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# TEACHER CANDIDATES IN THE URBAN CANADIAN CLASSROOM: REREADING THE DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP PARADIGM THROUGH ATOM EGOYAN'S *ADORATION*

Linda Radford

**Abstract:** *In this paper, inspired by the challenge Atom Egoyan provides for educators in Adoration, I offer the film as a heuristic to digital citizenship to read two university driven digital initiatives. I argue that digital citizenship is always emerging, and can be understood as a form of currere, where the personal and historical underpin "digital acts" that rewrite the notion of subjectivities as being disembodied in the seemingly atemporal space of being online. As a teacher educator who is part of the Urban Communities Cohort (UCC) team, one of the five different streams incoming Bachelor of Education students choose upon entering the program at the University of Ottawa, I am interested in exploring the concept of currere as it applies to digital citizenship and asking why it matters to urban schools in Ottawa. My inquiry is part of a larger project entitled, Developing Mobile Media Spaces for Civic Engagement in Urban Priority Schools, located in Ottawa, Canada that is supported by Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Insight Grant.*

**Key Words:** Teacher education, urban schools, digital citizenship, currere, film, cosmopolitanism

## Introduction

Arguably one of the most compelling Canadian movies that takes up digital youth is Atom Egoyan's (2008) award-winning *Adoration*. This feature film, directed in non-linear segments which leaves the viewer with the feeling of being in multiple temporalities, left to puzzle together the plot, features a 16-year old protagonist named Simon who writes a controversial assignment for his French class that intertwines his family history with a news story involving terrorism. Encouraged by his teacher, Sabine, to take the story further and further, Simon claims his mother was seduced by a Middle Eastern man after which she naïvely tries to board a plane without knowing her husband has planted a bomb in her bag. The result is a controversy that blends a fictional class assignment and the reality of terrorism, and the debate goes viral on the Internet. The film hinges on critical scenes where Simon engages in productive and impassioned debates about citizenship and belonging, all while doubly mediated on his computer screen. That is, by putting his story on the Internet, it is promptly taken up by a multitude of viewers. At the same time, he views the viewers responding to his story in real time (Figure 1).

Given the routine nature of youth being online all the time, Simon sitting in his bedroom on the Internet with twelve people speaking back to him leaves us with the feeling that the scene is both normal -- even banal -- and also somehow revolutionary. In exploring the political role of subjectivity in cyberspace, Foucault's concept of the transformation of power as applied to the digital (Isin & Ruppert, 2015) comes to mind as we see Simon act through the Internet. One large group chat becomes a multitude of simultaneous voices about Simon's provocative narrative crisscrossing lines of debate around terrorism, loss, xenophobia, values, and questions of free will and determinism. Like rapid fire, his debate even extends beyond his peer group to include people who

mourn the accident that didn't happen, and those who use Simon's story as a means of pushing their hatred further like the anti-Semitic discourse of a neo-Nazi sympathizer and the outrage of a holocaust survivor. In *Being Digital Citizens* (2015), Isin and Ruppert argue that the Internet allows "doing things with words and saying words with things [devices always connected to the Internet]" and this dynamic cultivates a space of digital citizenship whereby taking action online through words constitutes a speech act that lays the groundwork that they term "digital rights claims" (p. 2). Sabine's unorthodox work in the classroom and failure to regulate Simon's on and off line behavior ironically paves the way for Simon's creative, yet critical journey involving others who are affected by this story and who grasp at a range of possible truths through their dialogue. We might reimagine the chaos of voices talking to, and on top of one another, and oftentimes clashing as one of the defining structures of citizenship borne out of such "digital acts."



**Figure 1.** Hypermediation: Simon, while eating a bowl of corn flakes, engages with his classmates about issues of citizenship through his fantastical narrative that his father was a monster and his mother a naïve and unwitting accomplice.

