al., 1996, p. 9).

Physical Effects of Trauma

Complexes are formed through trauma. Neuroscience teaches us the physical effects complexes can have on individuals. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study in 1995. Van Der Kolk states it is "one of the largest investigations ever conducted to assess associations between childhood maltreatment and

later-life health and well-being” (2015, p. 1). The results were astonishing. They revealed an epidemic ranging from long-term medical problems to a lifetime of mental health problems. Each of these areas affects the other, creating a complicated prevalent problem that education and healthcare have barely cracked open. Analyzing the results of the ACE Study, the CDC realized they had stumbled upon the gravest and most costly public health

issues in the United States: Child abuse. He had calculated that its overall cost exceeded those of cancer or heart disease and that eradicating child abuse in America would reduce the overall rate of depression by more than half, alcoholism by two-thirds, and suicide, IV drug use, and domestic violence by three – quarters. (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 150)

These facts are overwhelming. One of the ways the study was able to measure traumatic experiences is through the development of the ACE questionnaire (Appendix A). The questionnaire is comprised of 10 questions to assess the level of trauma one experiences before the age of 18. A strength of this questionnaire is that the questions are simple, factual, and do not probe about feelings. They are simple yes/or no questions, with each ‘yes’ response earning a point for a total of 10 possible points. The questionnaire takes about five minutes to administer, and the results can be powerful. At the very least, it gives individuals a ‘snapshot’ view of the amount of trauma they have experienced. This simple overview can get one’s attention -- it did mine. I scored nine on the ACE questionnaire and was shocked. Trauma affects the body physically. Brain scans of individuals recalling a traumatic event show the amygdala responding as if the trauma were happening in the present (Van der Kolk, 2015). The flashback releases stress hormones, triggering the nervous system to respond. This process, in turn, triggers faster heart rates and blood pressure. Trauma in childhood affects the way our brains grow, and the area of the brain which helps regulate our biological system. A child’s brain is not fully developed at

birth. In fact, it continues to develop into the late teens. Along with the biological imperative, development is shaped by our socialization, family experiences, and culture. Something as serious as trauma can affect how the brain grows and develops.

To illustrate this point, the reptilian brain, or the brain stem, is responsible for our basic 'life-sustaining functions' including instincts, crying, sleeping, and eating. Van der Kolk states, "the reptilian brain is responsible for all the things newborn babies can do" (2015, p. 56). The regulating cycle of eating, sleeping, urinating, and defecating keep the body free of toxins which helps create homeostasis. The brain stem and the hypothalamus control the energy levels in the body. They work together to coordinate the function of the lungs and the heart. As a result, any disruption in eating habits, sleeping patterns, or relationships can affect one's chemical balance. "It is amazing how many psychological problems involve difficulties with sleep, appetite, touch, digestion, and arousal" (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 56).

The limbic part of the brain is above the reptilian part of the brain. All mammalian animals that live in groups and nurture each other have a limbic brain. This part of the brain does not start growing until after birth because it is shaped, in part, by our socialization. The other contributing factor to the development of the limbic part of the brain is one's genetic makeup. Van der Kolk explains, "it is the seat of the emotions, the monitor of danger, the judge of what is pleasurable or scary, the arbiter of what is or is not important for survival purposes" (2015, p. 56). Experiences shape who we are, including how our brains grow and develop.

Finally, the topmost area of the brain is called the neocortex. This part of the brain, the frontal lobe, is responsible for learning how to socialize with others. It begins to grow at a rapid rate around age two and continues for several years. One's experiences with socialization affect the growth and learning that takes place during this time. Experiencing trauma during this time

can make it difficult for one to connect to others, learn appropriate social skills, or reason capably. Van der Kolk elucidates, “the frontal lobes allow us to plan and reflect, to imagine and play out future scenarios. They help us predict what will happen if we take action or neglect another” (2015, p. 56). Trauma can interfere with imaginative play and reflection.

Trauma then has the power to change the way we think and feel because the traumatic experience changes the “fundamental reorganization of the way mind and body manage perceptions” (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 21). Trauma often leaves individuals so scared they are unable to talk about their experiences. When they do find the courage to give words to their experiences, they have great difficulty expressing themselves. Physical responses to trauma include shaking, rocking, and/or elevated heart rates. In retelling a traumatic event, a person can reexperience terror, rage, and helplessness, as well as the impulse to fight or flee, but these feelings are almost impossible to articulate. Trauma by nature drives us to the edge of comprehension, cutting us off from language based on common experience or an imaginable past. (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 43)

I had such an experience while writing this dissertation, and it scared me.

In keeping with the idea that trauma affects how one reasons, I turn my own thinking to the work of Kalsched (1996, 2013). This Jungian analyst writes specifically about trauma and provides unique perspectives. Kalsched defined trauma as “any experience that causes the child unbearable psychic pain or anxiety” (1996, p. 1). When trauma occurs in childhood before the development of the ego, anxiety of this magnitude threatens to annihilate the individual personality. In order to prevent this from happening, a different line of defense comes into play called the “archetypal health care system” (Kalsched, 1996, p. 4). By giving credit to our dissociations, for example splitting, projection, and/or identification, we provide a positive

perspective on life-saving defenses. Kalsched argues, “few writers have acknowledged the miraculous nature of these defenses – the life-saving sophistication of their archetypal nature and meaning” (1996, p. 2). The archaic nature of archetypes would easily take over the psyche of a traumatized child with an underdeveloped ego. These defenses provide survival techniques for that child and work hard to keep the child safe from additional trauma. The child can become safe in their own inner world. Trauma stories often start out mythologically before becoming something of their own (Kalsched, 2013). Working through one’s archetypal health care system opens the door for integration and wholeness.

Another interesting fact that Kalsched (2013) noted while working with trauma survivors is their ability to navigate through a mythopoetic world. This is a language many understand at an early age because it is mythological. Myths leave room for varied perspectives. “Survivors of early trauma often report that an essential part of themselves has retreated into a spiritual world and found refuge and support there in the absence of such support by any human person” (Kalsched, 2013, p. 9). Trauma survivors can have access to spiritual worlds that others do not because trauma shatters the psyche, opening it up to Other. These individuals are sensitive and often report having mystical experiences or synchronistic experiences that defy rational understanding. They view the world differently from those who have not experienced trauma, and the spiritual aspect of this mythopoetic world often helps them survive. As an example, I went to church frequently as a child, and, as mentioned earlier, the one story that always resonated with me was the story of Joseph. In the Bible, we learn that Joseph was his father’s favorite and that his siblings were jealous. His brothers faked his death, deceived their father by telling him Joseph was dead, and sold their brother into slavery. Joseph spent time locked in a foreign prison but had a gift of interpreting dreams. When the Pharaoh heard about Joseph’s gift,

he made him part of his inner council. Joseph's ability to understand dreams provided a way to not only save Egypt from future famine but also his starving brothers and extended family who traveled to Egypt to find relief. Myths provide powerful lessons that can be life-changing. Myths belong to the archetypal world and as such they are experienced, not invented. "Mythic tales illustrate what happens when an archetype has free rein and there is no conscious intervention of the part of man" (Samuels et al., 1996, p. 95). Myths belong to the spiritual world and can lose their affect if they are taken too seriously.

Depth Psychology and Curriculum Studies

Depth psychology and curriculum studies share many motifs. I turn now to these themes of collaboration, imagination, reflection, spiritual life, and social reform. First, both disciplines see the value of collaboration. Because depth psychology's goal is individuation, it sees the worth of educational practices that go beyond intellectualism. Any educational practice "that satisfies the intellect alone can never be practical, for the totality of the psyche can never be grasped by the intellect alone" (CW 7, par 201). Education should teach to the whole complex of the individual, from the political to emotional aspects and all complexes falling in between. Teaching to the psyche takes a collaboration of topics and ideas because of the complex nature of humans. Education is a sacred act and should be approached as such.

An educational system that exists simply to serve the needs of a consumer society and its military-industrial machinery is not only inimical to the delicate archetypal dynamics of the student-teacher relationship but, in the final analysis, is also socially destabilizing despite its grand social-efficiency claims. (Myers, 2005, p. 97)

We see an example of this kind of collaboration in *Promoting Social Justice through the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (Liston & Rahimi, 2017). Here educators are engaged in

“an international movement addressing the integration of scholarship, teaching, and learning across a wide range of disciplines, ranging from the hard sciences to the humanities to education and to health-related disciplines” (Liston & Rahimi, 2017, p. xxi). There is nothing standard about collaborative education, which is what makes it so powerful. Educating the individual and considering the plethora of psychological components involved can be complicated; the more tools one has to address this complexity, the greater the chance one has to find a sense of Self.

Depth psychology values imaginative work as does curriculum studies. Imaginative work is evidenced in literature, philosophy, art, mythology, and cultural studies. This variety of disciplines allows an individual to use their imagination to connect to things that move them. I have already discussed the transcendent function that comes with Jung’s concept of active imagination, and I also provide an example of this in chapter three through the writing of poetry. Robert Lake states, “conversely, it is through imaginative engagement of personal sensibilities, where the divide between the objective and the subjective aspects is transcended, that learning is most likely to occur” (2008, p. 112). Imaginative work can be transformative as one works to bring the unconscious into consciousness. The process of *currere* helps one discover what they are passionate about. In *Daredevil Research* we learn that research is “pushed beyond conventional formulations” and opening up these “zones of possibility for intellect and imagination” (Jipson & Paley, 2006, pp. 3 - 5) allowing researchers to explore new possibilities. For instance, in *Teenage Motherhood Public Posing and Private Thoughts*, we learn about teenage mothers through photos and “through excerpts of poems and autobiographies written by the girls” (Holm, 1997, p. 61). Imaginative work also makes room for the symbolic; the symbol points to something else. Imaginative play is the highest form of research because it allows one to create. “A Jungian curriculum would encourage the student to explore and experience the

primary, archetypal symbols embedded deep in any discipline, topic, or activity, thereby allowing him to use those symbols for personal and social transformation” (Mayes, 2005, p. 107). The teacher and student relationship is archetypal, thus allowing them to explore many subjects as they engage in imaginative play of the creative process.

Both depth psychology and curriculum studies make room for reflection. The value they bring to individual understanding is priceless. Of course, reflective work is done through autobiographical pedagogy. However, because both disciplines value collaborative work, one can reflect in that sense as well. *The SAGE Guide to Curriculum in Education* (2015) reflects on four commonplaces in the area of curriculum. They are “subject matter as curriculum, teachers as curriculum, students as curriculum, and milieu as curriculum” (p. xxvii). In essence, it looks at what is “worth knowing, needing, experiencing, doing, being, becoming, overcoming, sharing, contributing, wondering, and imagining” (p. xxvii). This is reflective work in education as scholars work together to advance the field of curriculum studies. Figuring out who we are takes reflection, multiple subject matters, and time. Wade Tillett states, “a central feature of integrated, holistic, and core curricula is that they evolve as students work with their teachers to continuously reconstruct their understanding of and relationship with the world” (2015, p.101). The more complicated our world becomes, the more complicated self-discovery can be. We need each other to help us through this difficult and often painful process. Mayes states that, “Jung saw education as one of humanity’s best hopes to control our animal nature and promote social and spiritual evolution” (2005, p. 116). Educators cannot accomplish this if standards remain a large part of our educational narrative. Reflection is vital for self-understanding.

Curriculum studies and depth psychology see value in spiritual pedagogy. Depth psychology is a study of the spirit that allows for the exploration of God, a study almost

nonexistent in other forms of psychology. For example, cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on positive and negative reinforcers to help shape behavior. Play therapy's demographic is children with a focus on themes that emerge as one plays with the intention of awareness and cognitive understanding. The idea of soul and soul-making can be found in both depth psychology and curriculum theory. Depth psychology focuses on integrating complexes so that a stronger sense of Self can emerge. It tackles the unconscious impulses we have and has numinous aspects to it. In a similar vein, curriculum studies provide opportunities for self-discovery through the process of *currere*. This 'intellectual soul travel' (Morris, 2016a) also makes room for self-discovery, and anytime we discover new things about our self our sense of Self grows. Both disciplines have a moral motif as a guiding undertone. Social justice starts with the betterment of the individual. This makes both disciplines forerunners for the discovery of Other. Other is the place without standards; it has a numinous quality to it. The depth psychologist Lionel Corbett observes, "we are fascinated by our contact with the numinosum because it stimulates a kind of spiritual desire within us, a longing for the holy and a promise of love and peace that it holds out" (2007, p. 13).

Other is of great value to me because I long for love and peace, something I missed out on as a child. Perhaps this is one reason educators are not typically consulted on issues of educational reform and Jungian centers are not typically found on college campuses. Educational standards set by politicians help maintain cultural standards that lead to a docile existence for the populace thus maintaining social stability and the status quo. Curriculum studies affords me the opportunity to explore the Other as there are spiritual aspects to the canon. I maintain that both disciplines have great value because their boundaries for learning are not standard. John Miller states, "we can see our souls as not localized within ourselves but as an energy field that extends

beyond our physical Being” (2000, p. 37). Our souls provide our lives with the energy to move and connect to things, and it is through our connections that we experience and discover Other ways of being in the world.

Finally, they both are positive agents of change for the individual and for society as a whole as social reform is the desired outcome. *In Personal, Passionate, Participatory Inquiry into Social Justice in Education* (2008) we learn that social justice has its roots in education, communities, and societies. “Researchers engaged in this form of inquiry use stories to tell hidden and silenced narratives of suppressed and underrepresented groups to counter narratives that portray these groups as deficient and inferior” (He & Phillion, 2008, p. 268). Through the process of *currere*, I have complicated conversations with myself as I work at deconstructing my story and reframing it into something else. This is a form of social justice that starts with self-improvement. Similarly, depth psychology’s purpose is individuation, “a person’s becoming himself, whole, indivisible, and distinct from other people or collective psychology” (Samuels et al., 1996, p. 76). This is a complicated process because “individuation is not the outcome of a correct technique” (p. 78). There is no standard way to become your Self just as curriculum theory has so standard way of educating. Both disciplines believe standards can stifle. Education that serves to maintain a consumer society is destructive to the student. “It is because such forms of education do not address the whole child in all of his physical, emotional, political, cultural, and ethical complexity. The result is psychic ‘disorientation and fragmentation’ in children” (Mayes, 2005, p. 87). Our current educational practices promote groupthink and standards of practice that stifle students’ ability to exercise critical thinking skills.

This chapter summarized some of the basic concepts of depth psychology as well as explored common themes of both depth psychology and curriculum studies. The process of

individuation is lifelong; in it, individuals work at integrating complexes for a healthier and more meaningful life. Concepts such as psyche, complexes, the collective unconscious, archetypes, dreams, synchronicity, and active imagination are all tools one can use to help in the individuation process. They act as guides to aid in a process that can be very challenging. The collective unconscious helps us connect to our psyche by providing it with energy that moves us. This is very similar to the concept of *currere*. Doll states, “the work of the curriculum theorist should tap this intense current within, that which courses through the inner person, that which electrifies or gives life to a person’s energy source” (2000, p. xii). Our curriculum *vitae* should reflect our passions, our soul work. Collaboration is vital to curriculum studies, just as it is to the individuation process. Our educational work needs to be accomplished without standards because the psyche does not understand them. Education should feed our souls just as depth psychology helps us understand our souls with better clarity. This process can be the bridge to Other ways of knowing a concept important to both fields. These mystical ideologies have powerful lessons to teach us. “Archetypal patterns are also represented in mythological stories in the form of recurring motifs such as death-rebirth, the descent into the underworld, the heroic quest, or the confrontation between good and evil” (Corbett, 2007, p. 47). There is a deep power and strength that comes from individual quests for understanding. These lessons run deep in the psyche making changes that can transform. Transformation leads to a better, more meaningful life.

