

## Embodiments and the Open/ness of Kinship: Ma(r)king Curriculum Through Material Abstractness and Counter-Cartographies

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### Abstract

(Re)imaging curriculum as world(ing)s, this article explores what was produced by pre-service teachers when tasked with creating a counter-*cartography* (i.e., an abstract and material representation of two or more coordinates) that reflects specific (curricular) moments that have shaped their teaching identity/ies. We leaned into abstract artist Mark Bradford's process to guide pre-service teachers in the abstract (un)mapping of curricular moments/experiences to affirm that they are holders and makers of knowledge, theory, and curriculum. This work argues that despite the nefarious ways in which maps have been used, they can also be(come) territories that promote healing. We draw upon tenets of new materialism (as Sara Ahmed reminds us, matter *matters*) to frame our engagement with three counter-*cartographies* produced by pre-service teachers.

**Keywords:** Counter-*cartography*, teacher education, new materialism, social studies

### Introduction

Despite the ways in which maps have been used to colonize, divide, and dehumanize, maps can also be(come) territories that promote healing by laying bare the nuanced texture(s) of communal and spatial wounds (Varga et al., 2021; Varga & Flores, 2020). From this perspective, perhaps maps can be best conceptualized as reflective spaces that are “useful, even necessary, particularly in these modern times in which colonial projects have shaped technology, knowledge, and connection to a veritable non-stop stimulation of tweets, status updates, and deadlines, all competing for our attention” (Patel, 2015, p. 1). We see many (inter/intra-)secting/locking<sup>1</sup> similarities between maps, mapping, map-making, and curriculum. Notwithstanding the patterns that maps and curriculum share in relation to ordering and stratifying knowledge systems (Harden, 2001; Oliver et al., 2007; Sunsion

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<sup>1</sup> We acknowledge that our disordered style of writing that (over)uses (j) and /s might be challenging for readers. However, they are meant to illuminate the kinship that certain concepts have to each other. We encourage readers to consider this stylistic approach to be our attempt as cultivating liminality with(in) the text. That is, perhaps textual measures are not as stable as they (first) appear and that—in/frequently—written/typed words fail to adequately convey the complexities embedded within individual concepts (Derrida, 1998). Moreover, we see our stylistic approach as working alongside McKittrick's (2021) reminder that “[i]f we are committed to anticolonial thought, our starting point must be one of disobedient relationality that always questions, and thus is not beholden to, normative academic logics” (p. 45). Extending this thought, we also view footnotes as a form of disobedience against traditional academic logics of linearity and believe they offer alternative ways for us to map our thoughts/voice/perspectives throughout this article.

& Goodfellow, 2004), both maps and curriculum are dynamic and subject to transformation (Hale, 2008; Wang, 2015). Moreover, maps (and curriculum) are rhizomatic insofar that they do “not reproduce an unconscious *closed in* upon itself; [they] construct the unconscious” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12, our use of italics). Just as art, reflexivity, and restorative practices are subjective, importantly, each is alive with an *open/ness* that resists colonial and neoliberal logics seeking to govern onto-epistemological ways of dis/connecting to be(com)ing with the (material) world (Ahmed, 2012, 2014). That is, we see materiality and abstraction as a means of intercepting positionalities seeking to control, stymie, and limit imagination. As Ruha Benjamin<sup>2</sup> (2018) suggests that “[a]ll kinship, in the end, is imaginary[...]*cultivating kinfulness is cultivating life*” (p. 65), central to our main argument is that when (re)imagined, the entangled relationship(s) between maps and curriculum hold the capacity to foster kinship (i.e., cultivating multiplicitous and queer relationships across times/spaces) between educators, students, and the material world around us.

