Tracing the threads
A curriculum study of the dialogue of “otherness” in the histories of public and independent schooling

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This text is a postmodern, historical analysis that seeks to trouble the distinction between the “private” and the “public” that is traditionally drawn in educational history and theory by examining the histories of public schools and independent schools around the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization. This work is unique in its focus on the histories of independent schoolings as being in dialogue with those of public schooling. Through a historical and theoretical examination of the dialogical space in-between the private/public divide in education around these three interrelated topics, this work seeks to troubles the private/public distinction, exploring the possibilities and futurities for curriculum work and education in the postmodern space in-between public schools and independent schools. It raises questions regarding what defines the structures of schooling in the United States as well as how contrasts between public and private spaces question traditional notions of democratic education.

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Dedications
For Ellie and Charlie
and the glory of our Maker
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INTRODUCTION

This work is a postmodern, historical analysis that seeks to trouble the private/public distinction that is traditionally drawn in educational history and theory by examining the histories of public schools and independent schools around the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization. Although there is much literature and research regarding these topics within the context of public schooling, much of it is ahistorical in many respects. There is much less scholarly work discussing these topics in the sector of independent schooling. The majority of the literature on the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization in schooling takes an either/or perspective, in which the interconnectivity of the histories of private and public schooling are isolated or dichotomized. This work is unique in its focus on the histories of independent schoolings as in dialogue with those of public schooling. Through a historical and theoretical examination of the dialogical space of the in-between of the private/public divide in education around these three interrelated topics, this work seeks to troubles the private/public distinction and explores the possibilities and futurities for curriculum work and education in the postmodern space in-between public schools and independent schools.

The concept of a dialogical history work raises questions about the nature of dialogue in a postmodern world, as well as what this dialogue looks like when examined historically from the postmodern perspective. This is related to the concepts of otherness that are within public schooling and independent schooling and how these have developed historically as others. This topic is also related to the way in which otherness can be understood as a concept that has much to do with the public/private distinction. It beekons inquiry into the presence of otherness in identity, and how this otherness can be used in both empowering and disempowering ways.

These topics are the focus of chapter 2. In this chapter, I discuss the notion of a postmodern historical perspective and the ways in which this can be used to trouble the notion of the traditional distinction between private and public beginning with an exploration with an emphasis on the works of Ankersmit (1998, 2001) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1986). Ankersmit explores the ways in which history from a postmodern perspective emphasizes the idea of representation, in contrast with a modernist approach to history focusing on description. Bakhtin introduced the idea of dialogism in understanding in relation to linguistics and art. I suggest that Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism is revised and understood differently in postmodernism, where there is a movement from binary dualisms and permanent structure, and movement towards a conceptualization of understanding as being embodied. This does not negate the possibility of dialogue, and therefore dialogism, in the postmodern, but suggests that it is of a different nature, more celebratory than communicative. I employ the works of poststructuralist philosophers Foucault (1970, 1972, 1994), Deleuze and Guatarri (1987), and Derrida (1977, 1995) to explore the understanding of the possibility of dialogism in a postmodern history.
A disclaimer must be made at the introduction of this work with regards to postmodernism. Postmodernism is often critiqued as a relativistic paradigm for understanding the world that leaves no place for objective Truth. This is certainly the argument of many postmodernists, even some of whose ideas I employ in this text. However, I do not agree that there is no place for this concept of Truth. I do believe that we often assert our own individual truths and perspectives in a dogmatic fashion that leaves little space for creativity or unity. As the idiom states, a broken clock is still right twice a day. This is where I believe certain postmodern understandings of dialogue and history are useful. They call us to be aware of our own subjectivities in our understandings of the world; not that there cannot be objectivity, but that it is rather difficult to achieve. Postmodernism questions where the dividing line between subjectivity and objectivity resides, not that it cannot exist at all. This work questions where the dividing line is between the public and the private in the history of schooling is and has been, and whether this understanding has been useful. The use of a postmodern understanding in this work is an acknowledgement of how our understanding of the histories of independent and public schooling might be understood from different perspectives, not the denial that some perspectives are more correct than others.