CHAPTER THREE: WRESTLING WITH THE DEVIL

I have had bouts of depression with suicidal ideations throughout my life. The burden of abuse weighs heavily on one's psyche and making sense of an abusive family is not an easy task. Finding supportive and uplifting social connections is another challenge for me because I can be socially awkward at times. Abusive families struggle with appropriate social skills; a room with books proved my most consistent companion. As previously mentioned, the significance of authors such as Conroy and Sexton, who likewise had nervous breakdowns while writing about their traumatic experiences, mirror my breakdown during the process of writing this dissertation. This particular forum provided me with the opportunity to see abuse through an academic lens, something new to my world. Now, I see the generational aspects of my family's abuse, the disorders my parents suffer from due to the experiences of their childhood. I was shocked to discover they both fit the criteria for a personality disorder. As a child I would have said they could be difficult at times, but as an adult, I realize there was nosology to describe their behavior. This was difficult to digest. I left Texas in 1995 for graduate school and eventually made it to Georgia in 2000 where I would live for thirteen years. This period is when my education became more of a focal point, and I started to notice my depression becoming more manageable for the first time. I also found the help of a therapist, and with medication, was happy for the first time in my life. I started the Doctoral program at Georgia Southern University and began to learn even more about myself. What I found along the way scared me into Being.

My time in Georgia came to an end in 2013 when I moved home to Texas and back in with my mother and stepfather. Mentally, I was struggling because I was mourning the loss of Georgia. I had built a life there with friends; I had community connections, and it was there I bought my first home. It saddened me to leave, but it is life rather than ourselves that often

dictates our next steps. Moving back home was challenging because my family was different; we had all changed. I had lived independently for so long that I struggled to conform to house rules. Also, my educational experiences created a large gap between me and my family. As a first-generation college student, I was now face to face with ignorance. My father earned his GED before enlisting in the Air Force. My mother graduated from high school and worked as an office manager for the same company for over 40 years. And, my brother graduated from high school eventually becoming a paramedic. He also had two children, a boy and a girl, who also only have high school diplomas. Connecting with them on an intellectual level was very challenging, leaving me feeling isolated and alone.

Texas had changed too. The town I grew up in was quite different. I was now in a lower economic part of the town which had increased crime rates and abandoned homes. My stepfather died after a long illness; his loss was hard. My mother then decided to move into a retirement village and seems to now be getting along and enjoying this chapter of her life. I moved to Pearland, Texas to open my private practice and begin anew. Pearland did not exist when I left for graduate school; it was nothing but land. Now it is populated with thousands of families and with many residents working at the Medical Center. Once my name started circulating in the community, I had more business than I could handle. I was overwhelmed by all the work that went into owning my own business.

When I first returned home and was getting reacquainted with my family (mom, dad, brother, and stepfather) they seemed surprised by my reserve towards them. I found this strange because I had been away from home for close to 20 years, and our interactions during this time were rare. This was very difficult for me to understand. I seldom went home, but they did visit me a few times in Georgia. Phone calls were rare. These as well as their past actions

demonstrated they did not take my abuse seriously. I remember telling my parents that my brother was sexually abusing me, and being told I should have just said 'no.' Subsequently, I asked for counseling on several occasions because my depression was worsening and was told we did not have money for it. I struggle to believe this is true because I was taken to several doctors to help fix my ongoing weight problem. I was fifteen and very confused as to why my parents would not get me help. I increasingly isolated myself. I had very few friends, and my escalating weight problems made it that much more difficult to connect with people. Loneliness was becoming my consistent companion, so I focused on education -- the one thing that was all mine. I started to dream about living in Georgia and could not wait for the day I would move. When that day finally came, my mother and I were packing the U-Haul and she asked me, 'You will never be back home will you?' To which I simply replied, 'no.'

My mother's and stepfather's apparent shock over my coldness attracted their attention and strange things started to happen. My stepfather asked about the sexual abuse for the first time and wanted to know what happened. I did not want to talk about it; I had dealt with it in counseling. I had moved on. So, I told him that I was better and that I thought we should stay focused on getting him better. He was chronically ill at the time and would die several months later. I wanted to spare him the details of that ugly reality. After his death, and perhaps due to her grief, my mother forced me and my brother to sit down and work things out. This was another strange event because neither of us wanted to. We had not really spoken in over 25 years. Further, my mother did not know that I had already confronted him a few times in my early twenties as I was trying to process this trauma myself. She made it clear she could not help me with this. The first time he told me 'you need to forget about the past and move on.' A little shocked by this response I decided to try again several years later. The second time was worse

because he said, “it wasn’t so bad that I made you lay there, but that I held it over your head all those years and made you my slave.” Clearly, this response speaks to his ignorance concerning his own actions. All I could do was move on, and we have not spoken much since then. I had a strong feeling that forcing us to communicate was not going to have a positive outcome.

Unfortunately, I was right. This time my brother responded with “I don’t remember anything that happened, but I am sorry for whatever I did.” All I could say, through my anger and disgust, was that there is no reason to apologize for something you do not remember doing. On the drive home from that meeting, I started to weep, and I promised myself I was not going to talk with my family about the past anymore because whenever I do, I walk away feeling bad about myself. I am reminded that I am still all alone in a family of three.

My niece, the daughter of my brother, was only eight years older than me so we were more like sisters. She even lived with me for a short time while I was in Georgia. I tried to get her to focus on her education, but she was more interested in finding love. She struggled all her life because she only had a high school diploma and had three children to feed. Her husband was an alcoholic who drank his paycheck and had several DUI’s to prove it. They separated in 2017. She also struggled with alcohol and got her first DUI that same year. It was also during this time that she learned that her oldest child was sexually abusing his younger sibling. She now had an open CPS case, her children were living in separate households, and she was filing for a divorce. It was during this time she went to counseling for the first time and was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder and PTSD. Her behaviors were becoming more toxic, and she was very difficult to communicate with. The final blow was when a mutual friend (Julie – a pseudonym) told her about her father, my brother, sexually abusing me. I had shared this with Julie in hopes that she would keep my confidence; sadly she did not. My niece was devastated

and together we cried over the truth. We also cried over her children, my nephews, who were going through something similar. Several months later she was on her way to court for her DUI charge when she ran off the road, into a tree, and died instantly. I was devastated. And somehow, I had to pick myself up again and finish this work. I know she would want that because she was proud of my success. She bragged on me more than my own mother.

Depth psychology would assert that many of my complexes were constellated. The emotional intensity I was feeling is very difficult to describe. Complexes have egos of their own, with separate feelings flooding the ego and saturating them they can manifest in physical form. Sometimes, I would physically shake when recalling the past. I was processing my new interactions with my family, writing about my trauma, trying to keep up with my private practice, and mourning the loss of my niece. I turned to writing poetry as a coping skill. The poem *Georgia* was the most difficult and intense poem that is included here. It is significant because it came from a memory I recovered during the writing of this dissertation. That is the value of autobiographical work, learning new things about oneself. I remembered that a Hispanic woman who lived next door caught my brother and his friend assaulting me. She had such a kind response. She was not shocked or angry. She helped me get dressed, took me to her house, fed me, and kept me safe until my mom got home. All the while she would affectionately call me 'Mija.' I felt so safe and cared for; this was new to my world. She was only in my life for a short period of time and I do not know what happened to her. I can only speculate as to what might have happened because I cannot recall how she exited from my life. It seems likely that she told my mom what happened, and it is even more likely that my mom did not take it seriously. My mom has consistently denied the sexual abuse and/or pretended it was not a big deal. I doubt she

believed the Hispanic woman. I will never know how she exited from my life, but I know she was there.

Writing a dissertation is the scholastic ‘center stage’ of academia. Sharing trauma with one person is difficult, but sharing it with the public is terrifying. It feels like the world is watching and judging. My fear of not being believed raises its ugly head at times. I must fight these thoughts. Yet, my trauma also has a voyeuristic component to it, making this process more complicated. My brother watched Sam (not his real name) sexually assault me, and my cries for help were not enough for him to step in and make it stop. Being watched as I was sexually assaulted was physically and psychically traumatic, creating a complex that was constellated during the writing of this pathography. It has taken me a long time to tell this story because it has so many horrific layers.

This work has triggered my post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Stein (2006) stated, “Catastrophes seem to be a necessary trigger for individuation” (p. 72). Parts of myself were shattered into so many pieces that I feared for my survival in a way I never had before. For the first time in my life, I did not recognize who I was. I was scared. I was alone. I was so terrified at times that I physically shook. Who is this person that I see? What am I becoming? How did I survive all this trauma? *This* is my family? These are powerful life-changing questions that can take years to answer and recover from. Breakdowns like this are also referred to as midlife crises, wrestling with the devil, facing our shadow, or the dark night of the soul. These types of experiences are given such titles because they are hard to explain any other way. They also evoke powerful feelings such as anger, shame, desire, and loss that can be difficult to express. From a depth psychology perspective, I was working at integrating my complexes. Jung stated, “Complexes are something so unpleasant that nobody in his right senses can be persuaded that

the motive forces which maintain them could betoken anything good” (C.W. v.8 p. 101).

Complexes have egos of their own; each ego has its own set of emotions so powerful that they control you instead of you controlling them. If you have several complexes, as I do, that adds up to a lot of feelings fueling your psyche and controlling your behavior -- not a healthy place to be.

In the first part of this chapter, I explored four statements that drew my attention and stayed with me. Words can heal and change the world. Words can also harm and devastate a psyche. I include these statements here because they were devastating to me; harmful words can force one to dig deep in the unconscious as we search for meaning. “Memories, thoughts, and images from childhood, and the emotions that belong to them, are grounded together into what Jung called complexes” (Corbett, 2007, p. 77). I brought my objective memories, thoughts, and images from my childhood together as I worked through my complexes. The statements are where I started because they are examples of the (post)colonial thought that is a part of my family’s narrative. I may not remember certain details or remember the abuse with perfect clarity, but these statements are a place to start. Traumatic memories are often engulfed in the emotion they create making details harder to remember, but one can still have moments of clarity. Van der Kolk (2015), stated, “Trauma is not stored as a narrative with an orderly beginning, middle, and end” (p. 137). Basically, “the imprints of traumatic experiences are organized not as coherent logical narratives but in fragmented sensory and emotional traces: images, sounds, and physical sensations” (Van der Kolk, 2015, p. 178). I remember my trauma based on how the experience made me feel. Writing this chapter involved critiquing the trauma based on the facts I know, and these statements are where I began.

Following each statement, I have included a poem I wrote as a way to illustrate how active imagination works. “Active imagination is a way to face more directly the unconscious

directions of our inner life while maintaining as far as possible our conscious sense of self and our capacity for informed, ethical action” (Hopcke, 1998, p. 34). There is a transcendent function in active imagination that “arises from the union of conscious and unconscious contents” (CW. 8, p. 69). The poems helped me make some sense of my feelings as I worked through my complexes and toward becoming more consciously aware of my trauma. Imaginative work is powerful work because it is meant to awaken new life, provide new perspectives, and/or allow one to ponder other possibilities. My poems are about hope; hope that my future will be better than my past.

Finally, I have used the method of *currere* to deconstruct the statements as I worked through my complexes. Pinar’s (1978) method of *currere* is a four-step process described in chapter one of this dissertation; the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical, which allows me to deconstruct these statements into something with meaning. Meaningless suffering is harder to handle than suffering which has meaning; I am attempting to ease my pain as I search for meaning and purpose. The steps of *currere* are not linear but act more as a guideline, which I will demonstrate here.

Statement One: “I’ll Buy the Stamp”

Poem – My Favorite Room

Books line the walls,
 Huxley,
 Conroy,
 Allison,
 Wright,
 Walker,
 Sexton.
 My comforts, my connections, my soulmates.
 They look after me.

From my writing desk, I gaze out the window.
 I see a world I don’t understand

Oppressions,
Ignorance,
Violence.

My journals are on my left.
Huxley's picture is on my right.
Both reminding me of the power of words.

My pink fountain pen rests in front of me.
Do I dare pick it up?
No one listens to me when I speak.
Will I finally be heard when I write?

I hope; my library is where I create.

Deconstruction of Statement One

In deconstructing this statement through the method of currere, I start with the regressive step as I look back and remember why I said this. I was a teenager when I made this statement to a favorite aunt. We corresponded through the mail several times during my teenage years, so I told her about the abuse during one of these exchanges. Months had gone by and she still had not replied to my letter. I was so confused and so desperate that the next time I saw her I handed her a dollar and said, "I'll buy the stamp" in the hope that this would encourage her to write me back. It worked, she wrote back, and the letter meant so much to me that I kept it for years. When I moved back home in 2013, I ran across the letter she had written. She was kind and encouraging in her letter and it comforted me. I had a lot of feelings about this memory and found the experience significant enough to mention here. The progressive step of currere looks at the future and what is possible. What is possible after uttering a statement as desperate as this one? I had no idea at the time, but now this quote shatters my world with its many horrible truths. First, it seems odd to me that I have to offer to buy the stamp before someone would respond to a cry for help. At the same time, I was surprised at her kindness and comfort; that was new to my world. My aunt was also aware of my mother's and father's difficult behaviors. It is

possible she was scared to respond because she did not know what my parents would say if they found out. Also, what do you say to someone who has experienced trauma such as mine? It becomes so complicated.

With the *analytical* step of *currere*, I can explore those truths as I work to find ways of integrating the broken parts of myself into something manageable. Looking back, this statement would become prophetic for some of my future encounters involving my trauma. This was a slow and painful process of awareness. I would come to learn that telling my story and asking for help would be an impossible task. Was my aunt that cold and crass and I just never noticed it before? Is my story so dark and disturbing that others can't look at it? Or, was my teenage boldness in offering to buy the stamp socially inappropriate? The truth is all of these are possible. My traumatic experience was isolating. My family and my extended family would never be able to acknowledge it. My aunt was busy with her own five children, one who was handicapped, and with caring for her husband. She was not cold or crass; she was busy. Finally, I can see how my teenage boldness could have been disrespectful. My social awkwardness would force me to isolate myself more and more over the years. The painful rejections I experienced socially, coupled with the neglect at home, forced me to retreat deeper inside myself. Reading and writing became some of my creative outlets and how I express myself to the world.

Synthetically, what does this experience mean for the shattered self I am trying to put back together? I know that complexes must be felt before they can be understood. Jacobi (1959), stated, "knowledge of its existence seems futile; its harmful action will continue until we succeed in discharging it, or until the excess of psychic energy stored up in it is transferred to another gradient, i.e., until we succeed in assimilating it emotionally" (p. 10). I have remembered this experience and the emotion it evoked. I expressed my emotions with a poem as a cathartic

release with the intention of integrating those emotions instead of being controlled by them. By analyzing my way through this experience, I was able to deconstruct it into something of meaning as I no longer feel emotionally bound here.