Working from the premise that curriculum is replete with speculative multiplicities/nuances (Huber, et al., 2011), this article explores what is produced by pre-service teachers enrolled in the authors’ social studies methods courses when given the task of creating a counter-*cartography* (i.e., artistic/abstract representation of two or more coordinates) (Varga et al., 2021). Underpinned by the artistic methodology of renowned abstract artist Mark Bradford (2018) (i.e., process of reflecting, researching, layering, and excavating everyday items to represent coordinates across time and space), counter-*cartographies* “further trouble cartographic (colonial) representationalism through artistic/aesthetic [means]” (Varga et al., 2021, p. 2), thus amplifying an attunement to the ways in which dominant, *immaterial*, and reductionist narrativizations of traditionally silenced perspectives continue to plague (mandated) curricula writ large. Specifically, with an understanding of curriculum-making as life-making, we leaned into Mark Bradford’s artwork to guide pre-service teachers in the abstract (un)mapping of curricular moments/experiences that contributed to the shaping of their identities as (future) teachers. Sara Ahmed (2010) suggests that the relationship between humans and materialities is co-constitutive, meaning that while humans produce objects/stuff, once made, objects/stuff in turn, make, unmake, and remake humans.

In traversing the relationship between our students, maps, curriculum, and materials, we first situate this work in a body of literature that examines the variegated *world(ing)s* of curriculum. Next, we expound on tenets of new materialism that framed our engagement with three counter-*cartographies* produced by pre-service teachers<sup>3</sup>. After presenting each *cartographic* example (i.e., data/findings) and accompanying composite narrative (Duke, 2010; Johnston et al., 2021; Willis, 2019), we conclude with implications and final thoughts relating to maps, materialities, and

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<sup>2</sup> When first citing authors/artists throughout this article, we purposefully include first names in an attempt to signal our kinship with their work/thoughts.

<sup>3</sup> Of note, the examples of counter-*cartographies* provided in this article are from students enrolled at Author 1 (United States) and Author 2’s (Canada) institutions.

(curricular) kinships<sup>4</sup>. This work seeks to inspire other unexplored ways that abstraction and materialities can be used to foster hope, healing, and love within the context of (teacher) identity.

### Curricular World(ing)s

Our work towards (un)mapping curriculum alongside pre-service teachers is shaped around a conceptualization of curriculum that is (co)composed, speculative, embodied, relational, dynamic, and fluid (Aoki, 2004/2011). Doing so, we draw from the work of Ted Aoki (1991; 2004/2011) to trouble the dominant story of curriculum as an externally pre-packaged immaterial ‘thing’ that is ‘delivered’ by teachers in the classroom. Further, this work resonates with Janice Huber, Shaun Murphy, and D. Jean Clandinin’s (2011) notion of curriculum as being relationally composed in a multiplicity of “worlds”—including from/within/across familial/community landscapes. Like Huber et al. (2011), we trace Maria Lugones’ (1987) position that “a ‘world’ need not be a construction of a whole society. It may be a construction of a tiny portion of a particular society, hence some ‘worlds’ are bigger than others” (p. 10). Examining idyllic conceptualizations of queerness within a global context, Manalansan (2013) suggested that worldings are perhaps more than spatialities imbued with currents of power (Spivak, 1990) insofar that they are also messy, chaotic, and erratic. Moreover, embracing irregular approaches to dominant systems of logic (e.g., white supremacy, settler-colonialism, heteronormativity, ableism, patriarchy) can be(come) capacious in opening up new spaces for (re)imagining how relationships between self-others-world is a continual process of be(come)ing.

Framing curricular counter-*cartographies*, we are of shared mind that students (co-)learn and (co-)teach just as much (if not more) about themselves, others, and the “worlds” they inhabit *outside the borders* of formal school curriculum-making contexts. We approach(ed) (un)mapping counter-*cartographies* as an invitation for pre-service teachers to share/inquire into the plurality of their multi-layered curriculum-making experiences—including an interrogation into the many (colonial) histories and places within which they have composed curriculum—in different “worlds.” For us, this necessarily involves (re/de)constructing the past and present, real and imagined, experiential and embodied, border(land)s (Anzaldúa, 1987) that (have and continue to) shape our lives. Vitally, this process of honouring and inquiring into pre-service teachers’ onto-epistemological curriculum-making is not only grounded in queering traditional ‘roles’ of who can be deemed an ‘expert’ holder and maker of knowledge, theory, and curriculum (Ahmed, 2019), it demands that pre-service teachers maintain agency throughout the entire process (i.e., including a self-assessment of their counter-*cartographies*).