I will use the celebratory concept of dialogue and discursive space from postmodernism to explore the breakdown between private and public spaces and how they cannot be understood dualistically or apart from the other. This troubling between the traditional private/public binary is explicated in this work through a postmodern, historical exploration of the positions of public schools and independent schools around the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization in subsequent chapters. The way in which their positions can be viewed as discursive spaces in which they have formed and (re)form their institutional understandings relationally to the other. This troubling is beneficial in its unique position to not pitch one type or institution of schooling against the other or complete a comparative history, but to explore the mutual benefits and the celebratory possibilities in their positions as others.

This troubling permits probing at the question of whether the current debates over school choice, standardization, and general critiques of different types of institutional schooling are not indicative of a larger philosophical breakdown between the definitions and boundaries of public and private in postmodernity. I thread this troubling of public/private distinctions throughout this work around specific topics in the history of schooling and seek to discourage debate that is nearsighted in its focus on schooling.

I then apply this troubling uniquely to the general histories of the development of public schooling and independent schooling in Chapter 3. The purpose of this chapter is to give a general overview of what is defined as an independent school. This definition cannot be articulated well outside of independent schools’ relational development to public schooling in the United States. As stated earlier, public school histories have been articulated by many, but are rarely examined in their relationship of otherness to independent schooling. I will draw heavily on historians of public schooling such as Spring (2001), Randall (1994), and Kaestle (1983), as well as the work of Kraushaar (1972) on independent school development,
to develop a picture of the interdependent historical development of both types of schooling. In this chapter I also trouble the notion of elitist education understood as being solely a problem of the private sectors, examining and incorporating the works of cultural critiques such as Lasch (1995) and Jacoby (1994). I then examine the interdependent historical development through the framework of troubling presented in Chapter 2 to suggest the ways in which independent schools and public schools have developed as others drawing on the scholarship explored in the previous chapter.

In Chapter 4, I investigate the understandings of identity from a postmodern historical approach in weaving together the various understandings of public schooling and independent schooling of what composed/composes identity. I explore how these understandings of identities have affected the ways in which students were/are categorized and their lived experiences, understood as the curriculum. This approach contributes to the troubling of the private/public distinction in the ways in which private experiences are brought into the realm of what is generally considered public, the curriculum. This chapter employs the term identity to explore how differences have been categorized and marginalized throughout the histories of education, while also troubling the notion and (im)possibility of the concept of identity from a postmodern perspective. I will argue that identity, like dialogue, is not an impossibility but rather requires a revision in understanding within postmodernism. By weaving together these various approaches, we see how there are more complex relationships of identity in schooling than commonly espoused. The intent of this chapter is also to trouble the notion that public schools are inherently democratic because they must supposedly teach all, and troubles the notions that independent schools, as a unique subset of private schooling, is necessarily exclusive or unable to be an inclusive, democratic community. The histories of public schooling and independent schooling reveal how they have developed their understandings of identity in relationship to each other, and why their histories have led to assumptions about how they understand identity and the relations of power. I draw on the works of Castenell & Pinar (1993), Haynes (1995), McCarthy (1990), Lei and Grant (2001), Delpit (1995), hooks (1994), Alexander, B., Anderson, L., and Gallegos, B. P. (Eds.) (2005), Kraushaar (1972), Kozol (1972), Kane (2003), Tyack (1967, 1995) and excerpts from various publications from the National Association of Independent Schools.