For years, I have been showing this film to my students in the Education program at the University of Ottawa, in a range of courses -- Globalization and Citizenship, Internationalization of Curriculum Studies, Racism and Anti-Racism, and Schooling and Society, to name a few. The main themes drawn from a postcolonial/decolonization lens are often overshadowed by my students' seeming infatuation with the fact that Sabine is fired for perceived transgressions. She pushes the pedagogical and moral boundaries of teaching French in a Toronto high school classroom. Ultimately, she pays the price for her decision to encourage Simon to flesh out his school assignment by losing her job because his fictional assignment goes viral, drawing the attention of school administration and their ire about the unregulated online behavior of her student. My students' focus stems from their fear of their digital footprint -- that what is said online stays there. In Bachelor of Education programs, one of the main lessons in professional ethics amounts to a stern warning about posting anything unsavoury, political, or damaging on social media because teachers represent a supposedly higher moral ideal than other professions. The publication of the Ontario College of Teachers, *Professionally Speaking*, often features articles about teachers' responsibilities online. Its most recent article on the subject (June 2016), entitled "Going Social," reminds teachers across the

profession that “you’re a role model” and that they “must be aware that what they do in their private lives can be subject to scrutiny” (p.29). In *Being Digital Citizens*, Isin and Ruppert (2015) again remind us that “the struggle over the things we say and do through the Internet is now a political struggle of our times, and so is the Internet itself” (p.2). And nowhere do we see this more than in the field of education. Teachers’ self-policing of digital online practices trickles down to how they teach students in their practicum placements. In drawing out these responses to the film in terms of the moral regulation of the digital space, I work towards having my students read further to consider what Egoyan opens up in representing the political subject “not as a coherent and unified being but as a composite of multiple subjectivities that emerge from different situations and relations” (p.4). Furthermore,

The citizen, it is observed, engages (or fails to), participates (or fails to), and receives (or fails to) rights and entitlements. The figure, then, is largely an already present figure or problem figure. To put it differently, the figure of the citizen is a problem of government: how to engage, cajole, coerce, incite, invite, or broadly encourage it to inhabit forms of conduct that are *already deemed to be appropriate to being a citizen*. What is lost here is the figure of the citizen as an embodied subject of experience who acts through the Internet for making rights claims. (p. 9, emphasis mine)

Through Egoyan’s film, we can see how the digital citizen comes into being through the dynamic of the technological and political. What the above quotation makes clear is that cyberspace and the space of the so-called “real world” are not mutually exclusive. Invoking Foucault, citizens are subjectivized online *not* as disembodied beings, but as subject to same bounded laws, expectations of performance, and ideas as in conventional conceptualizations of good citizenship.

Using *Adoration* as a heuristic for digital citizenship, I contend that Simon’s process of connecting his personal history to political and historical events enables him to make digital rights claims, and, thus, he comes into being as a digital citizen. This can be likened to the process of *currere*, which is a curriculum studies practice whose history I will explicate in the literature review section later in this paper but introduce here. *Currere*, defined first by Pinar in 1975, is a process in which I ask my students to engage, as new teachers, as a means to prepare them to enter into dialogue with their students about ideas of citizenship, identity, and culture. *Currere* has four stages: regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetic. The *regressive* stage returns us to our autobiographical and educational past, as when Simon has flashbacks of his real childhood and the images are conflated with the enactments in his mind’s eye of his fictional mother boarding the plane, which never happened. The class assignment reawakens Simon’s memories of loss of his parents, but the details remain fuzzy even until the end of the film, at which the viewer is still not certain if the (finally) clear picture is Simon’s recollection or not. The *progressive* turn of *currere* asks us to imagine our perceived future and the movie is an embodiment of this stage. The entire plot centers around the possible future of Simon’s story, and by extension his life, the larger the lie becomes. The twists and turns to the narrative that he invents is a reaching into the depths of cyberspace to understand himself by understanding the self as other. The next stage is the *analytical* stage, in which one looks at his or her educational past, present, and future together. What is the atemporal scene that is under construction on account of the many twists and turns of Simon’s story? The online dialogue calls forth historical trauma re-articulated by Simon’s online commenters, combined with the nonlinear telling of his family history in a space open to trolls, followers, and friends alike. Finally, there is the *synthetic* turn, which relates

the previous stages to the larger political and cultural context. This stage is enacted simultaneous to the previous three in this film as the political and cultural milieu of the news article is the impetus for the entire narrative in the first place. The stages of *currere*, by definition, are not linear. Rather, they are related in a cyclic manner, speaking to one another. Each of the four stages is reflective and situated temporally -- speaking backwards and forwards at once, thus challenging presentism.