It is important to note that while we ask pre-service teachers to engage in abstract representations, *we are not asking them to abstract away their lived experiences of curriculum-making*. Rather, we wanted to *re-calibrate agency* through the gaze of abstraction. Although we request that pre-service teachers discuss their representations, we encourage them to only share what

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<sup>4</sup> This work is positioned from an understanding that to be in kinship is to be in (ethical) relationship. We appreciate how kinship doesn’t mean sameness, nor is it steeped in colonial, neoliberal logics of hierarchy or reductive notions of “good” and “bad” relations. Rather, as Dwayne Donald (2016) and Deborah Bird Rose (2022) teach us, we understand kinship as a profound interconnectedness within, between, and across human and more-than-human life forms and systems:

Ethical relationality does not deny difference nor does it promote assimilation of it. Rather, ethical relationality supports the conceptualization of difference in ecological terms as necessary for life and living to continue. It guides us to seek deeper understandings of how our different histories, memories and experiences position us in relation to one another. (Donald, 2013, p. 11)

they want to express about their counter-cartography with us and others. None of the counter-cartographies contained keys or compasses to decode meaning(s) or cardinal directions (e.g., east, west, north, south), which allowed each participant to be the keeper of their own story/ies. We insist(ed) upon this important aspect of their process of un/mapping because we want to embody the spirit of a Curriculum of *Rahma*<sup>5</sup> (Saleh, 2020, 2021) and ethical relationality (Donald, 2016) that we discuss and uplift in our teacher education classes. Further, we want to encourage honest and hopeful inquiry in ways that are trauma-conscious and respectful of the fact that (pre-K-primary-secondary-higher/graduate education) students do not owe us or anyone else their story/ies. Like Thomas King (2003), we believe that the “truth about stories is that’s all we are” (p. 153), and so to demand the sharing of stories is profoundly unethical and problematic with our conceptualization of kinship—especially in situations where power imbalances persist (i.e., in our post-secondary classrooms), regardless of our efforts to shift the scales of im/balance(s) throughout our work. However, when stories *are* freely shared, institutionalized kinfulness is unsettled and thus resisted (Benjamin, 2018).

### New Materialisms and the Orientations of Matter(ing)

Our cartographic work is underpinned by new materialisms<sup>6</sup> (Alaimo & Heckman, 2008; Barad, 2007; Bennet, 2009; Coole & Frost, 2010). Despite the position that we (e.g., humans) co-exist in a material world made up of artifacts and various natural matter(ing)s, oftentimes the role that materialities play in the more-than-human experience is eclipsed/ignored; thus perpetuating human exceptionalism over *all* other worldly entities (Coole & Frost, 2010). Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) define matter(s) as “the unformed, unorganized, non-stratified, or stratified body and all its flows: subatomic and submolecular particles, pure intensities, prevital and pre-physical free singularities” (p. 43). Important to our deployment of new materialism is how fostering an attunement to the (non-human) material bodies creates space for engaging with *flows* of kinship that extend beyond exceptionally simplistic human to human (inter/intra-)actions. Put differently, taking a new materialist approach orientates our thoughts/intentions to the always-already-but-not-yet entangled and co-constitutive nature of both the material world and the more-than-human world, specifically “how it shapes it, is shaped by it, and how a closer look at it allows for a better—and potentially more critical—understanding of society and its underpinning ideologies” (Nelson et al., 2021, pp. 1-2).