These relations of power and identity are closely tied to the topic of accountability. Accountability is always a reflection of who holds power and their understanding of what/whose knowledge is of most worth, defining to what standards students are held and to what purpose. Chapter 5 will investigate the different threads of accountability in a dialogical history of accountability in public and independent schools, continuing to trouble the private/public notion. I will examine the various histories of these two types of schooling through different movements of accountability, beginning with the work and recommendations of the National Education Association’s Committee of Ten and surveying various movements to the No Child Left Behind Act. The examinations of these different movements explores the ways in which private values are inseparable from policies that stretch out of the realm of the private into the public, and in turn stretch into
the realms of other privates. This position reinforces the inability to create a value free curriculum, despite such attempts, or so rhetoricized attempts, present in many current reform efforts. I will draw heavily on the documents contained in the edited documentary history, the American curriculum, of Willis, Schubert, Bullough, Kridel, and Holton (1993). I will also employ the works of Dewey (1954), Counts (1969) Apple (1995), Pinar (2004), Kridel (2007), Spring (2001), Cremin (1988), and others that have explored the histories of the ways in which accountability movements have developed and been lived out through the curriculum. 

Bringing this conversation into the present, Chapter 6 will examine the ways in the threads of the past continue to be woven and unwoven in the future as we are increasingly told to understand our world more globally. Globalization is shaping, influencing, and changing the standards to which public schools and independent schools are held under the weight of an increasingly global understanding of the world, and the ways in which each type of schooling offers possibilities and limitations. Through an exploration of the various positions, reactions, and discursive spaces produced by and about each public and independent schools with relation to the topic of globalization, I trouble the private/public distinction through the ways in which globalization is erasing and rewriting many of the boundaries by which we understand ourselves, the world around us, and the relationship between the two. I will employ the works of Spring (1998, 2001, 2006), Apple, Kenway, and Singh (2005), Lasch (1995), Jacoby (1994), Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

Chapter 7 will conclude by revisiting the ways in which the private/public distinction is troubled by a postmodern, dialogical history of public schooling and independent schooling around the issues of identity politics, accountability, and globalization. I will revisit many of the postmodern writings of the first two chapters to draw some conclusions and insights from the historical exploration of previous chapters. However, in the spirit of postmodernism, I recognize my own positionality and the impossibility of a “complete” work. Therefore, I will offer questions more than conclusions and invite questioning more than concluding. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state,

[T]here is no question, answers are all one ever answers. To the answer already contained in a question… one should respond with questions from another answer… (p. 110)

Through a historical study of the dialogue between public and independent schools, spaces are opened to deepen and expand understandings of schooling proposed in current policy, what attempts to portray the history of schooling unitarily. It deconstructs the discursive space that forms around a public/private divide, to suggest and question the (im)possibility of this divide. The multiplicity of narratives within the public and independent schools serves to deconstruct and discredit unitary history. It validates the experiences of the other, and recognizes the need for open spaces in which to tell narrative and develop new questions and conversation.
“If there’s no meaning in it,” said the King, “that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn’t try to find any. And yet I don’t know,”… “I seem to see some meaning in them, after all…” (Carroll, 1992, p. 95)

The field of education is not surprisingly ahistorical in many respects. Movements and policies in education are often old paradigms of thought dressed up in new clothes. Like the King in Alice in Wonderland, perhaps multiple contemplations of the meaning in our histories will hold some import for the present situation. Huebner (1991) stated that educators notoriously live in the present and look towards the future, while disregarding the past. We are primarily concerned with the present welfare of our students and their preparation for the future. Whereas education has often employed sociology or psychology as a framework for exploration, Huebner emphasized the importance of utilizing history as a lens for understanding the present educational moment.

History, not sociology, is the discipline which seems the most making to the social study of education. The historian can be interpreted as looking back to where a society has been to determine how it arrived at a given point. In so doing, he identifies certain threads of continuity to unite diverse moments in time. (p. 325)

I believe that Huebner rightfully advocates for more emphasis on the historical exploration of education and curriculum. Our present is not an isolated moment, one that can be understood as singular, but rather is reflective of the compilation of all past and future experiences as well. Histories act as threads, and when we look at the current seams of the present, they are impossible without the stitches of the past. It is only possible to understand fully the present by understanding the past within it, as well as the futurity.

Huebner is reminiscent of Dewey (1997), who emphasized that any movement forward in education should be aware of that out of which it grows, to avoid the oscillation of reactionary movements.