In this paper, inspired by the challenge Egoyan provides for educators, I offer a reading of two university driven digital initiatives with and against *Adoration*. I argue that digital citizenship is always emerging, and can be understood as a form of *currere*, where the personal and historical intersect in the seemingly atemporal space of being online. As a teacher educator who is part of the Urban Communities Cohort (UCC) team, one of the five different streams incoming Bachelor of Education students choose upon entering the program at the University of Ottawa, I am interested in exploring the concept of *currere* as it applies to digital citizenship and asking why it matters to urban schools in Ottawa. My inquiry is part of a larger project entitled, *Developing Mobile Media Spaces for Civic Engagement in Urban Priority Schools*, located in Ottawa, Canada that is supported by Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Insight Grant.<sup>1</sup> The basis for the grant was to extend research garnered from observing classrooms devoid of progressive pedagogies that employ digital modes of engagement, and from living and working in an urban community where digital technologies and social media have the potential to galvanize citizens around educational issues but seemingly fail to do so. This ongoing five year project seeks to advance knowledge of existing digital and pedagogical practices used by teacher candidates to foster students' digital literacies; investigate digital media across the curriculum to create and evaluate learning experiences to support active digital citizenship; to provide a model of sustainable Faculty/school partnership for other teacher educators; and to exemplify pedagogical strategies that support urban high school students as active digital citizens now and in the future. In the following literature review, I take up the concepts of digital citizenship and *currere* so to provide a framework for my reading the two scenes of digital citizenship practices at the University of Ottawa -- what I will be calling *digital currere* in the section that follows.

## Review of the literature

### *Digital Citizenship*

While in this paper I am arguing that Egoyan's film adds to the conversation taking place about what digital citizenship is, digital citizenship is defined in many ways in academic journals, teacherly periodicals, government white papers, and popular literature. Bearden (2016) offers us a straightforward way into the concept, suggesting that digital citizenship "encompasses a broad range of behaviours and skills needed in today's digital environments" (p. 1). Similarly, Heick (2013) speaks specifically to educators about digital citizenship, contending that it is "[t]he quality of habits, actions, and consumption patterns that impact the ecology of digital content and communities" (n.p). In all of these definitions, Canadian students are presumed to be "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), a term which refers to individuals who were "born or brought up during the age of digital technology (Oxford Online, 2016). This assumption intersects with the fact that Canadians spend more time online than citizens of any other country in the world, averaging 45 hours per month (Canada Online, 2013). Ribble (2015) reminds us that society has shifted underneath our feet, "to the point where it is often difficult to separate the technology from the users" (p. 20). What is at stake during this age of posthumanism (Hayles, 1999) is the role of formal education in the shaping of student

participation in civics, particularly when citizenship is still an “essentially contested concept” (Beck, 1996).

The concept of digital citizenship is taken up in schooling as a form of character education (Ohler, 2012). Character education online mostly consists of teaching students to be informed participants in society by choosing and consuming reliable political and cultural information; avoiding participating in various forms of cyberbullying, and; be aware of trolling, sexting, and other dangerous practices online (Ribble, 2015; Crompton, 2015; Gibbs, 2015). However, Ohler (2010), as a futurist, offers a fresh definition of what digital citizenship might mean:

...a new perspective of citizenship has entered the public narrative that feels so different that we have given it its own name: digital citizenship. This term arises from the need to reconsider who we are in light of the globally connected infosphere in which we find ourselves. That is, given citizenship seems to be directly related to behaviour and social organization, and given that the Digital Age facilitates new kinds of both, we need to update our perspectives about citizenship to provide a more complete picture of who we are. (p. 2)

This definition expands the notion of digital citizenship by avoiding prescribing specific practices. Rather, Ohler’s (2010) definition leaves room for new individual practices, engagements, and activities.