Along with drawing our attention to surrounding objects/stuff, our work is particularly concerned with how “orientations might shape how matter ‘matters’” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 234). As our pre-service teachers were asked to use materials of the world in creating their counter-cartography,

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<sup>5</sup> Discussing the intergenerational curriculum her grandmother, Sittee Charifa, taught her to live, Saleh (2020) explained: The Curriculum of *Rahma* – an Arabic word that is often translated as ‘mercy’ – that Sittee composed and lived alongside me is infinitely more complex, ethical, relational, and profound than simply signifying ‘mercy.’ The root of the word رحمة (rahma) is رحم (rahm), or womb. Thus, rahma is also understood by many Arabic-speaking and/or Muslim individuals and communities as being strongly related to nurturance, compassion, and love. However, in our familial curriculum-making, Sittee continually reminded me that love and compassion inherently dwell alongside equity and justice. Thus, for us, living and embodying a Curriculum of *Rahma* is an act of radical love (hooks, 2001; Lorde, 1984/2007; Lugones, 1987) and relational resistance (Saleh, 2017, 2019(a,b) against inequitable structures, processes, and practices. (p. 9)

<sup>6</sup> We acknowledge the tensions of this label considering that Indigenous perspectives have long suggested that more-than-human entities are agentic and play significant roles in how humans come into being again and again (see, Bang et al., 2018; Byrd, 2011; Cajete, 1994, 2000; Kimmerer, 2002, 2013; Marin & Bang, 2018).

the matter emphasized in each project *mattered* greatly to each individual. Noting the relationship between (material) emphasis and connectivity, Ahmed (2019) says,

You have a bond when an emphasis is shared. An emphasis can mean an intensity of expression. In time, it came to mean the extra stress given to a word or phrase. It is a way of showing or displaying significance. Sometimes, you emphasize something because it has been over-looked. Perhaps you are trying to stop something from being passed over. (p. 17)

Leaning into new materialisms and the orientations of matter allowed us to think across the objects/stuff used by pre-service teachers to tell their curricular stories. Moreover, we hold that each material decision made during the creation of all counter-*cartographies* reflects what Ahmed (2019) deemed *queer use*; how objects/stuff can be used in ways that unsettle pre-determined intentions/purposes. In a broader sense, we understand our (*cartographic*) work as a queering of maps, map-making, and curriculum.

Our work is also shaped by Bettina Love's (2019) conceptualization of "mattering" in education. As social studies teacher educators, we resonate with Love's argument that "[m]attering is civics because it is the quest for humanity" (p. 7). Drawing from Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality, Love (2019) asserted that children and youth living at the intersections of anti-Black racism, anti-Indigeneity, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, colourism, and so many other forms of systemic oppressions too often learn to simply survive, not thrive, in formal schooling contexts. They too often learn—and sadly, are *taught* through silences, omissions, and in/actions—that they do not (really) matter. That said, Love (2019) argued that art can help re/imagine our worlds in agentic and life-sustaining ways:

Art can give this world hell ... Art first lets us see what is possible. It is our blueprint for the world we deserve and the world we are working toward. Abolitionist teaching is built on the radical imagination of collective memories of resistance, trauma, survival, love, joy, and cultural modes of expression and practices that push and expand the fundamental ideas of democracy. (pp. 100-101)

For us, our work alongside pre-service teachers is not only a way of "giv[ing] this world hell" (Love, 2019, p. 100), it is a way of creatively and collectively cultivate kinship by re/imagining worlds "that push and expand the fundamental idea of democracy" (p. 100)—worlds where everyone profoundly *matters*.

### Curriculum Counter-*Cartographies* and Composite Narratives

Taking a Bradforian<sup>7</sup> approach (i.e., reflect, research, layer, excavate), we invited pre-service teachers to queer normative and prohibitory approaches to *cartographic* representationalism through an experimental (abstract) move of (perpetual) creation or be(com)ing as an artistic/aesthetic and reflexive process (Varga & Agosto, 2020; Varga & Flores, 2021; Varga et al., 2021). In an assignment entitled "Curriculum Counter-*Cartographies*," pre-service teachers were tasked with (re)presenting some of their experiences within different curriculum-making "worlds" while reflecting upon the following considerations:

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<sup>7</sup> To do this, we showed students a video clip of Mark Bradford preparing for the 2017 Venice Biennale art exhibit, in which he unpacked his decision to feature materials of the world.