There is always the danger in a new movement that in rejecting the aims and methods of that which it would supplant, it may develop its principles negatively rather than positively and constructively. Then it takes its clew in
practice from that which is rejected instead of from the constructive
development of its own philosophy. (p. 20)

The historical orientation reminds us that our present and future grow out of and
are connected to our past. To explore our present moment in curriculum, we must
understand how it is connected historically and futurally to other movements.

The historical moment in which education finds itself further reinforces the need
for reflection on the past. Like the social climate in which Dewey lived, we are
living within a changing moment where the way we understand ourselves and the
world around us is rapidly shifting.

The time in which John Dewey lived and worked, the early 1900s, was one of
change in a still young country. The fabric of a newly formed American society
was being torn and re-sown by a sweeping revolution of industrialism and
immigrations. This society not only inspired Dewey and shaped his ideas on
education, but also gives us reason to revisit many of his writings. We find
ourselves in a similar situation as a technological revolution not only sweeps
across our nations, but also erases and redefines the boundaries of what we have
understood a nation or society to mean. Dewey would agree that his place in time
and space influenced his understanding of education. It is a central point of his
educational philosophy that the individual is never divorced from the society and
that to understand anything in education; we must consider the individual, their
environment, and the interrelationship between the two as being an inseparable
trilogy.

It behooves the educator to reflect on the history of schooling in the United
States at the present moment. Dewey warned of the dangers inherent in reactionary
movements in education. A historical exploration of educational and curricular
policy affords an expanded perspective on the past that is present now and in our
future. Rather than adhering to the cyclical pattern of reactionary policy, we must
look for policies that open spaces and allow forward movement. Ironically, that
forward movement is only possible and lasting when it is cognizant of its past
movement.

DOUBLESPEAK: THE DIALOGICAL HISTORIES OF INDEPENDENT
AND PUBLIC SCHOOL

What is fundamentally curricular and what is fundamentally human are of the
same fabric. ~William Schubert

This work seeks to examine the dialogical histories of public schools and
independent schools through a postmodern perspective. While chapter 2 explores
the concepts of postmodern histories in more detail, it is necessary to state that this
perspective utilizes the freedom and play of discourse within postmodernism to
trouble the concepts of private and public.

As will be seen, this work is necessarily political. Despite criticisms, post-
modernism is anything but politically neutral. Although postmodernism argues for
the opening of spaces and the looking beyond the dichotomies of modernism, it
must stand for something if it is to be philosophically or personally meaningful. It is a philosophic position that creates discursive spaces and positions. And in moving past modernisms, it argues for just that, the movement past modernist paradigms that box in and shut down the space of freedoms. It does not negate modernism, but renegotiates the modern understanding of “reason” as universal. Yetman (1994) outlines this renegotiation in the following, …[P]ostmodern thought develops a thoroughgoing epistemological politics, which insists on the always embodied and always particularized nature of knowledge claims. The consequence of this for how reason actually operates is, as Lyotard…put it: “There is no reason, only reasons.” (p. 1)

This is political, in that we think and live in a postmodern society that often refuses to recognize itself as such. Statements that seek to dismantle the power structures and institutions that continue to ignore our postmodern condition and propagate a modern worldview, including schools and educational institutions, are political. As Pinar et al. (2004) states,

Understood poststructurally [read as a subfield of the postmodern], political struggle is discursive; it involves destabilizing patterns of thought which cannot, finally, be separated dualistically from physical behavior or “action.” (p. 309)

In postmodernism, the spoken word is not separate from or a representation of action, (re)presentation is simultaneously action. Therefore, in dialogical history, the dialogue between public and independent schools creates a discursive space, and this is a political space in the postmodern sense. While disputes arise over the (im)possibility of dialogue in postmodernism, I take up the argument in the subsequent chapter that dialogue is not impossible in postmodernism, but requires a radical revision of how we understand the nature of dialogue by incorporating and examining the ways in which language always incorporates the other, employing the thoughts and Foucault, Derrida, and Bakhtin. This being said, postmodernism is not a unified political front, but rather represents a philosophic position from which different political (discursive) perspectives are built. This philosophic position, because of its desire and acknowledgement of our movement beyond modernism, which is the philosophic camp in which most institutions and places of power find or locate themselves, is political. How this political nature of postmodernism applies to Curriculum Studies and curriculum work is woven throughout this text and will be revisited in the conclusion.