Since our online behavior is both public and permanent (once uploaded, content is difficult to remove), we might find ourselves falling back into old debates which propose that on the one hand, citizenship is a matter of public concern, and on the other, it is about private membership and preserving personal choice. As expressed by McLaughlin (1992), this juxtaposition can be named “thick” and “thin” citizenship education, where the former involves inclusive, inter/active, process-based methods, and the latter passive, didactic, civics-based, content-led, and exclusive practices. This structured binary is not always maintained online, yet it is easy to spot instances of the passive/active dynamic surfacing, as students can choose to be mere consumers of information presented to them or active critics who can debate, envision, and propose alternative ways to engage with the structures of democracy (Arthur and Davison, 2000). Either way, the online forum makes it easier to express one’s opinion as a post or a “like” on Facebook, to use one example. As others have critiqued, passive forms of participation, such as “clicktivism” or “slacktivism” to employ marketing tactics to promote causes without having many real effects on society (White, 2010).

Recent scholarship, however, challenges this critique, particularly taking up the concept of “signal boosting” in relation to the idea of “community cultivators” (Aberl, 2016). Community cultivators are people who spread knowledge about community issues that need social, financial, or emotional support. The people sharing the message often re-post or re-blog without adding their own personal commentary, and “[t]housands of examples can be found by searching “#signalboost” on Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram” (Aberl, 2016, p. 47). Questions about digital violence have emerged on account of hate campaigns such as the controversial twitter hashtags in France, including #SiMonFilsEstGay, #SiMaFilleRameneUnNoir, #UnBonJuif, and #SiJetaisNazi (see Chrisafis, 2013). Isin and Ruppert (2015) look at all of these different power dynamics, arguing:

that citizen subjects are summoned and called upon to act through the Internet and, as subjects of power, respond by enacting themselves not only

with obedience and submission but also subversion. If indeed we understand cyberspace as a space of relations between and among bodies acting through the Internet, ways of being digital citizens is a site of struggle between virtuous, malicious, righteous, and indifferent acts. (p. 12)

With subjectivities written into being through the performance of writing the self online, the boundaries between the physical body and the perception that the online persona as disembodied become blurred. As well, as we have seen in the recent momentum gained by the #Black Lives Matter movement, social media has the ability to galvanize individuals to take to the streets in the name of civil rights and equality. Digital citizenship thus has the power to bring people together in the name of prejudice and divisive politics as much as social justice.

### *Currere*

Reading the literature cited above alongside the film *Adoration* is informative. In Emma Wilson's (2010) interview with Atom Egoyan, he explains that the power of digital storytelling for Simon is to "test out th[e] fantasy" that his father was not a monster. Egoyan explains, "[t]he technology accelerates the process in a way that would otherwise be unimaginable... It releases different energies that become part of his manic journey. He finds communities that would never have existed in the physical world" (p. 34). In the borderlands between online and offline worlds, like Egoyan, we can begin to ask about the limits of certain narrative forms and what the role of provocative discourse might be in shaping a new understandings of citizenship.

*Currere*, as outlined in the steps earlier in this paper, asks how students and teachers experience their lived curriculum through narrative. There is an emphasis on the expressive act, a challenge to considering one's subjectivity as a story told with the belief that there is an objective truth. In other words, there is no singular way to tell the story of one's life. As part of emphasizing the expressive act, Pinar and Grumet (1976/2005) establish that curriculum cannot be considered a thing (a noun) and it is also not a process (a verb). It is a social action, and a hope and a product of our labour to learn, changing as we change through time and as we touch different histories. Taking a view of subjectivity as never complete, subjects occupy multiple, shifting, differing, and moving positions with relation to culture, gender, race, and sexuality. Thus, part of *currere* might be to inspect the fractures or dis/jointedness in the unified (Cartesian) subject. Speaking about cyborg pedagogy, Garoian and Gaudelius (2001) describe how our identities become aesthetically absorbed into cyberspace on account of the embodiment experienced by being online. One form of resistance on account of being online, using *currere*, is for students to challenge the "rich" narratives that permeate educational discourse as Pinar (1994) explains. However, Garoian and Gaudelius (2001) go on to describe this process:

When students identify their own ways of performing what they have learned in school, they transform the curriculum from a reified construct to one that is dynamic, fluid, and diverse in its interpretations. What *currere* offers cyborg pedagogy is the possibility to expose, examine, and critique the oppressive conditions of digital media, its ability to reproduce identity, and to eradicate the body's cultural and historical difference. (p. 344)

This is attentive to the body's excesses; namely, that which flows over the boundaries of what is means to be contained by the definition of "student" or "teacher." As well, it returns us to Isin and Ruppert's (2015) concept of the embodied citizen who through

experiences on and offline makes rights claims that illuminate how normalized subjectivities might constitute the provisional in education, including such categories of race, class, gender, and ethnicity.