Statement Two: "I have Never Been Nice, and I'm not Going to Start Now"

I have no words for this statement, so I turn to J.D. Vance who wrote about his family in *Hillbilly Elegy*. He claims,

people like Brian and me don't lose contact with our parents because we don't care; we lose contact with them to survive. We never stop loving, and we never lose hope that our loved ones will change. Rather, we are forced, either by wisdom or by the law, to take the path of self-preservation. (2016, p. 254)

Deconstruction of Statement Two

With the statement, "I have never been nice, and I am not going to start now," I am going to start with the *analytical* step of *currere*. I needed to analyze how my father's abusive behavior makes me feel and decide what value, if any, he brings to my life. These were the words my father said to me several years ago. It came after many discussions about his verbal abuse, and my insistence that he find kinder ways of communicating with me. I had grown tired of his rude and condescending remarks about my body and my lifestyle. He had not hit me since I was a child, but his verbal abuse never stopped. He ridiculed my heavy body, my spiritual beliefs, and my job for years. I had hoped that moving home might change that. We had not lived in the same city since I was a child; maybe interacting as adults would improve our relationship. I spent time with him once a week and I would cook for him. He seemed to like it, so I started to bake him pies and cookies that were sugar-free (he is diabetic). I would take him to new restaurants and encourage him to order whatever he wanted because I was paying. For his birthday I bought him

whatever he wanted, but all he ever wanted was alcohol. I tried hard to make things work with him, but he could not stop his verbal abuse. I have accomplished so much, and all he can focus on are my flaws. I have exercised kindness towards him, but it went unnoticed. It was becoming clear to me that this relationship was still toxic no matter how hard I tried to change it. We had several conversations about his verbal abuse. I made it clear, on several occasions, that if he did not change I was going to have to exit from his life. Clearly, he got tired of my complaints and had no desire to change. The last thing he said to me was, "I have never been nice, and I am not going to start now." We have not spoken in over three years.

With the *progressive* statement of *currere*, I know that a statement like this is the death of our relationship as we have not spoken since he uttered those words. My father's words are the core of his truth; he does not know how to be nice, but he is, at least, honest about it. There is something refreshing about his honesty. Maybe it is because my mom and my brother struggle with honesty that I can offer this perspective. My life would be much worse if my father refused to leave me alone and continued to verbally abuse me. Instead, he has honored my request and left me alone; I am better off because of it. Mourning the loss of him was, and still is at times, hard. I have no words to express how I feel about him which is why I let J.D. Vance speak for me.

With the *regressive* step, I look back on what I know about my father to help me understand what might have made him so abusive. I also look back on a few of the experiences I had with him that helped shape my understanding of who he was. The last time we lived in the same city I was seven years old. That is the time my parents divorced and he moved away. We did not live in the same city again until I was 45. I foolishly thought my age and maturity would be enough for me to handle my father. I also thought he would want to build a relationship with

me, his only daughter, and that he might genuinely try. We had three years together before his statement forced me to end the relationship. Some of the things I learned about him during that time leave a sick feeling in my stomach. I have a half-sister. My father found out when she tried to reach out to him. He lied and told her he was not her father, and that she should not call him back. Through controlled anger, I asked him why he would turn her away and lie to her. He explained that he did not want her to ask him for money. As politely as I could, containing my rage, I reminded him that he has no money, no assets, and no place to live. If it was not for his girlfriend, he would be homeless. He gave me a look that told me I had gone a little too far. I hushed after that. His reaction to my half-sister and to my comment are examples of how harsh he can be.

As a child, the neighbors knew of my father's abusive ways and kept their children away from our home. I never had friends over because they refused to come when I asked. They explained that their parents would not allow them over because of my father's violence. He was, and still is, physically and verbally abusive. My father was so physically abusive at times that I required medical attention. Earlier in this dissertation, I shared that one of the worst beatings I endured took place when I was seven. I was in first grade and just learning how to read, so I made many mistakes. His temper was hot, and his tolerance was low -- a deadly combination. It led to a beating that busted my lip, bruised my back and legs, and included verbal taunts that felt harsher than his physical blows. He repeatedly told me to stop crying and when I could not, he called my mom at work, put the phone to my ear, and forced my mom to hear me cry. I wanted her to rescue me, but I knew she physically could not.

My father likewise had a harsh childhood. Through reading my grandmother's journals, I learned that he was conceived before marriage. It was scandalous at the time, and my

grandparents were forced to marry. They were married for over 30 years and had three children together. My grandfather fought in World War II and came back a changed man. He was cruel, physically abusive, and an alcoholic. The environment became too much for my father and he left home at 16. He did not have anywhere to stay, so he slept in what he called the 'Dodge house.' There was an old Dodge car in the junkyard in the town of Bellmead, Texas. He would push a button in the glove box, pop the trunk, and that was his new home for several months. He secured a job at a local gas station and dropped out of school. When my grandmother found him, she tried to bring him home, but he refused. So, she did the only thing she could which was to encourage him to enlist in the service. She could not tame my grandfather's rages so the only way to keep her son safe was to send him off to war. She died several years later from breast cancer. My grandfather never quite recovered from her death and remained grief-stricken until the day he died. After my grandmother died, he took all her belongings (clothes, shoes, purses, etc.,) placed them in a pile in the backyard, and burned them. This was a violent expression of his grief and an example of just how brutal his rages could be. It is a small glimpse into the climate of fear my father was living in. My grandfather died at 98, in the old mausoleum, with a half-bottle of whiskey in one arm, and my grandmother's journal in the other. Her journal did not make it to the bonfire, and I was grateful when I found it because it helped me understand a little about my father and his family.

Synthetically what does this mean for me and the complex feelings I have surrounding my father. I know his consistently telling me I am stupid is one of the main reasons I have continuously pursued education. In my way, I was trying to prove him wrong. Clearly, it has not worked as he continues to view me with contempt and disdain. From a broader perspective, I would argue that I responded to this complex in a healthy way channeling it into something

productive such as my education. I can read and write about my feelings now, and this helps, as I seriously doubt if I will ever see my father again. His toxicity is powerful enough to destroy a person emotionally, so I have cut him from my life for my own self-preservation. I lived in a climate of fear as a child, but I no longer must as an adult.

Statement Three: "You are the Most Ungrateful Child and I'm Not Going to Take Care of You"

Georgia

Spanish Moss gazed down over Georgia and whispered, "Mija I see you."
 The shame over Georgia's nakedness shattered her State of Being.
 She shook violently as the tears fell,
 flooding the causeway
 leading onto the island life she once knew.

Georgia's pain soaked deep into the Plantations' soil.
 Her roots soaked red with centuries of inequality.

Georgia shouted, "My Mother is dying and it's her children who are killing her."
 They are bound to a Patriarchal Democracy that allows,

Red,
 Religious,
 Rages, of
 Rape.

White sheets of
 Ignorance,
 Intolerance, and
 Incestuous
 Ideologies.

Blue,
 Decaying
 Bodies of
 Black
 Americans.

But Georgia Ganas runs deeper than her heritage.
 Pain she understands; Peace she does not.
 Peace and Other are Identical Twins.
 Other shatters Bounded systems.
 Peace is found in the bridge to Other.

Georgia's Peace comes from understanding her red roots.
Her solid foundation comes from Others who help her run the course.
Now, the conservation of Georgia's Soul is the Regalia she must share with Others.

Deconstruction of Statement Three

This statement was relayed by my mother when I was 17, so I will start with the *regressive* step of *currere* as I deconstruct it. I have been suicidal for as long as I can remember; my trauma created a death wish. I am searching for another way to live, a better way to live, so I told a teacher about my suicidal thoughts. I hoped she would be able to help me. Instead, she decided to tell my mom about my mental state even though I asked her not to. I had a feeling my mother would not take this news well, and if that happened things at home would get worse for me. Unfortunately, I was right as my mom responded with an anger I had never seen before. When I got home that day, she made me sit in the family room as she lectured me on being ungrateful. She paced back and forth in the family room repeating, "I can't believe you have done this to me." She then hit the arm of the chair I was sitting in, paced around the room, repeated her statement, and hit the arm of the chair again. This went on for what felt like hours as she berated and belittled me for wanting to die. She then cut me off financially and went back on her commitment to help me pay for college. She took my car away and made me pay rent. Her cold and callous response to my desire for death would scare me further into silence and create an even bigger barrier between myself and the rest of the world.

In keeping with the *regressive* step, I remember that my mother bought me a hope chest the very next day. She did not offer any comforting words, no apologies for her angry outburst, and still no plan to get me counseling. We went shopping -- her fix for anything that went wrong. Through hard work, saving, investments, and my stepfather's life insurance, my mom's current estimated net worth is close to a million dollars. Having my physical needs met as a child was

never an issue because my mom was always financially responsible. Money was not a debilitating issue; it was how she fixed her mistakes. I did not come to understand this until I asked for counseling as a teenager.

The messages my mother sent throughout my life were always confusing, harsh, and cold. With the *analytical* step of *currere*, I look back at those messages to illustrate factors contributing to my mother complex. When I was two, my mother tried to kill herself. Years later she told me that as she lay on a gurney in Ben Taub Hospital in Houston, Texas she prayed to God that if he would let her live, she would serve Him all the rest of her days. He did and she kept her promise. It makes me wonder where her Christianity was when I wanted to die? Throughout my teens, on several different occasions, I asked my mother for counseling. She told me ‘no’ every time, claiming we did not have the money. I knew it was a lie. When I moved back home in 2013, I learned that my mother invested in counseling for herself after I left for college. Now I am even angrier, and this helps me move on from my mother’s psychic hold over me. This also helps explain my mother’s narcissism. The main criteria for this disorder is a person’s grandiose idea of their self-worth. I once told her about my brother sexually abusing me, and she told me I should have just said ‘no’ and that we were not going to talk about it anymore. Several years later I came to learn that she had been sexually abused by an uncle and that most of her family knew about it. This was the main reason that this uncle was not allowed to family events and the reason I never met him. These facts make my mom’s response to my own abuse more perplexing. Maybe she could not accept the fact that her son was an abuser. Perhaps dealing with her own children’s abuse was too much for her. I do not know. I chose not to be a mother, so I can only imagine what this must be like for her. Miller believes forgiveness is necessary but only “if the parent realizes what they have done and apologize. This kind of

thing can happen, once parents start daring to feel and can accordingly understand the pain they inflicted on their children. But it is rare” (2005, p.125). As hard as my mother tries, she struggles to understand the seriousness of some of her actions. The pain she has caused me runs deep, and I am sure this must be hard for her at times. Abuse is complicated.

With the *progressive* step of *currere*, I look at what can be possible with my mom. A healthy relationship is not possible with one person having so much pathology. I had to learn to put stricter boundaries around myself and move out of my mom’s house. This was right before Hurricane Harvey hit Houston. She was so angry with me for moving out that she did not talk to me for months. Unfortunately, I am still surprised by my mother’s passive-aggressive behavior that often comes across as cold and crass; it sends chills up my spine. This is what Miller (2005) calls “poisonous pedagogy” or the maltreatment of children. This type of pedagogy “breeds overly well-adjusted individuals who can only trust the mask they have been forced to wear because as children they lived in constant fear of punishment” (Miller, 2005, p. 27). I learned at an early age that wearing a mask around my mother was a necessary safety precaution. She taught me to hide who I was and repress my feelings. These are pathological messages to send to your children, but my mother’s pathology runs deep, so deep that she can still be abusive to her grown child. The difference is that I can now see it for what it is. Her neglect and manipulation were difficult to recognize because there is no behavior to measure it by. I understand I am being physically abused when my father hits me. I also understand I am being sexually abused when my brother assaults me. However, neglect is difficult to understand because nothing is being done *when* it should be. How am I supposed to know that mothers protect their children when mine did not? How am I supposed to know the gentleness of a mother’s touch when I did not experience it? Neglect is difficult to recognize, making it a silent killer.

Synthetically, I know I can approach my mother complex with some understanding. Fighting my way out of the pathological nightmare I call ‘mother’ has been so painful that I have no words to explain it. I think the poem “Georgia” accomplishes this for me. Jacobi (1959), argued, “intellectual understanding is by no means sufficient. Only emotional experience liberates; it alone can bring about the necessary revolution and transformation of energies” (p. 14). The poem helped me express my emotions. The method of *currere* helps me understand intellectually. What I know about her childhood helps. She was abandoned by her mother and raised by her grandmother. They lived in the Texas hill country in a small house my great grandfather built for his family. He had 12 children and my mother lived there for years before her mother came back for her. While under the care of her grandmother, my mom was sexually abused, lived in poverty, and was often left to care for herself. My mom’s self-esteem was so low that she thought my abusive father was the best she could do. This explains why her pathology runs so deep. I know many of the abusive things she has done were committed unconsciously. They still hurt though, and my mom’s neglect has been the most difficult aspect of my trauma for me to accept and integrate.

Statement Four: “It Wasn’t so Bad that I Made You Lay There, but that I Made You my Slave for all those Years”

Poem – Courage

I was fifty years old before I found the courage to leave my mother’s house.

With my father’s violence coursing through my veins,
I found the courage to put my feet on the floor.

With my mother’s neglect piercing needles into my back,
I found the courage to take a small step forward.

With my brother’s perversion placed perfectly in my back pocket,
I found the courage to march on.

Now, I'm off to war, shaking with terror,
As my body haunts me forward.

Peace is now my purpose.
I am terrified that I will not have enough courage to find it.

Deconstruction of Statement Four

My brother reasoned when I was 20 years old and I finally got the courage to confront him about the sexual abuse, "It wasn't so bad that I made you lay there, but that I made you my slave all those years." There is very little hope for a relationship after a statement such as this, and our relationship was no exception. Outside of family events or discussing individual family members, I have not spoken to my brother in approximately 20 years.

With the *regressive* step of *currere*, I look back on my relationship with my brother and how our interactions deepened my complexes. First, my brother is five years older than me making him a parental figure. When my parents were still married, he would often hide me before my father got home from work. He would tell me to stay hidden until he came back for me. Sometimes, he would tell me to go to a friend's house and not come home until their parents came home from work. He was buying me time by allowing my father to start drinking. My father was mean by nature, but when he drank, he was tolerable.

Continuing with the *regressive* step of *currere*, I know my brother was exposed to my father's abuse much longer than I was. He was beaten many times, and several of those times he needed medical attention – which he did not get. I also remember the divorce being very difficult for my brother. He would complain about leaving his friends and not knowing anybody at his new school. He was desperate for new friends and he would go to any lengths to have them. As a result, he allowed a potential new friend (pseudonym: Sam) to sexually abuse me, but only if Sam promised to be his friend. Sam lived in the apartment complex we moved to after my

parents divorced, so just by proximity, he had access to me whenever he wanted. This arrangement continued for about a year until we moved from the apartment to a house. During that time, almost daily, Sam would rape me as my brother watched. I would cry; they pretended not to hear me, and eventually I hushed as I learned to dissociate to other places. I was seven, my brother was 13, and Sam was 14. As time went on, they got bolder in their interactions with me. Sometimes, I was delivered to Sam's apartment and we would go to his room. We spent a lot of time on the playground, me hidden in a sandbox, them hovering over my body and doing as they pleased.