1. What people, places, events, communities, and stories have shaped you? How have you shaped them?
2. What is/are some of the personal, cultural, social, political, etc. histories/stories of these experiences and the places within which they have been composed?
3. What are the borders (both internal and external) that might be present in these experiences and places?
4. Who has (had) the power to draw the borders and/or tell the story(ies) of some of the places you've co-composed curriculum over time? Has this changed?
5. How do these curriculum-making experiences continue to shape you (as a future teacher)?

These guiding questions led to a variety of (material) responses that elicited a range of emotions during the in-class presentations of the counter-*cartographies*. Below, we present three examples of these counter-*cartographies*. Accompanying each example is a composite narrative (Duke, 2010; Johnston et al., 2021; Willis, 2019) that braids together pre-service teachers' responses/reflections, theoretically guided engagements, and our own researcher questions and comments. Our participants' musings are in *italics*, theoretical considerations are in regular text/font, and our thoughts are [bracketed]. This decision was reached to amplify the narrative voice of our participants while still fostering kinship between us as researchers, pre-service teachers, and each counter-*cartography*. Here we conceptualize voice as meaning the complex range of sensibilities (e.g., traumas, experiences, learnings, perspectives) that underpin someone's (narrative) thought patterns (Krappmann, 2010; Lundy & McEvoy, 2012). We believe composite narrative ma(r)king underscores this Special Issue's central theme of kinship by "reflect[ing] the complex theoretical categories, properties, and dimensions" (Johnston et al., 2021, p. 3) of story-telling and narrative construction/articulation.

### Examples of Maps

Maps—despite traditionally consisting of demarcations and linearity—are an inflection point for teacher/student inquiry into the conditions that oftentimes support/restrict normative and oppressive practices relating to the articulations of one's Self (Schofield, 2016). Pre-service teachers' (re)presentations illuminated that maps are more than "tool[s] for visually organizing thoughts, experiences, and ideas" (Pacheco & Velez, 2009, p. 274) and can be used to artistically/abstractly express diffractive, curricular, historical, queer, *and* imaginative (material) relationships. Further, while these artistic/abstract articulations do not necessarily convey the *cartographer's* actuations, they can serve as conduits for dialogue(s) about the layers of experience(s) that factor into identity formation/expression/projection and "what could be done to bring about the [educational] change that is needed" (Pacheco & Velez, 2009, p. 297). Put simply, each pre-service teacher was afforded the artistic capacity to express their (curricular) journey in their own unique way using materials that mattered to them. It is worth noting that unexpected embodiments of matter manifested during a majority of the group presentations. In particular, many of the (pre-service) counter-*cartographers* became emotional and released tears that were collectively categorized as cathartic and restorative.

**Counter-Cartography Example 1: Lungs**

**Figure 1. Participants' generated (lungs) counter-cartography.**

Just as “attunement is a consequence of use” (Ahmed, 2019, p. 43), the objects/stuff used in this counter-cartography signals a heightened awareness that curriculum maintains the capacity to be(come) “a life-making process” (Murphy et al., 2012, p. 221). *I’m an asthmatic with life-threatening allergies. My whole life has been shaped by this fact: where I can go, what I can do, where I can live.* This breath(making/taking) counter-cartography juxtaposes smooth (e.g., felt) and striated (e.g., lace) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) materials to represent the participants’ struggle with asthma. As these materials (e.g., smooth, striated) in respect create “nomad space and sedentary space” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 474), the uses of each contain affordances for thinking about tertiary conditions relating the articulation/expression of identity and curricular markers. Whereas smooth spaces (e.g., felt) “in principle are infinite, open, and unlimited in every direction” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 475), as conceptualized by Deleuze and Guattari, striated spaces (e.g., lace) suggest closed/ness, coding, and capitalism. *I decided to use a representation of my lungs to map my life and show where they have drawn breath. How have the places whose air sustained me been woven into who I am?* [Perhaps the tension between the uses of these two materials (e.g., felt, lace) can also be thought of as coordinates, to which we might ask: To what end have capitalistic logics influenced the very breath that this participant draws each day? We understand *breathing* a basic