## **A lens for understanding digital On Twitter games**

*Currere* serves as an autobiographical theory and method to study the lived experiences (curriculum) of individuals in educational settings. As such, it becomes a beginning point for the teacher candidates to understand their “emplacement – temporal as well as spatial ...that confront[s] the historical moment...[and] reactivates the past in the present” (p. 51). Furthermore, Kanu and Glor (2006) remind us that:

[t]he method of *currere* foregrounds the relationship between narrative (life history) and practice, and provides opportunities to theorize particular moments in one’s educational history, to dialogue with these moments, and examine possibilities for change. (p. 104)

In this paper, I use the term *digital currere* to refer to practices associated with “comprehensions of alterity, including the self-knowledge that enables understanding of others” (Pinar, 2013, p. 50) through the digital realm. As Egoyan’s *Adoration* illustrates, the spatial and the temporal are dispersive online, as students sit in their homes with their different cultures and politics, confronting this historical moment of the telling of the story they perceive to be real. The recognition of alterity takes social form in the digital, as people share ideas about respecting others, the value of dialogue, and how growing up in different circumstances influences one’s beliefs.

Furthermore, one of the ways *currere* takes form is through what Pinar (2013) calls a “cosmopolitan curriculum” (p. 49). The reason for my interest in cosmopolitanism is because the Urban Communities Cohort is focused on the perspectives of a variety of communities: local, indigenous, new immigrants, among others. This diversity of perspectives contributes to the concept of the “passionate lives” (Pinar, 2013) that form the basis of a cosmopolitan curriculum. Pinar (2013) explains: “Focused less on institutional allocations of coursework than on its subjective structuration, a curriculum for cosmopolitanism cultivates comprehensions of alterity” (p. 50). An example of such can be found in *Adoration*, where we see students grappling with issues that are commonplace in the news yet are formative for them as young adults confronting the possible reality of issues of terrorism, questions of ideology, and the pressures of capitalism in their social circle as it applies to their classmate, Simon. The vocabulary of “values,” “morals,” “participation,” and “civic engagement” that are rehearsed in social studies classrooms are suddenly made real and urgent in the digital realm. Students’ subjectivities are formed in and through heated discussions that challenge their concepts of self. In other words, Egoyan’s film adds to the conversation in educational research by showing us that students are authors of the definition of digital citizenship when they, as Pinar (2013) would say, “grapple with the problem of my life and flesh” (p. 59). In a cosmopolitan curriculum, such grappling is inextricably linked to subjectivity and a recursive examination of the self, bringing practices of citizenship in direct contact with *currere*, both shaped by the digital.

## Analysis

### *Teacher Education, Digital Citizenship and Egoyan's Adoration*

Returning now to a pedagogy that uses *currere* as a means of attending to Ohler's (2010) definition of digital citizenship that challenges us to paint "a more complete picture of who we are" (p. 2), I provide two cases, one that involves blogging and the other that employs augmented reality. These two projects help to define the currency of the concept of digital citizenship, allowing for rich complexity of the plethora of individual experiences that are constantly unfolding in the digital in teacher education. Working alongside the teacher candidates in the urban cohort, we moved out from behind the curtain of the university's virtual campus of Blackboard Learn. To start the journey, students read Cynthia Chambers' (2006) seminal curriculum studies article, "Where Do I Belong? Canadian Curriculum as Passport Home." Reading their own lives with and against Chambers' coming of age story in which she shares intimate details of her life including an ethnocentric/settler upbringing, homelessness, love, and alcoholism, students begin to develop their own cosmopolitan curriculum. They attend to the facets of 'the autobiographical, historical and biospheric' (p. 49), which are part of Pinar's cosmopolitan curriculum. They begin doing this in a number of digital ways such as establishing blogs and using apps. Watching *Adoration* and my earlier journey with students reading the film inspired the pedagogy that underpins both projects – the blogging and augmented reality app. And the film thus became a heuristic that enables a reading of dimensions of digital citizenship in both projects. In this paper, I've returned to running after the fluid concept of digital citizenship that all too often is hemmed in by regulatory discourses that leave out its generative personal and political nature.