This work is also necessarily personal. As someone who has been educated in both public and independent institutions, as well as an educator who now teaches and does administrative work in independent schools, I do not pretend that my own perspective will not weave its way into the history I present. The historical work that ignores the perspective and lived experiences of the author is fallacious in my opinion, this also being a postmodern perspective. However, I want to state at the beginning that I have been and continue to be deeply aware of my own experiences and how these influence the histories I read and include in this text. I consciously
choose to work in the independent school sector, the reasons for that choice also being fleshed out in this work through an exploration of the historical dialogue between independent and public schools.

This work seeks to trouble the dualistic public/private distinction that is often employed in works that argue for or against school choice using an exploration of discourse in postmodernism. The troubling in which I seek to engage is not limited to schooling institutions, but to the breakdown and confusion of this distinction in our larger culture which finds expression in the way in which we structure and understand schools. The specific meanings of what is included in the category of public schools and the category of independent schools is explicated in more detail in chapter 3, through historical definitions (and as will be seen their respective categories have been redefined throughout history), a brief distinction based on current usages and the usage as employed in this work will serve to divert some misconceptions from the outset. The most superficial distinction between these two types of schooling is mostly concerned with infrastructure rather than curriculum, although the inseparability of these elements of schooling will become more apparent through dialogues of their histories around specific topics. The term or category of public schools in this work points to the institution of schooling that is historically derived from the Common School movement, and is funded predominantly by public monies or taxes (although as will be explored later the source of funding continues to blur lines of public and private). The term independent school, as a specific subset of private schooling, refers to schools that are non-profit organizations funded predominantly through private monies, tuition and donations, and are independent from other educational or other social institutions in governance, having their own board of trustees that operates as the highest level of authority in the school community.

The difficulty in researching on this topic is that the terms “private” and “independent” are often used interchangeably in the historical literature on the subject. Many statistics that pertain solely to independent schools are simply non-existent. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) does not use this term at all. Rather, they make a distinction amongst private schools between catholic, other religious, and non-sectarian. In this work, I use the definition of an independent school that is employed by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

Independent schools are distinct from other schools in that they are primarily supported by tuitions, charitable contributions, and endowment income rather than by tax or church funds… school must be independently governed by a board of trustees. (NAIS web site- http://www.nais.org)

In exploring independent schools, I mean only to refer to schools serving the elementary and secondary levels, rather than higher educational institutions that also meet the criteria of NAIS.

While important studies and explorations of the histories of both of these types of schooling have been done, it is rarely done in a dialogical manner, with the intention not of promoting one type of schooling over the other, but with the
intention of better understanding how each has developed in relationship to the other. Their histories and positions are not as simple and clear as the often uninformed sound-bites that we hear in common discourse about education and types of schooling. There are perceptions and misperceptions promoted about each of these types of schooling. These perceptions at times take the form of self-promotion, at times by the other.

SITUATING

This work is written in the tradition of Curriculum Studies. What exactly Curriculum Studies entails is a question I asked myself before becoming and as a doctoral student of Curriculum Studies. It is not always readily apparent how to define Curriculum Studies, nor should it be. It is appropriate, before divulging further into this work, to situate my own historical exploration within the history of the field of Curriculum Studies.

The field of Curriculum Studies, understood within the Reconceptualization Movement, shifts the emphasis from the development of curriculum, a preoccupation with the instruction, methods, and materials of curriculum, to an emphasis on studying the philosophical, historical, socio-political, and cultural connections between schooling and the lived experiences of individuals. The reconceptualized understanding of curriculum takes as its starting point the Latin infinitive of curriculum, currere, “to denote the running (or lived experience) of the course” (Pinar, 2004, p. xiii).