Looking back, we moved to the only home my mom and stepfather would own together. My mom and stepfather would live there for about 45 years, and my stepfather would die there. A lot of abuse took place in that house, but it was also the first time I had a refuge. When we moved there, I was grateful to be leaving Sam and happy for a fresh start. I would also have my own room for the first time in my life. Finally, my first refuge and I was entering third grade. Eventually, my brother started threatening to tell our parents that I slept with Sam if I did not do what he wanted. This is an example of his continual manipulation of me, as I was by this time scared of all family members. With the guilt and shame I was feeling, it was very easy for me to believe things were all my fault. Doing exactly what my brother said seemed to be in my best interest, so I became his slave. It started out as me doing his chores, then I had to cook for him, and eventually it turned sexual. I tried to tell my mom and stepfather what was happening, but they did not believe me and just told me I should have said 'no.' I had no ally or savior coming to rescue me. I would have to wait until my brother turned 17. That is when he moved out of the house; he married at 18 and had his first child at 20. He had his own family to care for now and I was 13 before the abuse by my brother stopped.

With the *analytical* step of *currere*, I look at this and try to find some meaning. My brother's selling me was so painful that I moved to Georgia. Complexes are filled with feelings, and feelings propel us onward. I needed to be in Dixieland; I felt strongly that I would find answers there. I became obsessed with slavery and read all I could about it. "Roots" the miniseries came out in 1977; I was nine years old, and it had a profound effect on me. I was watching a story unfold and obtaining a different perspective on slavery. I had experienced being sold, and now was watching others being sold and how this impacted their lives. I became bound to my brother's will as he became my plantation overseer, and I felt trapped and alone. Strangely, moving to Georgia in 2000 comforted me as it was a significant experience that aided in the deconstruction of myself. I was away from my family and feeling free for the first time.

My brother is an example (mom and dad, too) of the psychic danger Jung warned us about. His response to my question about being sexually abused is consistent with the other times I confronted him about the past. Maybe for him, there is some truth in all these statements. He does not remember all the details of what happened, and because of that all we can do is move on. Maybe he feels like making me his slave was worse than making me lay still while another boy assaulted me. Both were difficult for me to integrate, and I had to move to Georgia before I could come to terms with being sold. I do not know. I *do* know what I see, and what I see is a broken man who has lost his 33-year-old daughter. He is a part of a club now – a club no parent should belong to. The one where children die before their parents. Our family is crushed, changed forever. I discussed earlier the relationship I had with my niece so I will not revisit that here, but I will add that the last conversation we had before she died as it was so meaningful to me. She had been struggling with depression and suicidal ideation as she became more aware of her family and her reality. I listened for a long time as she vented, but before we hung up, I told

her the three things I loved most about her. I paraphrase here: I told her that she had a great sense of humor and could make me laugh until I cried; she was a good mother despite all the obstacles she has faced; and, I told her that my life was so much better because she was a part of it. It seemed to calm her a little. I then asked her to tell me three things she loved the most about me. Again, I paraphrase here: she told me how proud she was of my educational accomplishments; she thought I was cool because I had my own private practice, and she loved the fact that I was gay. I think she fully embraced it because most of our family does not agree with homosexuality for religious reasons -- something she could not understand. Finally, she told me I was the best aunt she ever had. Those were our last words together and I am grateful they were positive.

Synthetically, this experience continues to haunt me. Not just because my brother sexually abused me, sold me to Sam, and made me his slave, but because I am watching another generation of abuse being handed down and witnessing how this abuse affected my niece's life. It is haunting. I watch it through the eyes of experience as I was also sexually abused by a sibling. I understand what is happening intellectually because of my education. Through my work as a counselor, I understand the psychological toll and pain that my niece's children will have to endure for years to come. And I have a front-row seat as I watch a generational nightmare play itself out in front of me. My niece had three boys with a husband who could not care for them. My brother could not physically or financially care for them either, so he had to place his grandchildren in other family homes. I tried to step in and take my great-nephews, but things did not work in my favor.

My Inferiority Complex

These statements, and the traumatic experiences I remember, resulted in an inferiority complex. People find this hard to believe considering I have a master's degree, am a licensed

professional counselor, and have a successful private practice. These accomplishments might make others wonder if my trauma was *so* bad, *how* could I have accomplished so much.

Overcoming my inferiority complex has been one of the hardest things I have ever done. Why would I think I am of any value after hearing the statements enumerated above? My brother sold me like a piece of property and watch as I was raped. How does anyone find value in themselves after experiencing something so vile? My father confesses to his meanness like it is a badge of honor. The harshness of my mother's words, coupled with the coldness of her neglect, leaves me wondering why she ever had children. Her pathology runs deep; the God I understand has betrayed me on many levels. I am forsaken by a God who gave me a family comprised of sadistic and ignorant individuals. How do I make peace with that? How do I find value in myself when the individuals closest to me cannot? These are difficult questions to answer as I try to work through my inferiority complex and try to bring myself back to some normal level of functioning.

Ironically, few trauma survivors are atheists. Kalsched writes, "survivors of early trauma often report that an essential part of themselves has retreated into a spiritual world and found refuge and support there in the absence of such support by any human person" (2013, p. 9). I fell into this spiritual world when I created my imaginary friend Amy. Trauma survivors succumb to this world when disassociation cracks open their psyche, opening them up to soulful connections in the realms of art, film, literature, and poetry. This Other world is an archetypal or mythopoetic world where the trauma survivor can find solace. Archetypes are at the core of our complexes and they have numinous qualities. This is the world that helped me integrate my complexes and experience peaceful moments. Corbett explains, "since the archetype is at the core of both our complexes and our numinous experiences, the same archetype may be at the root of our

emotional suffering and also generate an authentic spiritual experience” (2007, p. 83). It is through life crisis that our complexes are triggered, providing an opportunity for a revision of our God-image. This evolutionary act develops as we mature and our God-image becomes “less colored by parental projections and more universal” (Corbett, 2007, p. 83). I am on the verge of a spiritual revolution as I continue to deconstruct my experiences.

The Synthetic Aspect of Currere and Integration

In keeping with the theme of this chapter, I will look at four statements and/or experiences that helped with the integration of my inferiority complex. These experiences are with my community and have become the middle passage that helped me find my voice. The middle passage allows one to move from “the familiar to the unfamiliar, to estrangement, then to a transformed situation” (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 548). Abuse and neglect were once very familiar to me, but my community introduced me to something very unfamiliar -- kindness and acceptance. My reputation as a therapist began to grow, and eventually I was being praised for the value of my work. This, what I call the middle passage, helped me find my voice. I will explore this process in the next section. The only difference here is that I will utilize the synthetic aspect of *currere* all at one time after discussing each of the following statements or experiences. By addressing this step at the end, I can integrate aspects of my own complex, but only after the process of deconstruction. I start with a dream.

Community Experience One: The Dream

With the *regressive* step of *currere*, I look back on the significance of my dreams and the role they have played in shaping my life. I have always remembered my dreams and my nightmares. The most significant nightmare I had was of my mom killing me. She would come into my room at night, climb on top of me, and start stabbing me with a knife until there was so

much blood I disappeared. It was a gruesome dream, and it haunted me for years. Then a few years ago I had a dream where I gave the knife back to my mom. We were in Walmart (a place we both dislike and seldom shop at) and I found her shopping, handed her the knife, and walked away. It was a powerful dream. I also dreamed of the graduate school I would eventually attend. I dreamed of living in a small southern town years before I moved to one. My dreams have always been guidelines for me. So, when I had my nervous breakdown, I knew I needed to listen to a recurring dream I had about a couple who played a significant role in my life as a teenager. I had not seen them for about 25 years, and I had no idea what they were up to or where they were living. Following a Google search, I discovered that one of them was now the pastor of a large church in a nearby town and that his wife was a realtor. I reached out to her because I was ready to open my private practice and needed someone to help me find office space. She remembered me instantly and the reunion warmed my heart. While we were talking and catching up, her husband, the pastor, called and after hearing my name asked, "Has she opened her private practice yet?" His wife responded with a laugh and said, "that's why she is here" (personal conversation).

With the *analytical* step of *currere*, I look at the significance of dreams in helping us discover more about ourselves. "The point of dream work for Jung was to arrive at an interpretation or a set of interpretations that united consciousness understanding, and unconscious processes in a way that was intellectually, emotionally, and intuitively satisfying" (Hopcke, 1998, p. 26). Dreams are mirrors that can help us discover what might be going on in our psyche. The nightmares about my mother tell me her neglect ran deeper than I consciously realized. It was not until I moved back home that I would understand just how deep her neglect and ignorance go. Sadly, my mother can still scare me. However, the dream about the couple is

most significant to me now as I work at wrestling with my demons. Kalsched (2013) stated, “often the early story of the trauma survivor is a mythological story before it is a personal one” (p. 5). This couple aided my spiritual growth when I was a teenager.

As mentioned earlier, I have always been drawn to the biblical story found in Genesis Chapters 37 - 39 about Joseph and his brothers because it paralleled mine. His brothers sold him into slavery, he was wrongfully put in prison for refusing to sleep with the Pharaoh’s wife, and then used his dreams to help him escape. After predicting famine and gaining the Pharaoh’s favor, Joseph was placed in a position of power and respect as the Pharaoh sought his advice. This position of power allowed Joseph to reunite with his family and see his father, Israel, before he died. When father and son saw each other, the Bible says, Joseph “fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while” (Genesis 46:29, NRSV). I know that kind of sorrow and longing for a loved one. I was born with three strikes against me forcing me *out* of the family business. I must now find one of my own. It is sad, it is hard, and it is my reality. Mythopoetic language “provides a matrix and resource for the traumatized soul in ‘another world’ before it can return to, or enter, ‘this one’” (Kalsched, 2013, p. 5). My three strikes separate me from Joseph’s story because he was reunited with his family. I struck out with my family, and am now in search of something new.

Community Experience Two: “You are my new Hero...”

This statement came from the preacher (guru) I had the dream about. Using the *regressive* step of *currere* I look back on this relationship and how it impacted my life. As a teenager, I would eat lunch with this couple several times a week for many years. On one occasion I was asked what I wanted to do for a living. I replied that I did not know, but that I just wanted to help people. They both advised that I become a therapist. This was significant to me

because someone had given a name to what I wanted to do. Now, I had something to focus on; I had hope that my future could be better, and that I could become independent from my family.

With the *analytical* step of *currere*, I look at this situation with awe and wonder. I am my guru's hero? I have never been anyone's hero. I am fifty years old and I am my guru's hero? I like this feeling; it is new. Do I dare trust it? I can feel myself entering a new world where I am finally being seen, and others think I have value. It terrifies me. Is this what kindness feels like? Focusing on the facts helps me with integration by trusting what I see. I know I trust my dreams and my dream is what brought me back to my guru. After 25 years he clearly remembered me, because the first thing he wanted to know is if I had opened my private practice. These are facts; they can be trusted. Trusting my feelings is becoming a new practice for me because for so long I could not identify them. My world is changing.

Relationships built on mutual respect are more likely to thrive. I began spending quality time with my guru as we worked at getting reacquainted. We had been apart for about 25 years, so we enjoyed getting to know one another again. He would come by my office and we would reminisce about the past and critique his sermons. He asked my opinion on family issues and problems he was having with his wife. I predicted he would have dreams during this time of analytical work and when he did, our relationship grew deeper. Throughout this time, he was referring friends, family, and members of his church to me for counseling. My practice was growing, and together we watched it happen. In 2017, he was also struggling with a complex of his own and when I told him what the core of it was, I could see on his face that I had assessed correctly. He was impressed with my knowledge and therapeutic skills; with shock and awe he looked at me and proclaimed, "you are my new hero."

With the *progressive* step of *currere*, I see that this relationship continues to grow. My guru has become human to me and no longer the archetypal figure that he once was. I have become the only therapist of referral for the church he pastors. He had grown disappointed with past referrals and continues to question the quality of certain others' therapeutic skills. I am a frequent house guest as we continue to spend time enjoying each other's company. We keep each other accountable and encourage one another when we are down. It is rewarding, healthy, and fun. It is also normal -- and that is new to my world.

Community Experience Three: I Once Played with Tim Duncan

With the *regressive* step of *currere*, I go back and look at how I staged the moments leading up to this experience. When I opened my private practice, the one thing I was adamant about was having a separate room for play therapy. Play therapy is very Jungian, so I was drawn to it immediately and added it to the list of therapies I provide in my practice. Ironically, it was the last type of therapy I added, and it has been the most rewarding. I once worked with a family who adopted two boys, ages nine and eleven, from an abusive family member. These boys would sometimes be confined to their highchairs for hours at a time while their mother went out or slept off a hangover. They were malnourished and still underweight when I first saw them. Both boys were prone to temper tantrums when things did not go their way, and they struggled with school. I synced well with the family, and one of the things we often talked about was our love of basketball. This was when I first learned that the family knew Tim Duncan, the San Antonio Spurs star who led the franchise to five national championships. My playroom has a basketball hoop, one of my most popular toys. These boys would shoot the ball and talk about Tim Duncan and the San Antonio Spurs because they had been to many games. They spent time at his house and played with Tim's children. They told me he had the biggest front door they had ever seen

and that there were always lots of cool toys to play with at his house. Tim Duncan had a go-kart, a pool, a trampoline, and plenty of nerf guns -- any child's dream playground. The boys had standing schedules back to back, so therapy had become a part of their weekly routine. One week they missed therapy because they were going to San Antonio to see Tim Duncan. I can only paraphrase the conversation because it was spoken to the boys' guardian, who then told me. On the drive to San Antonio, one of the boys reminded her that this was the day he sees me. With a frantic tone, he asked if she had rescheduled the appointment because he just "needs his time with Ms. Merry" (personal conversation). The guardian texted me as this was happening, and I laughed out loud. At that moment I had been mentioned in the same sentence as Tim Duncan, which is significant for me because it demonstrated I was making a difference in these children's lives. As a Tim Duncan fan, it was a win/win moment. These types of moments are rare in my life.

With the *analytic* step of *currere*, I know working with this family gave me a lot of confidence. First, I am a huge basketball fan, so to 'play' with one of them, even in the metaphorical sense, gave me a shot of confidence. The guardian told Tim Duncan the story, so I know he has heard of me. I am a little star-struck as a basketball fan, but I am especially a Tim Duncan fan. I felt special that the boys had developed such a fondness for me because the feeling was mutual. This is not the first time a client has had an effect on me, but the treatment of these boys helped pull me out of the nervous breakdown I was having. It renewed my sense of purpose and helped me focus as I continued to work on my practice and finish my education. Their treatment was successful as they both went from failing to being on the A/B honor roll. The temper tantrums also became less frequent. They each hit a growth spurt and fell into the normal

weight range for their ages. One found solace running track, and the other chose football. The family eventually moved out of state, but when they left the boys were managing fine.

Progressively, I know this case provided me with confidence, something I have always struggled with. I have also come to learn that I like it when I become a part of my client's narrative. I was a part of the family on that drive to San Antonio; I liked that a lot. I have become a part of many families' lives through the years, and I like the sense of purpose I now have.