*Blogging to Reactivate the past in the present.* The first project involves teacher candidates' creation of blogs. Using blogs (choosing from a number of platforms such as wix, blogger, weebly, and wordpress) allows the teacher candidates to branch out and include a wide variety of modes of engagement. More than just a repository of pedagogical content for the classroom, teacher candidates often include photo essays, twitter feeds, poetry, news links, external videos and sources that they find inspirational. This is all part of working through their subjectivities as they absorb the concept of being a teacher. While many of them, as our emerging data for this project reveals, did not explicitly equate this with a form of digital citizenship, through these paths, they invent and reinvent the definition of teacher, one teacher candidate at a time. Interestingly, in *Adoration*, Simon's teacher, Sabine, pushes Simon to work through his unconventional interpretation of her routine assignment to extraordinary ends. Though taken to an extreme, Simon's teacher explores the question of "Where Do I belong?" as a person who has had a traumatic past. Both of Sabine's parents were killed in a civil war, prompting her immigration to Canada. Through Simon's engagement with the assignment, she reads for the plot of her own loss, which is the process of *currere* that involves looking to how the past is enacted in the present. Sabine's lingering in the regressive stage of *currere* involves her return to her memory of the past "to recapture it as it was and as it hovers over the present" (Pinar et al., 1995). Interestingly, Simon's parallel act of mourning the loss of his parents -- his *digital currere* taking place across time and space -- is the impetus for Sabine to continue encouraging him to develop his narrative. In so doing, she lives vicariously through Simon's progressive stage, wherein he free associates his future, looking at "what is not yet the case, what is not yet present" (Pinar, 1994, p.24).

Like Sabine, the teacher in *Adoration*, the teacher candidates at the University of Ottawa, engaged in the process of *digital currere*, remind us that the identity we commonly associate with the trope of “teacher” is not fixed -- just as educational research has begun to show us there are many different forms and manifestations of digital citizenship. Their blogs and wikis are not just highly individualized, but also contain passionate opinions, political leanings, and forceful ideas about both education and the world. While to some, the choice to write the self publicly online might be risky for a future career, one might contend that it is part of a larger project of evolving the concept of the contemporary citizen. Citizenship in this contemporary model, as Isin and Ruppert (2015) contend, necessarily goes beyond accepting the nationalist view of a rights-endowed citizen in favour of the individual whose subjectivity hinges on making rights claims in the digital.

An example of a rights claim that emerges from a passionate life lived online can be traced in the work of a teacher education student named Mary<sup>ii</sup> who writes on her teacher-blog of memories of growing up in Africa. After reading Thomas King’s (2012) *The Inconvenient Indian*, Mary responds with her own cosmopolitan curriculum from her past before immigrating to Canada:

I remember during our visits to the village, some of our uncles & grandparents will tell us history of our people; the land; our culture; etc. as we sit outside in the moonlight; their narration wasn’t in a strict sense but it was true stories of our people and how we have journeyed so far, to us it was history... Did we get the whole story of what happened in their youth; did we get all the facts on why some of them completely rejected the white man and their education, medicine, soap, clothes, food etc; of course not, we may only see through a glass darkly and get just a glimpse of history.