The Reconceptualization has yet to fully penetrate the study of curriculum more generally, and debates in curriculum are often erroneously understood by the larger public as simply being a battle between conservatives and liberals, or traditionalists and progressives. Kliebard (1995) notes one such explication of the field in the opening of his text, The struggle for the American curriculum.

In a recent review of two historical studies in education, Carl Kaestle (1984)… describe[s] these two competing schools of thought as to the course of education in the United States: “School systems exemplify democratic evolution, said the traditionalists. No, responded the radical revisionists, school systems illustrate the bureaucratic imposition of social control on the working class. Recently, some historians have emphasized that public school systems are the result of contests between conflicting class and interest groups.” (p. xiii)

This reductive history hardly does justice to the historical and philosophical movements that coincided with and influenced the Reconceptualization of Curriculum Studies. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2004) mark the Reconceptualization proper as beginning formally in the 1970s. This reconceptualization grew out of the dead-end that the curriculum field reached in structuralism and positivism, which culminated in the Tyler Rationale. Such approaches were failing to move education forward, or to reach its desired ends in affecting social character by deepening our understanding of our learning and
ourselves. The emphasis on the Tyler Rationale neglected the humanistic aspects of schooling, leading to a dull and technical approach to curriculum development and teaching (p. 187). The Tyler Rationale reduced curriculum to a technical procedure, and its employment denied the development of new ways of thinking about teaching and learning.

The emphasis on technical rationality did not occur apart from larger social, historical, and philosophical movements. From its inception, the field of curriculum was concerned with practical matters. Pinar (1999) identifies this inception circa 1920, and its development as a field coincides with the need to develop and manage curricula for the rapidly expanding public school system at this time.

The main function of curriculum studies, beginning in the 1920s, “was to develop and manage curricula for a public school system in a period of rapid expansion. Consequently the early texts of the field addressed issues of development, including curriculum planning and evaluation.” (p. 484)

The early texts and the way in which curriculum was developed with an emphasis on scientific and positivistic methodologies was connected to the larger philosophical movement of structuralism, and with the historical efforts to develop war and space technologies in the international competition in arms and space technologies that occurred from the 1920s to the 1960s.

Whereas a traditional approach to curriculum and instructions focuses on the what of curriculum, Curriculum Studies focuses on the why of curriculum. Curriculum Studies reconceptualized is an approach to curriculum that seeks to understand through questioning, the different nature of the questions leading to different types of understandings. These understandings do not stand definitively, but point to more questions, representing approaches rather than stagnant sectors of the field. It is this emphasis on understanding and the questioning that the field necessarily involves that opens spaces; that allows the circularity of life to exist within the field of curriculum. The approach to studying curriculum, while focusing in part on schools, is not ignorant of the interconnectedness between schools and society. Curriculum Studies differs from Curriculum and Instruction in that it is focused on lived experiences. While Curriculum and Instruction was and is concerned with developing theories about best practices, Curriculum Studies is often critical of these because they are developed in isolation of and disregard for the larger cultural and societal factors that are, in fact, lived experiences of those who will be learning under particular pedagogic methodologies and those who will be employing them. As Apple (1995) states,

We should be cautious about technical solutions to political problems. We should be cautious about fine-sounding words that may not take account of the daily lives of the people who work in these institutions. Any attempt at bringing coherence to the curriculum that does not begin with the role of the school in the larger society …should make us a bit nervous. And any suggestion for transforming curriculum that is not grounded in a recognition of the texts and tests that now provide the hidden principles of coherence for schools… should make us equally nervous. (p. 134)
The disconnect in traditional curriculum development between the lived experiences both within school and within society and culture often results in short-lived or ineffective practices and reforms. Traditional curriculum practices and perspectives that intend to achieve reform focused solely on schools are often simplistic and naive. In exploring the histories of public and independent schools, I plan to show that issues of great importance at present in education—identity politics, accountability, and globalization—have been historically issues around which educators and community members have focused their attention and reform efforts. This continuity suggests that these issues are societal and not just educational. Therefore, traditional approaches in curriculum that search for a singular or narrow vision of change that will “cure” educational problems will always be ineffective. These three topics—identity politics, accountability, and globalization—are explored because of their connectivity with each other and their relevance for informing our practice today. The exploration of these three topics shows how the troubling of the private/public divide has and is still present within the histories of public and independent schooling, simultaneously emphasizing the connectivity between all areas of schooling and our lived experiences inside and outside of the school walls.