Community Experience Four: "You're Merry Trammell?"

With the *regressive* step of *currere*, I look at how I came across this statement. I was at a social event about three years after opening my private practice. I was being introduced by the host to two women I was sitting next to. When they heard my name, they both turned to me and said in unison, "You're Merry Trammell?" The first woman pulled out her phone and said, "Look you're in my phone and your name is even spelled correctly." I would come to learn that she was a principal at a local high school and had been referring clients to me for a few years. The second woman on the couch said, "Wow, I feel like I should bow down". Turns out she was a neighbor of my guru and he had been bragging about me. I also had one of her friends as a client, and I had been successful with her treatment.

Analyzing how I feel about this encounter gives me chills. The significance of this moment for me was huge because I have never felt like I had a reputation for being good at anything. This validation, coming from complete strangers who were simply familiar with my work, provides me with newfound confidence. I am seen and respected.

With the *progressive* step of *currere*, I can see a greater sense of purpose for my life. One that goes against the Trammell heritage. I am building a new legacy for myself, one that involves

love and kindness. These qualities are new to my world, but I feel much safer exploring them than wrestling with the devil.

Finally, with *the synthetic step of currere*, I look at all these statements and how they have helped me reconnect parts of myself. All these experiences were confidence builders for my self-esteem. The celebrity connection is probably my favorite because it is still sometimes referred to in my social setting, although, being someone's hero is also a lovely feeling. The significance of metaphorically playing with Tim Duncan ran deep and provided me with a shot of confidence welling from deep in my soul. This, coupled with the value I place on my dreams, lets me know I am connected to my life source, my life's purpose. Hillman (1996) stated,

The soul of each of us is given a unique daimon before we are born, and it has selected an image or pattern that we live on earth. This soul-companion, the daimon, guides us here; in the process of arrival, however, we forget all that took place and believe we come empty into the world. The daimon remembers what it is in your image and belongs to your patterns, and there for your daimon is the carrier of your destiny. (p. 8)

In summary, putting together parts of my broken and shattered self has been one of the most difficult things I have ever done. Facing the facts and feelings of my childhood forced me to dance with the devil -- one of the scariest dances I have had to date. Using the autobiographical method of *currere*, I was able to deconstruct my trauma into something with meaning. Bad things do not happen for a reason, but I am using reason to help me understand my experiences. This process was cathartic for me because it helped ease my depression making it easier for me to put my feet back on the floor.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERCPECTIVES ON PLACE

Place is a significant subject in the field of curriculum studies. Writing about place is a curriculum of social psychoanalysis and one way to contribute to the reconstruction of the south. My experiences of being a southerner are important data sources that contribute to my narrative and to curriculum studies. The South is haunted (Doll, 2000) due to the years of oppression it inflicted on individuals because of race, class, and/or gender. By keeping these individuals marginalized, white patriarchal privilege continues to steal the power it craves. These patriarchal ideologies come from individuals who are often controlled by their shadows. Some behaviors one might see in these individuals are arrogance, fundamentalism, narcissism, and/or a lack of self-awareness. Exercising self-awareness is a paradox for the narcissistic individual. It is difficult to reflect on one's self when the self you are reflecting on is already viewed as perfect. Thomas Moore (2004) states, "Narcissism is a concern for self that stands in the way of experience" (p.53). Being self-absorbed is an intense focus that keeps the ego safe from any critique that feels harmful. Remember, this is the "psychic danger" Jung was referring to when he stated it is, "man himself who is man's greatest danger to man, for the simple reason that there is no adequate protection against psychic epidemics, which are infinitely more devastating than the worst of natural catastrophes" (CW, v.18, par1358). My family is an example of the psychological dangers that come when individuals endanger others. Staying married to fundamentalist thoughts or ideas keeps individuals bound to their shadows. Remaining lost in one's shadow is a psychic danger for the individual and for those they encounter. Whitlock (2007) argues, "Southernness has been a form of identification that has protected racist, misogynistic, homophobic practices and mindsets by invoking small-town life, pastoral aesthetics, closeness to the earth, simplicity, and spirituality" (p.6). My experience with these

issues runs deep as I am a daughter of the South. Born and raised in Texas, and then living in Georgia for over ten years, I have varied perspectives and diverse experiences of Southern ways of living. This form of social psychoanalysis is needed as culture and place are powerful contributors to the development of the Self. Pinar states, “unless this process occurs culturally and individually, the South will probably continue to live out – perhaps unconsciously – its history of relative poverty, defeat, racism, and class privilege” (1991, p, 175). I am pushing and challenging my own levels of conscious awareness through this work as I explore parts of myself that have experienced these oppressions.

I grew up in Texas in the 70s and 80s in a lower-middle class, white neighborhood. Because of my abusive home, we rarely had company. As early as five I can remember being turned down when I invited friends to our home. They were afraid. So was I. I was imprisoned to my father’s violence and bound to my heritage in my mother’s silence. As a result, my young world view was small and limited by my own developing complexes. I had few social interactions and fewer friends. This made my view of Texas limited, obscure, and problematic. I also viewed Texas with mixed feelings of anger, shame, and embarrassment as I began to see it as the place that created my family. My mother’s family comes from the Hill Country and my father’s family comes from Waco. These are both small towns with limited resources as some of the homes my parents grew up in did not have a working bathroom. While my mother graduated from high school my father got his GED after dropping out in his senior year of high school. This would be the only formal education for each of them. I dreamed of leaving Texas and moving to Georgia. In some ways, I was running away from my past as I was in my twenties when I moved to Georgia, but I always hoped for something new. Although I did find new life in Georgia, I am a Texas native and that must also be explored. When I returned home in 2013, I

was a different person and Texas was a different place. I did not recognize it. It was bigger. The toll road was complete. There was ethnic diversity everywhere. My childhood neighborhood was suffering an economic decline. These areas need to be explored before I can make more sense of them, so I return to the method of *currere* for clarity and liberation. Pinar (1972) states, “the method of *currere* is one way to work to liberate one from the web of political, cultural, and economic influences that are perhaps buried from conscious view but non the less comprise the living web that is a person’s biographic situation” (p.108). Starting with the regressive step of *currere* I turn to Molly Ivins (1944-2007). Ivins was a political reporter, writer, and advocate. She was a native Texan, a Smith graduate, and a longtime reporter on the Texas Legislature. Ivins (1991) sates,

Texas is an un-self-conscious place. Nobody here is embarrassed about being who he is. Reactionaries aren’t embarrassed. Rich folks aren’t embarrassed. Rednecks aren’t embarrassed. Liberals aren’t embarrassed. And when did black folks or brown folks ever have time to worry about existential questions? Lobbyists, loan sharks, slumlords, war profiteers, chiropractors, and KKKers are all proud of their callings. Texas is not a civilized place. Texans shoot one another a lot. They also knife, razor, and stomp one another to death with some frequency. And they fight in bars all the time. You can get five years for murder and 99 for pot possession in this state – watch your ass. (p.5).

This is a good description of Texas and those who live here. Focusing on the analytical step of *currere* while regressing to the past will help me understand my family. We are rednecks as we come from a long line of Bubba’s and Bubba-it’s. The first time my mother was introduced to my father’s family they were physically fighting. She once told me that she had never seen so much arguing and fighting in one family. Likewise, when my grandmother died of

cancer my grandfather dealt with his grief by acting out violently. He took all her belongings and piled them in the back yard where he later lit them on fire and watched all her things burn. Some Texans live and die by a complex. I have personal experience with such complex behavior in my family. By the time I graduated from high school, the relationship with my father had become disenchanted. I had been sold and raped for several years at the hands of my brother and his friend. I had a mom who knew what happened but did nothing about it. I was nine or ten when I first told my mom what was happening. I thought my brother would at least get grounded, but I do not remember that happening. What I remember was a “family talk” in which my brother was told he should not have touched me, and I was told I should have said, “no”. After this short conversation, my brother and I were sent to the kitchen for dessert. It was awkward for both of us as we worked in silence scooping ice cream into bowls. I reached into the utility drawer for the dessert spoons, pulled out four, and placed them in the bowls. He picked up two bowls and went back to the living room, I followed. Inside, I felt shocked and numbed as I struggled to believe what had just happened.

This “family talk” experience is a classic example of how institutionalized oppression starts and/or continues to live on. I remember telling my brother “no” many times, but he did not listen. In the end, it was his violent behavior that forced me to lay down. This is another example of how my family and my abuse kept me marginalized. I was raped. I reported it but was not believed. As a result, the sexual assaults continued until I was thirteen which is when my brother left home. After experiencing our “family talk” it was becoming clear to me that I could not count on my family for help. The lack of support and the continued sexual assaults forced me to isolate myself more as depression slowly crept into my world. “After trauma, the world is experienced with a different nervous system. The survivor’s energy now becomes focused on

suppressing inner chaos, at the expense of spontaneous involvement in their lives” (Van Der Kolk, 2015), p.53). By the time I was a teenager, my depression started to manifest physically. I began to have digestive problems that became so severe I was hospitalized for several days and later prescribed medicine to help with the problem. Van Der Kolk (2015) goes on to say that after trauma, “these attempts to maintain control over unbearable physiological reactions can result in a whole range of physical symptoms, including fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, and other autoimmune diseases” (p.53). My medical problems started in the mid-seventies and I was becoming a statistic for research that would not occur for another forty years. My brother married and left home when I was thirteen and I felt a little safer, but now I was depressed. I finally asked my mom for counseling, but I was told “no” because we did not have the money for it. By this time oppression was so ingrained in my psyche that I was paralyzed with fear and overcome with neglect; I did not think I would ever find someone to help me.

With only these experiences to reference, I utilize the progressive step of *currere* as I think about what the future has for me. I always thought that once I broke away from my family, I would be fine, and life would be so much better. Clearly, I was wrong as I am still struggling to make sense of my history. Trauma is difficult to overcome because of the sheer impact it has on the entire body. I was depressed at an early age, suicidal by fourteen, and having digestive problems before I started junior high. I was seventeen the last time I asked my mom for counseling (I have asked five or six times). That was 35 years ago, and I am still trying to make sense of my trauma. I could not have predicted how deep my pathology was or how much it would continue to grow. But this is the result of oppression, trauma, and their lingering effects on the body and soul.

From an analytical perspective, trauma research and its neurological side effects were not discovered until 2000 with psychologists such as Perry and Van Der Kolk leading the way. I address their work in some detail in the prologue and chapter one. I would like to expand on this here to include cultural complexes that were a part of my narrative. “From a psychological point of view, he (Jung) suggests that culture carries the connotation of a group which had developed its own identity and consciousness, together with a sense of continuity and purpose or meaning” (Samuels et al., 1996, p.36). Most Jungian concepts can have multiple meanings, and not all of culture operates in harmony as sexism, racism, and classism are aspects of our culture as well. These oppressive cultural complexes run deep in our country and are one of the greatest ills in our society. I grew up in the 1970s when the Women’s Liberation Movement had just begun. My family was lower middle class, with extraordinarily little education. I had little interaction with people of different races, but my family’s narrative was filled with bigoted language. The family system can be one of the first places to breed prejudicial thought. Remember my “family talk” story? Those thoughts and/or actions then leave the family and spillover into our culture. My brother took what he learned from our family and used those traits to raise his own family. He did not stray far from our family narrative. This was just one of the many contributions that led to my niece’s death. And this is just one example of institutional racism. The United Kingdom’s Lawrence Report (1999) defines institutional racism as,

the collective failure of an organization to provide appropriate and professional services to people of their color, culture, or ethnic group. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes, and behavior that amount to discrimination through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

(Macpherson, p. 3)

The oppressive nature of my family and its attitudes toward each other and society were filtered through hate and a lack of conscious awareness. My father's ability to create a climate of fear in our home was his way of dominating us and beating us into submission. "Cultures of domination rely on the cultivation of fear as a way to ensure obedience" (hooks, 2001, p. 93). This is how complexes develop, with a paradoxical perspective. This bipolar aspect is what makes the complex so powerful. Cultural complexes have such deep roots in American soil that it may take centuries to find deliverance from cultural domination. Liberation from oppressive situations exemplified by my family and their prejudicial ideologies is my ultimate quest. Paulo Freire (2000) states that the oppressed, "will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it, through their recognition of the necessity to fight for it" (p.45). In essence, the oppressed must fight for their freedom. This work is my fight for freedom and liberation.

Southern writers are what led me to Georgia. Regressively, I look back on what drew me to some of these writers. I felt Southern writers understood something about me that no one else could. I take from pages of my personal journal to help me explain how I feel about Dorothy Allison and Pat Conroy. These two Southern writers had the greatest impact on me, so I focus on them. Taking from my journal is another example of the collaboration that is a part of curriculum theory. Sometimes we need reflection, along with scholarly endeavors, to help us understand parts of ourselves. Here is my journal entry for 2016,

Dorothy Allison makes me blush with her tales and stories about females. I long to be a part of her Southern Place as a student, activist, writer, and lesbian. She is a soulful sister who understands the monsters of my own world. We are naked in Truth, Naked in Pain. This is our covenant as we work at remixing the world.

I wrote this journal entry in 2016 a few months after Pat Conroy died.

Pat Conroy romanced me with Southern charm, genteel manners, and a pathological place that warmed my insides. His intimate connection to the South birthed life in my soul and lit a fire that brought awareness to my own Southern pain. A light that kept the shadows of my world at bay until I could find the courage to face them myself. I long for Pat's prose as it soothes my soul the way the Blues soothe my senses. It tingles my insides as I long to understand the new shadows lurking about.

One element of Conroy's work is his ability to write about the South with love and disdain. He lured me into his Southern world, and I knew I had to find a way to live in the South. I wanted that experience. Allison wrote about a Southern world that I knew and experienced. It is a world filled with sexism, racism, and classism. This is the power of her Southern place, and I found comfort that someone else understood me and the world I lived in.

Analytically, we can start by exploring southern places which Pinar refers to as the epistemology of place, especially southern places. "An understanding of southern place involves the history, literature, and sociology of the South; it also involves a more textured understanding of the southern mind – what we might term a southern epistemology" (1991, p.10). The southern mind or the southern way seems to have deep roots in religious organizations. This fundamental perspective allows no room for compromise. Maybe that is why some southern authors are so uncompromising in their literary works. For instance, Daddy Glen is an uncompromising character in Allison's book *Bastard out of Carolina*. As Allison shares her story it becomes clear that Daddy Glen's treatment of Bone escalates and finally leads to her being raped. Throughout the story, Daddy Glen had opportunities to learn and grow from his mistakes but he remained unconscious, unchangeable, and uncompromising.