Mary’s blog response, entitled “Reminiscing,” first works through the regressive stage, a gathering of past memories -- the importantly, *educational* experience of being there, in the village, learning through the stories told by elders. As Pinar describes in *Autobiography, politics, and sexuality: Essays in curriculum theory* (1994), by recording these past memories, Mary brings the past into the present. Moving forward to the analytical stage of *currere*, Mary’s post about reading King’s history of Indigenous peoples in Canada informs her present moment. Mary writes that the King quotation that “[o]ne of the difficulties with trying to contain any account of Indians in North America in a volume as modest as [*The Inconvenient Indian*] is that it can’t be done” inspired her connection to the concepts of leaving behind the need to know why members of her culture “completely rejected the white man.” The metaphor of glimpsing “through a glass darkly” to reveal a partial history is a revelation that constitutes the synthetical stage, whereby the historical past informs Mary’s childhood memories which are then recalled in the present moment in her formation as a new teacher. Combined with her reading of King, Mary brings us into the present under the moonlight, so to speak. Speaking of the journey of her people “so far,” Mary looks forward for herself and others like her, invoking the progressive stage. I would contend that the blog writing is the synthetical stage, whereby Mary brings together the strands of the regressive, progressive, and analytic, to re-emerge in the “lived present and interrogates its meaning” (Kanu & Glor, 2006, p. 105). Disrupting the focus on a moral disposition stemming from a rational subject, the blogging becomes a mechanism for digital acts as well as living within the affordances of technology. The political significance here is that the blogging is a response to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Call to Action* (TRC) (2015); it is a recognition, within the field of

education, of how colonialism eradicated the strength and diversity of indigenous peoples in North America.

*Triggering history and augmenting realities using Aurasma.* The second example involves the use of the mobile app Aurasma ([www.aurasma.com](http://www.aurasma.com)) that also enters the topic of the TRC (2015). Aurasma has been popularized in advertising, but has been reimaged in all sorts of pedagogical contexts.<sup>iii</sup> Users of this app have transformed its purpose through inventiveness and creativity both of which are referred to as 21<sup>st</sup> century learning competencies (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016). Also taking up the topic of Reconciliation and the Call to Action, teacher candidates created Auras, which are video montages triggered by locations. The locations and events captured in the Auras were key for the teacher candidates to tell the stories they wanted to tell about colonization, decolonization, reconciliation and responsibility. This assignment allowed students the freedom to read themselves with and against the prescribed curriculum and the space we call the University of Ottawa that is located on unceded<sup>iv</sup> Algonquin territory.

In studying Indigenous history and its absence on the University of Ottawa's campus, teacher candidates created films that represented the reconfiguration of their thoughts and physical engagement with the space that has long neglected Indigenous histories, knowledge and epistemologies. As Pinar reminds us, "understanding is instead a retrospective judgment rendered by those who have been reconfigured by what they have studied and how they have lived" (p.50). In looking to what teacher candidates are doing with their Auras, I remain mindful that the difficult knowledge they are coming up against and might even be resisting in and through their work, gives us a glimpse into what challenges our subjectivities and the ways that we see ourselves in the world. As one participant, Thomas, wrote about his venture into learning about Anishinaabe teaching practices, which included a trip to a reserve in Quebec, in preparation for making his Aura:

I stumbled upon an article entitled "Stories, Dreams, and Ceremonies – Anishinaabe Ways of Learning" by Leanne Simpson. Leanne spent some time on an Anishinaabeg reserve conducting observational research. In her work, she captures a few key principles within the internal transmission of Anishinaabe cultural learning...I have gained a tremendous amount of respect for the deep sense of spiritual belonging that is associated with Anishinaabeg culture. Indeed, I was enlightened to the fact that any learning experience should be treated as a life-long process built off of the act of self-reflection and sharing. I believe all educational models would benefit from incorporating this notion within their basic foundation.

In his writing, Thomas describes how education should be about *acts* of self-reflection, and his entry into the space of the digital in the form of a public blog for the course. Like Thomas, the other teacher candidates in the course were able to use the digital to narrativize their subjective engagements with the world in new ways, which then become part of their autobiographical structuring. This happens in and out of time, where the present of decolonization comes crashing up against the monolithic institutions such as universities that thrive on historically entrenched hierarchies that champion Western epistemological traditions. The important work of decolonization begins to take place through narrative engagements with the self precisely because teacher candidates continue to study on Algonquin territory through their whole program. Digital acts (Isin & Ruppert, 2015) are part of becoming a teacher. Using apps like Aurasma become both authority and rebellion. The jarring reality of being on unceded land also forces us as

researchers alongside the teacher candidates to re-examine our places as citizens. Digital projects such as the Aurasma bring to life Chambers' question of where we *all* belong, particularly in this academic hierarchy that goes from the university classroom down to preschool. Along the way, it helps to unravel the hierarchy that we come to rely on to validate our very existences as learners and teachers.