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more-than-human necessity, yet issues of access and equity literally maintain a chokehold on this liberty. In particular, we are concerned with fees associated with products (e.g., inhalers) and medications allowing asthmatics to breathe.] *What are the events that have taken my breath away, and how have those shaped who I am as a teacher?* Importantly, this perspective suggests that curriculum can be conceptualized as a map or rather “a curriculum of lives” (Huber & Clandinin, 2005, p. 318). [Moreover, this set of lungs—which uses smooth and striated spaces—draws our attention to the imaginative possibilities of curriculum despite the myriad of ways that capitalistic and neoliberal forces strangle and restrict how curriculum is developed and implemented. From this perspective, we believe *learning* is a basic more-than-human right that unfortunately is not actualized/prioritized in either Canada or the United States.]

### Counter-Cartography Example 2: Dress



**Figure 2. Participants’ generated (dress) counter-cartography.**

Ahmed (2019) asserted, when “we are using something, it is being transformed” (p. 21). As this student’s counter-cartography so powerfully illustrates, that same something can also transform *us* during—and after—its use. *On the left sleeve of my dress, closest to my heart, I constructed an image of myself. This represents myself as a teacher.* Being mindful of the Bradforian approach to re/presentation by purposefully excavating and then re/layering areas of a dress that held meaning and *mattered* to her, this student (un/re-)made her relationship to the dress, her (curriculum-making)

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experiences, and herself. The visually stark re/presentation of the intricate patterns of lace cut in strategic places revealed a ‘fresh canvas’ in the background layer of fabric upon which she could re/imagine her curriculum-making worlds. [Emotion filling her voice as she presented her counter-cartography, this student clarified that she was inspired by Indigenous methodologies and knowledge systems to bead re/presentations of her growing understandings of her curriculum-making experiences in the areas she excavated. For us, this evokes a decolonial re/orientation of life-giving and life-sustaining un/learning of (neoliberal) borders.] *Closest to my heart, is a representation of love. Students who come into a classroom who do not feel loved or safe will not learn. I hope to keep an open heart in my classroom for my students, their parents or guardians, and my colleagues.* [We could not help but think of how use “offers a way of telling stories about things” (Ahmed, 2019, p. 22) and wonder: What stories are now (inter/intra-)connected with the now-excavated and layered dress? What stories have been (re)told and (re)woven around variegated cultures and worldviews? How have these (cultural) stories shapeshifted over the course of time, and what stories might be told in the future?] *With every student that walks into my classroom, I get to experience a whole other world.* In her presentation, this student wore her counter-cartography during her presentation [further adding to our conceptualization of kinship], and in doing so invited us into the worlds she inhabits in a profoundly powerful and humbling way. In echoing Sara Ahmed’s (2019) words, perhaps this counter-cartography underscores how to “use an object is to create a memory that is shared” (p. 20) and how, in wearing her counter-cartography, this student not only extended and (un/re-)made the biographical history of her kinship with this dress, she invited us to be part of this kinship for a brief moment in time—although that moment continues to lingers with(in) us all.