Analytically, we know that fiction can heal sick souls. Words are powerful tools that can destroy a life more quickly than they can heal one. Writing is a revolutionary act; it is what it is meant to do—promote change. Writing is *the* agent of change for all our social illnesses. That is where it starts. It is through writing and rewriting, that is the remix the world needs for change. Allison (1992) states, “sooner or later, though, if you keep pushing yourself, you begin writing stories out of more than just rage, and they began to tear you apart even as you write them. Oddly enough, that tearing open makes possible a healing, not only in the writer but in the world as well” (p.218). Writing, like reading, cracks open part of the psyche, exposes it to Other possible ways of knowing. This requires the use of one’s imagination, and once the imagination is activated, learning occurs. “Imagination is the capacity to posit alternative realities. It makes possible the creation of ‘as is’ perspectives, perspectives that can be open metaphorically and, oftentimes, through the exercise of empathy” (Greene, 2001, p.65). Without the exercise of active imagination, one often stays trapped in literalisms, and literal thinkers marginalize people. Our imaginations create, supplementing and improving what we intellectually understand. It is only through our imaginations that we can challenge our intellect. “Without the release of imagination, human beings may be trapped in literalisms, in blind factuality” (Greene, 2001, p.65). The imagination opens other possibilities, other perspectives, and offers hope of what can be possible. If oppressed people dare to hope, they achieve this through their imagination.

In this chapter, I will explore varied perspectives on the idea of place. The reasons for this are three-fold. First, it provides an example of how one can have varied perspectives around one idea. Using one’s imagination to find different perspectives around one idea is an example of active imagination. Greene (2001) explains, “By imagining, we are enabled to look at things, to think about things as if they were otherwise” (p.65). Having different perspectives can also be

healing for a wounded soul. Secondly, I want to expand on the idea of place without the geographical focus provided at the beginning of this chapter. Place has many possibilities. I would like to expand on the conversation of place by offering varied viewpoints. Finally, I will explore cultural complexes that are fueled by Southern ideologies. One does not have to physically live in the South to prescribe to southern dogmas. I will explore these dogmas and how they maintain oppressive practices.

First, I will look at current places. I delved deep, deep, inside writing this pathography, so deep that I touched places inside of me that I did not know existed. Becoming more consciously aware of my history allows me to become more self-aware of my current state of being. I will discuss this in current places. What does it feel like to come back from your own dark night of the soul? What does the world look like through integration? What is next for me? I will then explore scared places as I discuss my individuation process and the role of the madwoman. Individuation is the holy grail of individual development. The madwoman tries to destroy the process unless one can find an outlet for her to be heard. I will explore my challenges with this process in sacred places. Third, I look at lonely places as that has been a theme of my life since I was a child. However, it is not uncommon for children of abuse to experience loneliness and social isolation. Loneliness is a long silent killer; we are not made for isolated living. We need others. I will explore this topic and some of its challenges. Finally, I discuss Southern ways through the lens of cultural complexes. I explore southern ideologies that are taught and handed down through generations. These beliefs are what can lead others to marginalize individuals who are different than them.

Current places

“Hello, my name is Merry, and I am an addict.”

According to Van Der Kolk (2015), “people with an ACE score of four were seven times more likely to be an alcoholic than adults with an ACE score of zero” (p.148). My ACE score was a nine; I have two addictions I fight. I keep reminding myself that a high ACE score increases the likelihood of pathology in hopes that it will loosen the shackles of shame I walk around in every day. The shame feels never-ending in a sea of trauma. Facts help ease the intensity of my feelings, but the shame never leaves. Struggling with relationships and unable to connect with family members, it makes sense that I would connect with food and alcohol. My father taught me about alcohol and my mother’s comfort came from food. As humans we are made to be relational, we need connections to live. Perry and Szalavitz (2010) state that trauma victims often struggle with relationships.

Not finding relationships rewarding they seek thrills in physical pleasure and in wielding power to others. The buzz they get from food or sex or drugs isn’t diminished by these epigenetic settings – it actually seems to be enhanced. Only the comfort in relationships suffers. This has major public health implications because it increases every other hunger dramatically raising their risk for all addictions and compulsive behaviors. Whether it’s cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, or alcohol; sweet, salty, or fatty foods, gambling, video gaming, or promiscuous sex – anything that can be an escape attracts them.p.135

Connecting to things rather than people has always been easier for me. I was raised in a house with toxic individuals and through this work I have come to learn just how damaging this can be to a person’s body and mind. My family is an example of institutional racism as we kept bigoted ideologies alive and active. The anger and hostility we felt for one another can be seen in how we treated one another. Flo Kennedy (1970) states, “the concepts of horizontal hostility and dumping are an integral part of the circularity of oppression in an institutional system” (p.138).

Some people do not just harm you or wound you, but their acts can be so powerfully destructive that they annihilate you. My mother's behavior, or lack thereof, were daggers to my psyche for so long that it has taken me half my life to recognize them. My relationship with my mother is an example of horizontal hostility which is a form of domination between and among women.

Kennedy (1970) explains, "women are frequently oppressive in one-to-one situations. In those cases, the oppresses tend to be their children, other family members, especially husbands, superintendents, or other domestic or nonpolitical public servants" (p.137 - 138). For example, I have struggled with nightmares for most of my life, but as a child they were a regular occurrence. Sadly, they were mostly about my mother harming me in some way or killing me with a knife in the middle of the night. I remember when I was about nine or 10 I had such a nightmare and went to my mother for comfort. I was scared as I walked through the large dark house to her room, my fear escalating as I entered her room. I shook her awake. Once she realized that it was me and I was only there because of a nightmare she sighed in frustration and told me to go back to bed. No comfort, no touch, no kind words -- the common themes of my childhood. As a result, food and alcohol became things I would turn to for comfort. Shamefully, they would make my life even more isolating, making it difficult to socialize properly and only perpetuating parts of my pathological life cycle that continues to be a struggle.

In the book *Born for Love*, we learn the value of empathy for the psychological development of individuals. "Empathy is deeply rooted in our biology" (Perry & Szalavitz, 2010. p.13). We exercise and develop empathy through our interactions and socializations with others. When our empathic responses are positively reinforced, we are more likely to respond empathetically in future situations. "These crucial associations between positive human interactions, reward systems, and the stress response networks are the neurobiological glue for

all future healthy relationships. They are at the core of why empathy matters” (Perry & Szalavitz p.20). This does make me curious as to why empathy was so hard for my mother to exercise. Returning to the method of *currere* I look back and reflect on her life through family stories and memories I have and analyze what I know about her. My mother’s father abandoned the family when she was still a child. Her mother could not financially take care of her children (a boy and a girl) so she left them at a bar in the Texas hill country. My mother’s family lived in the backwoods of the hill country, so the local bar owner knew the family and brought my mother and uncle to the family farm. She lived here for several years and she often talks about this experience as one of the best of her childhood. Her grandmother doted over her and she said she always knew she was loved. However, she was molested by an uncle during this time and told me how much she longed for both of her parents. Family folklore is that my grandmother worked as a prostitute until she met her second husband and remarried. My mother would return home as a teenager only to leave a few years later to marry my father. She brought these experiences of rape, sexism, and abandonment with her and they shaped her psyche and influenced her mothering.

As a child, I remember my mother being very irritable and often distant. This made it difficult for her to develop emotional attunement with anybody. According to Van Der Kolk, this can create an attachment that becomes disorganized because the attachment is controlled by fear. This is sometimes evidenced in passive-aggressive behaviors. These mothers “often came across as sweet or fragile, but they didn’t know how to be the adult in the relationship and seemed to want their children to comfort them. They failed to greet their children after having been away and did not pick them up when the children were distressed” (2015, p.122). These others did not seem to respond this way on purpose but “they simply didn’t know how to be

attuned to their kids and respond to their cues and thus failed to comfort and reassure them” (Van der Kolk, 2015, p.122). This helps me understand my mother a little better. She was distant and cold, and I do not remember warm hugs or loving looks. She has done some precarious things throughout my life. For instance, at my high school graduation party, she yelled at me and belittled me for an over-enthusiastic response to one of my guest’s graduation gifts. My mother became enraged because I did not thank her enough for the work and money that went into planning the party. She called me ungrateful and rotten in front of my party guests who were silenced in dismay at what was being played out in front of them. Name-calling is a form of horizontal hostility. It was only after my stepfather stepped in and calmed her down that the party continued. Van Der Kolk (2015) argues that withdrawn and dependent mothers are “more likely to have histories of sexual abuse or parental loss (but not physical abuse)” (p.122). My mother’s responses are filtered through the experiences she had, and with only a high school education and little family support, she had very few tools in her psychological arsenal when she married my father. She brought unresolved family complexes to her marriage and left her marriage with more complicated complexes than she brought. Kennedy (1970) states, “A lack of a sense of considerable worth is another reason for horizontal hostility, consent to oppression, and the circularity of oppression” (p.139). She lacks a sense of herself because she is still tied up in her narcissistic complex. My father’s abusive banter only perpetuated my mother’s lack of self-esteem. These complications, and then giving birth to me, are what I believe lead to my mother’s suicide attempt. The medical community did not know much about postpartum depression in the sixties so it could have easily gone undiagnosed. I was born premature and underweight which kept me in the hospital and separated from her. My mother returned to work six weeks after I was born because my father forced her; she had few choices in this relationship.

I use food and alcohol to cope with the feelings I have about my childhood and the lack of connection I feel with my family. My ACE score totals nine. My once ‘way of knowing’ is coming to an end. Families are supposed to be places of safety, comfort, love, guidance, or some other similar formula. Psychological neglect is not normal. Physical abuse is not normal. Sexual abuse is not normal. Being sold is humiliating. To be born into a family with multiple strikes already against me is not normal. The intensity of my rage is keeping the madwoman inside alive and I am starting to not like her negative influence. In the book *Meeting the Madwoman* we learn that her energy, like all archetypes, is packed with paradoxical meanings. “She can entice us to destructive actions against ourselves and others; she can entrap us in negative behavior patterns and experiences of victimization; or she can lead us to use her energy – our energy- creatively to change our lives for the better” (Leonard, 1994, p.2). My own felt Madwoman has been one of the guiding forces of this work and she needs some reflection as I explore what else she must teach me; I will dive deeper into this in sacred places.

In the current places section of this work, I am taking inventory of my current behavior and what I need to work on next. Physical health is now my focus as I work towards sobriety. This helps me to understand why I choose food and alcohol to comfort myself. My addictions are the result of generations of family trauma. Reflecting on some of the past experiences with my mother has helped me to understand why she acts and behaves with such hostility towards me. Her neglectful behavior and condescending tone were a part of her own oppressive experiences.

Sacred Places

“The Madwoman is at the very heart of addiction” (Leonard, 1994, p.117). Our addictions can lead us to find creative expressive outlets as we work through the feelings of anger. I have many feelings such as rage, sadness, terror, loneliness, devastation, as well as a lot

of curiosity. Finding meaning in my own madding experiences has been the intention of this work. So far, I have uncovered a Hispanic woman who tried to save me, I have learned the depth of my mother's pathology, I see that the estrangement from my father has sadly improved the quality of my life, and writing this pathographic I allowed myself to put together timelines and learned that my brother's sexual assaults continued until he left home at seventeen. And why wouldn't they? There was no consequence for his bad behavior. He could continue to harm me as often as he wanted. No wonder I feel madness; I have no allies. "Madness and addiction have been linked through the ages, ultimately, every addiction leads to madness. Yet in the madness there is a source of creativity" (Leonard, 1989, p.117). The madwoman is an archetype, replete with meaning, as the core of any complex has a spiritual component. The madwoman often emerges when one has been oppressed or abused, and she knows no gender. She holds our rage, anger, frustration, and/or recklessness. All archetypes have paradoxical meaning, and the madwoman is no exception. She also, however, holds qualities such as passion, ecstasy, creativity, and spiritual awaking (Leonard, 1999). So far, this work has been a source of creativity as autobiographical inquiry encourages imaginative work. Finding one's Self is sacred work. The journey into the unconscious is a journey one must walk alone. That is what makes it sacred. It is the archetype of the Divine Child which is a manifestation of the transpersonal Self. "The Divine Child is an immediate, felt Presence within the child that provides a numinous sense of joy and a feeling that one deserves to be loved" (Corbett, 2007, p.110). When the Self is met with proper encouragement and reinforcement from caregivers, the child develops a strong sense of self. This results in strong self-esteem and a healthy sense of self. When the Divine child does not get positive reinforcement, "the result is a painful sense of worthlessness, a fragile sense of self, and low self-esteem. There always seems to be something missing" (Corbett, 2007, p.110).

One can go mad looking for the missing piece in their life. The madwoman provides a spiritual avenue for exploring the missing piece while the Divine Child provides some boundaries for that exploration.

Jungian psychology provides opportunities for this spiritual growth through the process of individuation. Through the process of individuation, one might have numinous experiences, find meaning in the symbolic, and/or have synchronicity experiences as one works at integrating complexes. Individuation provides an opportunity for the individual to live a spiritual life and make deeper connections to the symbolic elements of their religious traditions. These numinous experiences have powerful effects on people and can even be more powerful than religious experiences.

The numinous is a god-like experience not caused by individual will. On the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject, who is always rather its victim than its creator.

The numinosum -whatever its cause may be- is an experience of the subject independent of his will. The numinosum is either a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness (CW, v.11 para 6).

The sacred work of Becoming can have a numinous effect on a person. Our psyches contain the potential for good and evil, but it is up to each individual as to which one they incarnate. It is the tension of opposites that helps form the personality, and sometimes numinous experiences are a part of this process. When or if the numinous experience finds you, it takes over. Often the person will “lose touch with ordinary time and plunge into sacred time” (Corbett, 2007, p.29). While wrestling with the devil I lost touch with ordinary time. The only way I could keep myself present is by obsessively looking at my watch, keeping track of real time, and

staying focused on the task at hand. This pathographic has been hard to write, but so are most traumatic stories. Trauma can annihilate one's soul. It did mine. It elicited feelings so overwhelmingly powerful that I could not face them. That is why my imaginary friend Amy was created. Dissociation is a violent act. Kalsched (1996) states that "splitting is a violent affair" (p.13). The energy one needs to dissociate comes from rage.

Completing this dissertation has become a part of my own individuation process. I am writing myself into Being. The individuation process is mysterious because we do not know what personal data source will significantly be used in the development of our Being. Corbett elaborates, "we are fascinated by our contact with the numinosum because it stimulates a kind of spiritual desire within us, a longing for the holy and the promise of love and peace that it holds" (2007, p.13). This fascination comes honestly as our psyches understand love and empathy and typically avoid anger and/or violent acts against others. In the book *Born for Love*, we learn that "traumas of war, genocide, famine, and natural disaster can linger and be passed on, affecting history through epigenetic influence. It is a mechanism by which the sins of the father can pass the grandchildren and beyond" (Perry & Szalavitz, 2010, p.136). I have sins passed down from my father and my grandfather on both sides of my genetic tree. I have been surrounded by wrongdoings my whole life. I know what it feels like to be tormented, I know how it feels to be neglected, and I know what it is like to grow up in a climate of fear. I, unfortunately, learned to treat myself in the same abusive manner. My self-talk is mean and abusive, and I must work especially hard to change it. Learning to love myself has been *the* hardest thing I have ever done.

The healing aspect of a numinous experience often has a powerful, long-lasting effect on individuals. Corbett (2007) explains, "what matters is our felt sense that we are dealing with a greater Intelligence than our own, which manifests itself to us in the form of numinous

experiences” (p.74). The experience is personal and intimate as the greater Intelligence has something powerful to teach us. Once the lesson is learned, we have developed our own authentic spirituality. Growing up with levels of distorted love I never had an accurate sense of what love is. “However, when a teaching about love is given to someone from such an emotionally deprived background in the form of a numinous encounter, its impact is enormous” (Corbett, 2007, p.16). Personal experiences can be exceptionally good teachers. And love has the power to transform a person’s life. Souls do not flourish and grow with an attitude of hate and violence.