Returning to Pinar's (2013) description of the subjective movements of a cosmopolitan curriculum, we learn that "[t]he force of history determines us, as victims and beneficiaries and all points in-between, as it demands that we reconstruct what it has done to us" (p. 54). In *Adoration*, Egoyan provides us with a glimpse into just such a curriculum. The students' speaking from their homes via the split screen into Simon's bedroom, debate the determinism of history in producing victims and beneficiaries. At the same time, Simon, through the four stages of *digital currere*, reconstructs his personal narrative to help himself understand what happened to his real parents who died in a horrific car accident and were, in fact, not terrorists. In trying to understand the larger lived curriculum of teachers in the Bachelor of Education program, I learn from the Aurasma project how interacting with the history of how Indigenous peoples have been treated and marginalized has shaped their subjectivities. Using the progressive and regressive structuring of *currere*, I encourage them to identify how they relate to the place of their education (that is, the University of Ottawa), its Westernized and sanitized curriculum. The analytical stage enables students to unpack the implications of these two features for their future practice. In undertaking the final, syncretical moment in the *currere* process, teacher candidates can question their own positionality along the spectrum between victims and beneficiaries as they reconsider Canada's genocide and the TRC. Entering the field at a time when education is touted as the key to Reconciliation, the work of writing themselves into the narrative as new teachers is crucial.

## Conclusion

### *The Afterlife of Films*

How do the above examples help illustrate the overall question of what engaging with different forms of digital participation and technology in the classroom might offer to students becoming digital citizens? The experience of the film character Simon provides a lens to understand what social forms student subjectivities take when students are asked to grapple with regimes of power and surveillance that intersect their private lives. Like Simon, who enters several online communities globally on account of his story going viral, the pedagogical experiment with digital practices, in the context of the SSHRC funded project, aims to support a curriculum that weaves student interests with their digital engagements both inside and outside of the classroom. And just as Simon is motivated by what happens in school to explore and narrativize and re-narrativize his story online – for better or worse – we want to push our teacher candidates so that their students might be similar to Simon in how they engage their lived curricula in digital worlds. This breathes life into the definition of curriculum, which is still often treated as static even while we know it is dynamic, constantly under revision, and undergoing re-authorship.

Through the lens of the exploration herein of digital participatory communities, informed by a reading of *Adoration*, I illustrate how students come to know history through themselves and challenge the boundaries of their own subjectivities. Foregoing a slip into functionality around the use of technology, digital communities that emerge organically and with autobiographical, historical and biospheric narrations illustrate "passionate lives," what we might imagine of teachers who will be facilitating learning

with youth in our urban classrooms. Together, through *digital currere*, they can reach for ways to enhance their experience of online realms, taking up cosmopolitan curricula and questioning what kind of civic engagements take place while broadcasting “live” with others in the world. Following Pinar (2013), digital citizenship embedded in a cosmopolitan curriculum becomes significant in “its provision of passages between the past and present” (p. 49). I offer insight into teacher education by illuminating how teachers’ digital acts – despite the culture of censorship that pervades educational discourse – provides a space where the personal and political are symbolized. These symbolizations help to grow our future public intellectuals – the teachers of our children. Learning to participate in discourse with others beyond boundaries -- of language, nationality, political views, and disciplines, and even bodies versus machines -- challenges us to question the fixed conceptualizations of digital citizenship.

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## Biographical information

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<sup>ii</sup> Participant names in this paper are pseudonyms.

<sup>iii</sup> This project arose from my collaborative work with Dr. Avril Aitken of Bishop's University.

<sup>iv</sup> Interestingly, in the writing of this paper, I noted that the word "unceded" is not recognized as a word in the English language according to the Microsoft dictionary associated with Microsoft Office Suite. Another colonial and corporate slip?