The complexity of educational history is often overlooked for the pragmatic purposes of simply “fixing” what is seen as broken. However, education, in its reflections of both our public and private lives, is not reparable with simple “solutions” that focus solely on schooling. Graubard (1972) expressed this observation in his study of Free Schools, an institution discussed in Chapter 4.

A point worth making is that education is not the sort of problem amenable to a sudden new discovery, either of theory or of new techniques. This is crucial to understanding the differences among the various reform perspectives. If problems of education and youth were like the problems of finding a cure for cancer, then the search for a new idea or new technique or a new theory or a new discovery in psychology would make sense as a path of reform. This is the preferred American way of seeing problems— as accessible to a concentrated input of new ideas and new technology. (p. 32)

A focus in Curriculum Studies on lived experiences “complicates the conversation” (Pinar, 2004) about education and schooling greatly, and prevents in many ways a reductive approach to thinking and talking about schools and curriculum. This is the focus and intent within the Reconceptualization of Curriculum Studies and this work seeks to continue in this line. As Schubert (1995) emphasizes, the diversity that is necessarily in this approach allows curriculum and education to be enriching and fulfilling experiences.

It may seem strange that diversity could bring a kind of coherence. However, the awareness of the diverse cultures, norms, ways of knowing, and ways of being in the world augments repertoires of possibility and enriches our capacity for creative lives worth living and worth sharing. (p. 153)

In the sections that follow, I will explore some of the voices that complicate this conversation, as well as include my own voice and thoughts on the increasingly
polarized understanding of the still interrelated histories and present moments of public and independent schools in the United States. As mentioned earlier, our present moment harkens back to that of Dewey, a time in which technological revolution, similar to the industrial revolution, tears through the fabric of our daily lives and reeks of uncertainty about the present or future. However, the present moment is also different than that of Dewey, in which we find ourselves amidst ethnic and cultural plurality that often defies categorization. The technological revolution spurs this defiance, as it allows us to transgress and digress across former structures around which we organized our lives—family units, national boundaries, categories of identity and selfhood. These transgressions and digressions trouble boundaries and distinctions. In this work, I trouble the traditional private/public distinction by tracing the histories of public schooling and independent schooling around the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization.

This piece is a work within the young field of Curriculum Studies. It seeks to open new spaces for exploration and speech in curriculum work, and education more generally. Little is written or read about independent schools. This work is not intended to promote a singular vision of education, but rather to argue for the non-standardization of curriculum for postmodern curricula, curricula that includes both private and public spaces and seeks out and utilizes both to continue forward. Through a historical exploration of the dialogue between independent and public schools, I seek to show how spaces in curriculum, or the lived experiences of those in education, are rapidly shut down in the face of standardization and conformity. The way in which we conceive of, design, and implement curricula in education often has this unintended (or is it intended?) effect.

This work reflects a situatedness of my position and perspective from the Southern portion of the United States. While the perception of a private/public divide is present throughout the country and educational discourse, it is particularly acute in the southern states. This is in part due to the remains of antagonistic feelings leftover from the Civil Rights Movement and integrations, as well as a large disparity in social class divide. Schools within the South, both private and public, are not isolated from these aspects of southern culture, and the ways in which they are reflected in schooling lead to a particularly acute attempt to build barriers between the private and public sectors.