Lonely Places

It is difficult to describe lonely places because there is little self-data to choose from. The definition of lonely “is being without company and/or cut off from others” (Merriam-Webster). It is not uncommon for trauma survivors to cut themselves off from others because it is safer and keeps the possibility of more pain at bay. In psychological terms, this is a dissociative act that can occur when the psyche is in extreme distress. Here, the only way to manage the pain is to split from it. This is how my imaginary friend, Amy was created. There was a lot of domestic violence taking place in my family and I was scared most of the time. Amy was created by the time I was four because of the climate of fear I resided in. Kalsched elucidates,

if we study the impact of trauma on the psyche with one eye on traumatic outer events and one eye on dreams and other spontaneous fantasy-products that occur in *response to outer trauma*, we discover the remarkable mythopoetic imagery that makes up the ‘inner world of trauma.’” (1996, p.2)

I have already discussed some of the psychological impacts of my trauma. I have had significant dreams throughout my life that have had a lasting impact. The power of my fantasy life can be

been seen by my literal move to Georgia that was fueled by literature. These three things were powerful tools that helped me survive, showing my own inner world of trauma and the mythopoetic motifs that reside there.

Mythopoetic language speaks to the psyche because there are no boundaries or interruptions by others. Psyche is given the freedom to explore and connect with lost pieces of the Self. This is valuable to the individuation process. For Kalsched, this is what makes up the healing powers in an archetypal self-care system. “The ‘system’ is archetypal because it is both archaic and typical of the psyche’s self-preservation operations and because it is developmentally earlier and more primitive than normal ego – development” (1996, p.4). These defenses run deep, and their bipolar aspects open the individual to receive numinous experiences. There is an intimate relationship between trauma and the numinous. Numinous experiences can be good or bad however, and for most trauma victims the numinous usually constellates negatively. “Once the trauma defense is organized, all relations with the outer world are ‘screened’ by the self-care system” (Kalsched, 1996, p. 4). This ‘screener’ often takes on similarities of the victim’s perpetrator but “the diabolical inner figure is often more sadistic and brutal than any outer perpetrator” (Kalsched, 1996, p.4). The inside figure must protect the ego at all costs from experiencing cruelty and pain as it did in childhood. As a result, the diabolical figure’s sadistic voice becomes the victim’s voice. The victim becomes harsher on themselves than anyone else. In fact, some choose suicide over dealing with the pain of the past because facing the pain of trauma is just that hard. The two things Kalsched (1996) learned from writing the *Inner World of Trauma* is that “the traumatized psyche is self-traumatizing” and that “the victim of psychological trauma continually finds himself or herself in life situations where he or she is retraumatized” (p.5). The pathological cycle continues, and if changes come it will come slowly

and with the help of varied perspectives. For instance, I can continue to say I was a victim of childhood trauma and remain in this state. However, if I add a level of curiosity my perspective now considers why was I a victim of childhood trauma. My intention is to find meaning in my pain and purpose for my life. This type of exploration is difficult, but it is all the data source I have.

The trauma survivor's story is often a "mythological story before it is a personal one and should be seen as such" (Kalsched, 2013, p.5). The mythological story holds the "survivor's pain before a human story can be told" (Kalsched, 2013, p.5). Trauma produces "traumatic like" responses that can often be overly dramatic with its use of victims' and heroes' roles while downplaying their own traumatic experience. "This is why the 'two worlds' of ordinary and non-ordinary reality – and the imaginal 'matrix' in between – are so important for our discussion of trauma and healing" (Kalsched, 2013, p.5). For instance, I moved to Georgia in response to being sold and raped. Conroy convinced me of his love for the South and enticed my curiosity for a similar experience. Allison understood my family dynamic and the fundamentalist ideologies we live by. If I cannot find the answers I need in the South, then I will not be able to find them anywhere. These bipolar thoughts are an example of my own unresolved complex. What I discovered through my southern migration is the power place has to change one's perspective. Living in Georgia was a wonderful experience that I will always treasure. The South has indescribable beauty and a southern slang that often requires an interpreter. I discuss the differences between Texas and Georgia earlier in this work. I found many answers and varied perspectives on my whole southern experiment which include my educational experience at Georgia Southern University. Having the freedom to tell my story has helped me integrate some of my complexes as I work at becoming whole.

“C.G. Jung realized early on that the magical and mysterious world into which the trauma survivor falls when dissociation cracks open his/her psyche is not only an artifact of the splitting process but it is also archetypal or mytho-poetic world ready there to catch them, so to speak” (Kalsched, 2013, p.4). I also felt safe in my mythopoetic world. It was a world of love and acceptance that made me feel alive. I have already spoken of how connected I felt to the character of Savannah Wingo in the *Prince of Tides*. She is not the main character, but she is the “sick” one in the family and displays some strange behavior throughout her life. She may not remember the facts of her childhood, but she holds her feelings deeply. One of those strange behaviors came in her childhood when she held her dead sibling in her arms and told them how lucky they were to be a stillborn baby because being a Wingo is a miserable fate. It is a dark, heartbreaking moment and one I completely understand. It is a world that is safe *because* I understand it, it is archetypal, a part of our humanity, and allows me to explore and understand, and to feel and express my way around this mythological home. Pathology arises when the self-care system remains the self-regulatory function of the individual instead of the ego. Kalsched states, (1996) “what was intended to be a defense against further trauma becomes a major resistance to all unguarded spontaneous expressions of self in the world. The person survives but cannot live creatively. Psychotherapy becomes necessary” (p.4). This can become problematic as one can become dependent on the therapeutic relationship.

Trauma that occurs before the development of a healthy ego is vulnerable to the development of an archetypal self-care system. These saving qualities become allies for the traumatized soul in which the self-care system will protect it at all cost, including the extreme protective act of suicide. Trauma forces one to go deep inside themselves where the only language that is understood is archetypal. The depth one must reach before comfort can be felt

can make for a very lonely existence. Climbing out of the darkness into consciousness is extremely hard to do.

Southern Places

In Southern places, I want to take the focus off of geography and place it on ideologies -- specifically, Southern ideologies. One does not have to live in the South to prescribe to its ways. Casemore (2008), states, "in the South, however, 'place' is bound up with platitudes of white patriarchal culture, in particular with the 'sense of place' assumed to be a fundamental trait of aristocratic Southern identity" (P.2). Place is multidimensional as a location and as a state of mind. "I emphasize that 'place' not only refers to a location or region but also absorbs subjective meanings and social identities" (Casemore, 2008, p.6). I want to focus on the social identities and beliefs that make up southern ways.

The South is complicated as many southern ideologies make up the South's cultural complex. Race, bigotry, ignorance, and/or thoughtlessness are some of the more toxic psychologically. My father is a perfect example of this toxic cocktail. He was born and raised in Waco, Texas in the 30s and 40s when southern ideologies were the practice of the day. The symptoms of this type of mentality are often displayed through violent and abusive behavior. My father feels he has the right to behave however he wants because he is white and he is male; therefore, he is the dominant one in our culture. He still proudly (but privately) uses the 'N' word when he encounters an African American and he refers to their offspring as 'niglets.' He is bound to his ignorance and it keeps him isolated and alone. He has been married several times and when the last relationship ended, he had nowhere to live. He finally moved back to Waco and is living in a small travel trailer by himself. My father served in the Airforce, did a tour in Korea, and traveled the world before retiring from his civil service job. Through his travel alone

he could see and experience the diversity of the world, but that was not enough to change his way of thinking. Place contributes to the formation of the self. Casemore (2008) explains,

if we accept that place is ideological as well as physically dimensional, created in the mind and through language as well as the landscape, and thus constituted through certain values, some prejudicial, we have the opportunity to explore it as something that emerges laden with personal and public meaning. (p. 6)

My father is who he is, in part, because of the southern ideologies that he lives in and was taught. His bigoted ways have remained a part of him, and that speaks to the power of cultural complexes. This is just one example of how the power of ignorance can spill over onto those it touches. My brother learned how to parent from my father, I learned the (de)valuation of my self-worth and unworthiness to be loved, and my mother learned she could not keep her children safe while living in the same house with my father. These are not pleasant messages; many are lies.

Southern ideologies that keep people marginalized are predicated on lies. “The heart of justice is truth telling, seeing ourselves and the world the way it is rather than the way we want it to be” (hooks, 2001, p.33). Keeping truth at bay was my mother’s intense focus. By denying our family trauma she crippled her children further. My brother was given a free pass at our “family talk” and I was shunned because I told the truth. The truth may not be pretty to look at, but it can be freeing as I am feeling more liberated through the writing of this work. Now, my mother seems angry most of the time, my brother is mourning the loss of a child, and my father lives alone in a used trailer estranged from his children. These three strikes - my father, my mother, and my brother - are wrapped up in their own complexes which are fueled by southern ideologies that marginalize individuals by race, class, and gender.

Southern ways of participating in the culture begin by teaching men they are all-powerful. My father holds strongly to this belief. hooks (2001) argues, “patriarchal masculinity requires of boys and men not only that they see themselves as more powerful and superior to women but that they do whatever it takes to maintain their controlling position” (p.40). My father’s need for control is so powerful that he was willing to end relationships for it. My brother’s need for control allowed him to turn a deaf ear to my cries of pain while being raped. After all, I am just a girl, an example of the mindset of southern ideologies that do not see me as human. hooks (2001) states,

Estrangement from feelings makes it easier for men to lie because they are often in a trance state, utilizing survival strategies of asserting manhood that they learned as boys. This inability to assume responsibility for causing pain. This denial is most evident in cases where men seek to justify extreme violence toward those less powerful, usually women, by suggesting they are the ones who are really victimized by females (hooks, 2001, p.39).

Southern beliefs are complicated because they often come from unconscious states. The trauma that comes from cultural complexes often lasts for generations. My father learned from his father how to treat women and how to be a father. They both failed, thus leaving the complex for future generations to untangle. This speaks to the power a cultural complex can have on individuals and societies.

Cultural complexes can be traumatic experiences for those who live in them. I have discussed the power of trauma in previous sections of this work, so I only offer a summary here. We know that trauma can physically change one’s nervous system and evoke inner chaos. There is an archetypal component to complexes that riddles them with feelings and clouds our view of

the world. Trauma can scare one speechless, cracking open the psyche and opening the individual up to a mythopoetic world. This is why I was drawn to literature. And this is why African American Spirituals were created during slavery. These are powerful connections for trauma survivors because they provide an outlet for emotional release and allow us to feel connected to others with similar experiences. The archetypal health care system can also be applied to cultural complexes and is the second line of defense that develops when the traumatic experience cannot be dealt with via normal psychic defenses. These are archetypal, invincible, and develop power over the individual. “They are also demonic, or diabolical, because absolutely autonomous and capable of producing a complete separation – *dia-ballo*, from which we have the word diabolical between the Self and the external world” (Zoja in Singer & Kimbles, 2004, p, 85). The word diabolical is fueled by hate and cruelty as our complexes keep us bound and can prevent us from physical and psychological growth. Trauma forces the psyche to regress to an archetypal pattern for defense and this can be found in the individual and in culture. Zoja (2004) says, “collective trauma that befalls upon both adults and children is remembered for generations can become the nidus around which a cultural complex forms and it might be better if analysis became more aware of and concerned with cultural complexes” (p.85). Understanding the power of a cultural complex on the psychology of others is not a new concept but one that must be kept alive as we continue to learn and grown in psychological ways. Jung reminds us that psychology is the youngest of all the sciences as we are still developing and learning from this discipline.

Southern ideologies lack love because there is an element of hate woven into inequality. Also, complexes are held together by diabolical means. These beliefs hold the premise that one is superior to another based on their biological differences that are beyond one’s control. I was born

a woman and that does not make me inferior to anyone, and anyone who says otherwise is telling a canard. Audre Lorde (1981) states, “hatred is the fury of those who do not share our goals, and its object is death and destruction” (p.59). Hate is a dead inroad; it leads nowhere and uses up a lot of energy. Love cannot grow in a climate of fear, yet fear is what creates a complex. hooks (2001) notes, “a commonly accepted assumption is a patriarchal culture is that love can be present in a situation where one group or individual dominates another” (p.40). Domination is tyranny and love cannot grow in a culture of supremacy. Our psychology understands and responds to love and it does not understand oppression, which is why complexes develop. As previously mentioned, the lack of a loving environment can have biological effects on brain function. “And this can have terrible consequences, particularly with regard to the ability to find comfort and pleasure in loving and being loved” (Perry & Szalavitz, 2010, p.133). My father struggles with tender moments. My mother finds the act of comforting difficult. My brother seems to fare better with strangers. Sadly, I understand just how hard it is to allow someone to care for you. It is one of the more difficult things I have had to learn, so I can empathize with my family on this issue. It is so hard to believe you are worthy of love after experiencing the level of trauma all of us went through. I hope that they too can find their worth.

I would not have found my worth if it were not for my educational experiences. Learning is a vulnerable process. It takes real courage to learn from our mistakes and find ways to improve our world. Hope is found in learning new things. I am a first-generation college graduate. My educational experiences alone place a gap between me and my family. Kennedy (1970) writes, “Rednecks and poor white trash have traditionally dominated the Ku Klux Klan in the South, even as racist social workers and schoolteachers have infiltrated the ranks of those assigned to babysit the Black communities in the North” (p.139). I come from a long line of rednecks, white

trash, and KKK members. It is difficult to fight ignorance. Liberation is found in the educational experience. Without this experience to reference, there is nothing to learn from. Denial keeps oppression alive.

Autobiographical work is an exploration of our private worlds, our public worlds, and how these two merge. Place is a powerful tool that can be used to explore these worlds. It is a part of our "*Lebenswelt* a vehicle of self-knowledge, and a crack in the structure that allows the archeologist of self to discover the etymology of one's research art" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 6). My 'research art' has deep roots in Southern culture and Southern doctrines. Southern history is naturally different than that of the West, but the fundamental difference is how the South struggles to learn from its history. It stays stuck in its failures. Southern stubbornness keeps the South bound to ideologies that are no longer a part of our social narrative. Cultural rigidity leads to cultural complexes. Is this not like my family? They have not learned from their past. This keeps the family narrative the same with generations of abuse and trauma. This work is my way of breaking that chain.

CHAPTER FIVE: WELCOME HOME

When I decided to search for Amy, I knew I would have to start at Trinity Park. This was not the last place we were sexually assaulted, but it was where I left her. I had to, especially after the Legos and the sandbox became a part of our nightmare. I was nervous because I had not seen her in over 35 years. I did not know if she would still be where I left her. I was also terrified that she would not forgive me for my transgression. I brought some clothes with me in case she needed them. The last time I saw her she did not have anything on. As I approached the rundown playground, I recognized her immediately. She was sitting inside a sandbox that did not have any sand. Her head was bowed, and her hair fell and covered her face. As I got a closer look, I had forgotten how tiny she was; thin, blond hair, with a docile demeanor. She stood up and asked, “What took you so long?”

Before I could respond she took the clothes I brought and put them on as she briskly walked toward the parking lot. I followed as I watched her walk straight toward my car. I unlocked it with my key so she could get in. When I got in, she looked away and asked, “Where are we going?”