### Counter-Cartography Example 3: Burned Map



**Figure 3. Participants’ generated (burned) counter-cartography.**

This counter-cartography underscores the notion that excavation can take many different forms while illuminating how *queer* uses/implementations of curriculum offer unforeseen—and perhaps nomadic—entry points “to help people articulate physical/emotional experiences that can be challenging to convey through textual measures” (Varga & Flores, 2020, p. 98). *I think that I knew that to burn these locations into the wood was to relive things, even though I’d like to leave them in the past. This was especially true of my Washington location. I wanted to make each place match the depth that I felt during my time there.* [While the student has family history/ies in the state of Washington, notably, fire has a significant relevance to the location of this counter-cartographer’s learning institution and continues to inflict (more-than-human) trauma throughout the community.] However, by (re)conceptualizing “fire as a technologically formable matter” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 61), this example illustrates how curriculum can create a (queer) kinship to entities that create and reproduce trauma. Put differently, we understand the queer relationship between this map, map-maker, and fire, to be restorative insofar that fire—when re-cast through a curricular orientation—became a primary agent of healing. *I knew that Washington was going to be one that I would have to burn and scrape many times to get it deep enough. I feared that this was going to be like rubbing a wound over and over.* [Despite this positioning, we are reminded that fear and uncomfortable/ness can be(come) a powerful teacher and/or force of learning (Deleuze, 1988).] *But I was surprised to find that this process was actually quite healing for me. Being able to burn and excavate it was something that helped me remove some of the pain I associate with these experiences.* [Embedded in Mark Bradford’s artistic methodology is the notion of layering and excavating. We found it interesting that each student excavated each of their maps to different degrees. In the context of curriculum, how might presenting students with opportunities to (re)interpret directives (e.g., embrace a Bradforian methodology when making a counter-cartography) promote a greater sense of speculative understanding regarding the coordinates that helped shape (pre-service) teachers’ (messy) curricular worldings? Moreover, as this map demonstrates, spatial sensibilities relating to aesthetics, abstraction, and curriculum are subjectively navigated and in turn, responded to. Whereas the previous two examples of counter-cartographies (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2) reflected personal worldings, this example encompasses a world comprising several states on the West Coast of America.]

### Implications and Conclusions

As our students demonstrated with their counter-cartographies, (re)conceptualizing problematic tools (e.g., maps) through abstraction and materiality can significantly reshape our (e.g., educators, researchers, students) relationship to curriculum by exposing how multiplicitous worlds are (re)created and conceptualized. Importantly, we understand this project to be the result of a relationship across multiple worlds relating specifically to curriculum: school (worlding) curriculum and familial (worlding) curriculum (Lugones, 1987; Murphy et al., 2012). As each student spoke about their counter-cartographies, it was often apparent from the tone of their voices (in some cases), the presence of tears, and sometimes outright expressions that this project provided a space for healing; that abstraction provided a safe/brave landscape from which students could tell their stories in that particular or given time/space. Cultivating safe/brave spaces should remain a priority for all teachers, however, this project drew our attention to the way that safe/brave spaces are often ephemeral, despite teachers’ best efforts to sustain them. With this in mind, we encourage educators and researchers to continue to pursue speculative (re)imaginings of (inter/intra)-disciplinary/sectional) curriculum that promotes care, love, respect, trust, healing, and agency. Importantly, we

acknowledge that students do not owe us their stories in perpetuity<sup>8</sup>, regardless if they have made the decision to present their musings in a regular/singular class setting. Counter-*cartographies* allowed students to (up)hold this right and promoted a sense of ownership for students to have over their own story/ies. Whereas each map consisted of material coordinates, thus representing a sense of personal, yet, abstract history, every student was afforded the ability to decode the objects/stuff based on their comfort level. As Ahmed (2019) (paradoxically) points to, “history cannot simply be perceived on the surface of the object, even if how objects surface or take shape is an effect of such histories” (p. 241).

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the “map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification[ . . . ]It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation[ . . . ]It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 12). When (re)conceptualized through the gaze of abstraction, borders which are commonly “set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them” (Anzaldúa, 1987/1999, p. 3) begin to disappear/transform into liminal spaces of possibility and promise (Menon & Saleh, 2018; Varga et al., 2021; Varga & Flores, 2021). Through appreciating and delving into pre-service teachers’ (re)presentations of both curricular experiences (e.g., school-worlding, familial-worlding) we developed a more complex kinship (Benjamin, 2018; Bird-Rose, 2022; Donald, 2016), one that embraces difference(s) and rejects colonial, neoliberal logics and hierarchies, to our students and thus became more attuned to our own relationship(s) to curriculum. We remain optimistic that this project will inspire other (teacher) educators to (re)consider and (re)imagine the powerful potentialities relating to (curricular) identity expression/articulation through the merging of traditionally static disciplinary tools—such as maps—and abstract art.

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<sup>8</sup> Each counter-*cartographer* that contributed to this article consented to have their work highlighted in future articles/classes. We acknowledge the paradox of publishing ideations of students’ stories in a digital journal and this project’s intention on sustaining narrative agency, but do so as an act of affirmation that is rooted in love/care.

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