“13th and Sumatran,” I replied. “It is where I live.”

Amy did not speak, but she nodded. She laid her head back on the headrest and drank some of the water I had brought for her.

“It’s about a 30-minute drive to my apartment. You can rest or you can watch TV by pushing that button.” Amy looked at me with curiosity over the technological advances in the car that had taken place over time. I responded to her look by saying, “You are going to find a lot of

differences in today's world. Staying isolated on the playground for so long has kept you from learning and growing. I am here to change all of that if you will let me."

Amy did not respond, but I could feel her become a little calmer. She sat in silence for the remainder of the drive.

As I pulled into the drive of my apartment, George, the doorman was there to greet us before the car came to a full stop.

"How is your day going?"

Before Amy or I could respond, he told me that Dr. Smith had arrived earlier. He observed that she had grocery bags and was excited about our house guest. "Is this her?" he asked as the elevator doors opened, and we exited.

"Yes," I replied as I gently guided Amy off the elevator to my apartment. I gave George a gentle nod and thanked him as the elevator doors closed.

Savannah was there to greet us. She met us at the door with a smile and simply said, "Welcome. You must be Amy. I have been looking forward to meeting you." She approached us by shaking Amy's hand and giving me a hug and a kiss. She took my briefcase from my hand to help lighten my load. She then turned to Amy and said, "Let me show you around."

Savannah reached out for her hand and the two were off. I knew they would get along. Savannah has a gentleness about her that is infectious. I went to the kitchen to finish the dinner Savannah had started. I knew they would be a little while, especially when Amy saw her room and the new clothes we had bought for her. Growing up all we could afford was secondhand clothes that we found at used clothes stores. Having new clothes would be a real treat. I heard them walking toward me and I saw a smile on Amy's face as she held up the pink dress we had bought her.

“Pink is my favorite color, and this dress is so pretty,” she said with some enjoyment in her voice.

“Yes, I know pink is your favorite color,” I said in a factual tone. “We also bought you some pink and green pajamas.”

Amy looked at me as if she saw me for the first time. She gazed at me but did not say anything. I could not find the words either. Savannah noticed the stalled moment and broke it by saying,

“Amy you were in that sandbox for a long time; let’s get you cleaned up so we can try on your new clothes.” This got Amy’s attention and with some shock and a little bit of fear she looked at me and asked, “Is she talking about playing Soapy Monster?”

“No,” I replied, “but I remember that we use to play that game. The good thing is we don’t anymore. Soapy Monster destroyed all the bodily fluids we hated. Those days are over. Bath time is fun now.”

Amy looked at me with confusion. I tried to calm her with a simple smile while saying, “Savannah taught me about Spa time, so I think it is best that she teaches you. It is so much fun.” As I turned to walk away, I heard Savannah say, “I have bathtub goodies for you.”

I went to the kitchen to pour myself a glass of wine before sitting on the patio. As I sipped the Merlot, I struggled to remember the last time I drank myself to sleep. I took pride in this. I could hear Amy’s laughter in the distance. Innocent laughter is seldom heard when one is living in a climate of fear. Wherever my father went a cloud of fear followed, which is why Amy was created. I do not remember when she was first created, but I do remember her being around when I was three or four. She was my best friend, and we did everything together. But after the Legos and the sandbox I had to leave her behind. I could not take the intensity of my feelings

anymore. Shame, embarrassment, fear, pain, and loneliness were powerful feelings I needed protection from. So, I left them with Amy in a sandless sandbox located in a run-down park on Houston's south side. Finding Amy is my last attempt at my own redemption.

"Amy is asleep," Savannah said startling me.

"Good," I said hoping she did not see me shake at the sound of her voice.

"I'm sorry I startled you," she said proving me wrong. She took my hand and commiserated, "this must have been a hard day for you, so, I am going to remind you of your own words. There is no divinity in oppression. The Divine is found in love and love must be shown and felt, not just said." She squeezed my hand and then added her own tender words.

"When you show her, she will understand; and when she understands, you can finally have some peace." Savannah gazed at me with tenderness, kissed me gently, and then walked inside.

"Come to bed soon," she said, leaving me alone with my thoughts.

The next day I drove Amy to my office building. I wanted to show her what she had helped us accomplish. It was a quiet drive; she did not have much to say. How could she? She never expected to be rescued from the sandbox; she thought that box was her future. She must be confused and shocked by this current experience, so I left her alone with her thoughts. Amy will understand better when she sees what we created. I pulled into the parking of my office building and she noticed our name on the marquee. Still shocked, she remained silent.

"This is where I work. Would you like to see my office?"

Amy looked at me with wide eyes, a simple smile, and a lot of curiosity as she nodded in agreement.

I unlock the building's front door, put in the code to silence the alarm, and then locked the door behind us. The building was empty because it was early, and I wanted us to be safe. I still have that one custody case where I had to file a restraining order on the father. He is unstable and not well enough to care for his child and he is angry at me for telling the court. Sometimes, working with those who are a psychic danger to themselves and others can be dangerous for the service provider as well.

As we walked down the hall, the name on my door came more into focus. The closer we got the faster she walked to make out and verify the name on the door. Finally, she said,

“This must be your office.”

“Actually, I think of this as our office.”

She walked in slowly, her eyes wide with wonder. It is a big office space. There are two separate rooms with a reception area and a small place for the office manager. She first went into the adult room to look around. She saw a soft green sofa, a lounge chair that matched, and small decorations around the room to tie the color scheme together. On the main wall, she noticed the pictures of Charleston, South Carolina that used to hang in our grandmother's home.

“Are those grandma's pictures?” she asked.

“Yes, they are. I like having a part of her here because she was kind to us, and we never got abused at her house.”

“Yes, I remember Grandma,” Amy said with a softness I heard for the first time. I liked visiting her house. She walked out of the adult room and went next door to the playroom. On the door, there was a sign that said ‘Play Doctor’ that one of my former clients made for me.

“What's a play doctor?” Amy asked.

“Well, there is no such thing as a Play Doctor. That is just what some of my clients call me. But a play therapist is someone who helps children understand their feelings and emotions as they work through their own trauma or other life challenges.”

“So, we help kids like us,” Amy stated.

“Yes, we do.”

Amy looked around the room and let it all soak in. She noticed the artwork on the wall, the sand tray with all its miniatures, and the art area where kids could draw and paint. She liked the reading corner, and I watched her browse through the books before she finally picked *The Water Hole*, by Graeme Base. She then sat down in the yellow beanbag chair, glanced through the book, and remained silent before saying,

“There are a lot of Legos in this room. You have Lego trays and Lego storage bins.”

“Yes, I do. How do you feel about that?”

“They scare me,” Amy said.

“Well, they use to scare me too because I remember what they did with them.” I looked at her with softness and continued, “but we don't need to be afraid of these torturous phallic toys anymore. I freed you from the sandbox, the place where these toys were used the most. So, it is unlikely they will ever hurt us again. By freeing you from the sandbox, we liberated ourselves from that experience. As the play doctor, we use the Legos as tools to help other kids feel better about themselves.”

“That sounds like a fun job,” Amy commented.

“Caring for others feels so much better than hating them. Hate is easy. Kindness is hard. But kindness is our focus as it helps the world move forward. It feels so much better than hate.”

Amy started to cry as she took in these tender words. Kind words are foreign to our world, but we have started to recognize them as a part of our new narrative. Confused over the sound of our new native tongue, Amy glanced at me with tear-filled eyes with nothing to say. I walked toward her slowly and sat down next to her on the yellow beanbag chair. I could not say anything. There were no words. All I could do was put my arms around her and let her cry. There was no shame, no embarrassment, it was just a moment when you understand the depths of your own reality.

Amy asked me again, “what took you so long to come back for me?”

“I am sorry it took me so long to find you, but I had mommies, daddy’s, me me’s, and pa pa’s dark past to work through first. It was so much more than I expected.”

After visiting my office for over an hour we walked to the car slowly but with a new sense of peace. I think we could both feel it. Once inside, Amy took off her face mask and with a true childlike tone said,

“I hate this thing. Why do we have to wear them?”

“There are toxins in the air that can kill us, and this mask helps keep us alive.”

“You are right,” Amy said. “So much of the world has changed since I’ve been stuck in that sandbox. Do you remember the days when we went camping on the beach? And riding on the tailgate of Daddy’s truck as he took us to the water’s edge so we could wash our feet. Those were fun times. I think that is why we like to be outside.”

“Those were beautiful memories, and I am glad we have some to reference.”

We left the parking lot and headed West to Beltway Eight as it would take us home. We rode in silence for a while before I took her hand and said,

“Today must have been hard for you.”

“The last two days have been hard,” Amy replied. “So much has happened and I have a lot of feelings about it all. But today was fun. We get to help others. I like helping, it feels good.”

“Kindness always feels better than hatred. And we didn’t experience much kindness in our childhood, but maybe that’s why we were drawn to social justice causes. We find certain causes worth fighting for.”

Amy sat back and gazed at the sky, “I like that thought.” Several minutes later Amy asked, “where is all that smoke coming from? Do you see that?”

“Yes,” I said, “those fires are from the West.”

“The earth is on fire?” she asked, with fear and concern.

“Basically,” I explained. “It’s much more complicated than that. The earth is also drowning with hurricanes, freezing with snowstorms, and burning up during heat waves. Our planet is basically dying in front of our eyes.”

“That’s so sad.”

“Yes, it is,” I agreed.

After a long pause, Amy said, “Maybe we should find a way to help.”

“I think that’s an excellent idea,” I replied. I reached out and took her hand and raised it to my mouth for a gentle kiss and said, “We’re off now, getting into good trouble. That’s where life happens.”

EPILOGUE

I felt strongly that my dissertation should end with a work of fiction because fiction is where my educational experiences first began. Curriculum studies is loyal to the discipline and experience of education. This includes all my experiences from my trauma and how I survived, to my formal educational experiences and the teachers who helped shape me. The one thing I have learned about myself is how much I enjoy writing and how this has reinforced my conviction of its healing powers. Writing *Welcome Home* provided another cathartic release for me while I keep my intention focused on education.

Curriculum studies is a unique educational experience. There are no standards or guidelines for learning when working on an autobiographical account of your life. The field encourages marginalized individuals to share their stories even if they are as ugly as childhood traumas. Your experiences become the data source used for analysis through the process of *currere*. This four-step process- regressive, progressive, analytical, synthetical - is a method of self-formation. It is a process of soul-making that takes time and patience to form and create. Understanding your experiences is the key to understanding yourself. That is why *currere* is influenced by autobiography, phenomenology, existentialism, and psychoanalysis. Pinar (1972) states, “the running of the course is the building of the self, the lived experience of subjectivity” (p.220). *Currere* is not a form of therapy but it does have therapeutic components and healing properties to it. Reaching a higher level of consciousness is the intended purpose.

Currere allows one’s soul to travel deep into the psyche and explore those experiences that have deep roots and strong ties to our lives. Allowing marginalized individuals to share their stories provides them with the opportunity to find their voice. This is re-search that can unsilence

the secret keepers. Pedagogy of illness is rare in the field of curriculum studies and childhood trauma is infrequently discussed or explored. Morris (2016a) states, “a traumatic autobiography that deals with illness is called a pathography and there aren’t too many of these in curriculum studies” (p.197). Writing about trauma is hard; it is extremely hard if the oppressors are still alive. There is the fear of causing family members more pain even though pseudonyms were used on everyone except Amy. Reliving the experiences can be retraumatizing and writing about trauma can lead to uncovering memories. For example, I remembered the Hispanic woman who tried to speak up for me but to no avail. I am persistent however because my social conventions run deep. For me, silence is not an option. In abusive homes, the most unforgivable sin is speaking out against your oppressors. I have tried to settle our family’s issues privately, among ourselves, but they did not comply. I am left still fighting for my own liberation, and curriculum studies provides me with a forum to accomplish that.

It is not surprising that my family cannot face the trauma they inflicted now that we know how trauma affects the body. They are stuck in their own complexes and bound together by their feelings. My parents brought their acquired generational trauma to the marriage and passed that legacy onto their children. Our backs are heavily burdened by our family legacy and my brother and I have each dealt with it in our own ways. Miller (2006) states, “the central point in all this is that the body cannot relate to the commandments of morality. Ethical concerns are entirely alien to it. Bodily functions like breathing, circulation, digestion respond only *to the emotion we actually feel*, not to moral precepts” (p.30). Our feelings help shape who we are as individuals, and when we ignore them apathy becomes apparent.

Curriculum studies also encourages collaborative work. I have collaborated with literature, mythology, aesthetics, philosophy, place, personal experience, and academic

understanding. Our psyches are rich and fruitful playgrounds that need collaborative works to help in Self formation. For instance, the poems helped me channel some of my feelings so I could focus on the academic aspect of this work. They served as a valuable process for my writing while illustrating the power of collaboration. This was a dark journey for me, but one that eventually led to a deeper understanding of who I am and what I have been through. I am better, and any change in one's self is also social change. Pinar (1972) argues, "we cannot expect to meaningfully participate in the transformation of the nation and its educational institutions if we fail to authentically participate in the construction and transformation of ourselves and our work" (p. 78). Any change, I realize, starts with me.

Writing is a form of healing. Writing is a form of social reform. Writing is a powerful form of communication. All these forums can be found in autobiographical pedagogy. Autobiographical work is aesthetic work. Greene (2001) explains, "aesthetics draws on such reflection and such talk. It has often been called a 'second order' mode of study, since it involves inquiry into or clarification of critical talk and writing, as it involves reflection upon personal experiences with the several arts" (p.25). In this work, I have included poems, varied perspectives, flash fiction, making the whole document an example of active imagination. "The process of active imagination demands the active and creative participation of the EGO" (Samuels et al., 1986, p. 9). Once the imagination is free to explore and create, transformation can take place. To be liberated from my trauma is peaceful and I now feel at home with myself. This is the aim of individuation which is a "more complete fulfillment of collective qualities" (CW 7, par 267).

Place is of great value to the field of curriculum studies. I have explored my experiences of living in Texas and Georgia as I addressed physical places. Psychological places are of

interest to me as well. The psychic danger that Jung is warning us about has powerful consequences. We are already seeing evidence of this playing out in our society through the increase of prescription psychotropic drugs. The CDC study found that “child abuse is our nation’s largest public health problem” (Van der Kolk, 2015, p.150). My family’s history is a perfect example of this, and, I have already discussed some of my own health issues. Psychic complexes are even more dangerous when they get fueled by southern ideologies. The race riots of 2020 were fueled by the killing of unarmed black men. Most of the protests were peaceful and attended by a variety of races and ages. How is it in 2020 we are still fighting a race war? We are still fighting a race war because people such as my family continue to invite bigotry to the kitchen table. Family narratives change very slowly if they change at all. Nothing grows in a sea of hatred.

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APPENDIX

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire Finding your ACE Score

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often ... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?

Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often ... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?

Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Try to or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

4. Did you often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

5. Did you often feel that ... You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

7. Was your mother or stepmother: Often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or Sometimes or often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?

Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?

Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt

suicide? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

10. Did a household member go to prison? Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

Now add up your "Yes" answers: _____ This is your ACE Score