This work is not intended to criticize teachers, administrators, students, or parents in public or independent schools. Too often, the discourse surrounding public/private debates seeks to commend and condemn groups of individuals. Students, teachers, scholars, and the spaces to imagine new, viable, and sustainable ways of thinking about education, and therefore the living out of that, are shut down and closed out. This work looks at deeper and more connected issues related to historical conceptions of schooling within and about both types of institutions—their similarities and differences over time with regards to particular issues; the conception and purpose of the concept of “other” in the ways in which private spaces can be used to open public discourse and theorizing about schooling; and a continued expansion of the ways in which we think about curriculum in theory and in practice.
Within the field of Curriculum Studies, there have been many who have approached curriculum from a historical orientation. Curriculum history constitutes a significant area of study within Curriculum Studies. Understanding Curriculum Studies as lived experiences indicates that we cannot understand our present curricular moment without understanding the past and future that are integrally connected to it. Huebner (1991) emphasized the appropriateness of history as a theoretical orientation to the study of education. Huebner emphasized that history, more than any other discipline or social science, was an appropriate framework through which we can understand our present moment in education.

From his finite temporality, man has construed his scientific view of time as something objective and beyond himself, in which he lives. The point is that man is temporal; or if you wish, historical. There is no such “thing” as a past or a future. They exist only through man’s existence as a temporal being. This means that human life is never fixed but is always emerging as the past and future horizons of a present. (p. 328)

Huebner advocated for this theoretical orientation during the same time period which spurred the Reconceptualization. The historical study, for Huebner, was important in that we are “temporal beings”. We can only understand our lives as “always emergent as the past and future horizons of a present” (p. 328). While there are many scholars who have explored Curriculum Studies from the historical orientation, a few stand as representative for the ways in which they emphasize the connectivity of our past and future to our present moment. These scholars use history to bring unique and important perspectives to Curriculum Studies, and their work emphasizes the importance of history in opening up new ways of understanding education more generally. These scholars all share Huebner’s passion for understanding curriculum historically, recognizing our temporality.

Kliebard has also dedicated his scholarship to the historical study of the field. Kliebard has done much to make history a respected theoretical orientation to the study of curriculum.

Early in his career Kliebard chose history as the best vehicle for uncovering the errors and misconceptions of the curriculum field…. Clearly, no contemporary scholar has done more to make curriculum history a recognized field of inquiry than has Kliebard. (Franklin, 2000, p. 1)

Kliebard’s (1995) The struggle for the American curriculum represents another monumental contribution to the field of Curriculum Studies. This book includes and multiplicity of perspectives on the forces and factors that have shaped the ways in which we understand curriculum in American schools.

Pinar serves as a major contributor to historical orientations in Curriculum Studies, writing substantially on the history of the field of Curriculum Studies, his work documenting the history, present, and future of the Reconceptualization. Pinar et al.’s (2004) comprehensive text, Understanding curriculum, presents a very comprehensive exploration of the history of the Reconceptualization of the
field of curriculum studies, as does his work entitled *What is curriculum theory?* (2004). These texts contribute to the field in Pinar’s personal accounts of his understanding and work in the Reconceptualization of Curriculum Studies, and help the current student of curriculum to understand the movement of the field within the present.

Kridel (1989, 2007) and Short (1984, 1991) have both written on the historical orientation within the curriculum field and its position as a worthwhile perspective in the study of curriculum. Kridel’s (2007) scholarship on the Eight Year Study and its relevance to the examination and understanding of curriculum and secondary education in the present is particularly pertinent in this work to discussion of accountability.

Munro (1998, 1999) has done much work to explore and communicate the positions of women within education more generally and curriculum as a specific field within it. She has explored the ways in which feminine perspectives have defined and redefined ways of learning and living within education. In a discipline such as history, her work stands definitive in its commitment to interjecting feminine perspectives and lived experiences as histories among many accounts from a masculine perspective in education. This diversity of perspective is of import in the field of curriculum studies, where curriculum is understood as the “lived experience”. It continues to open new avenues for exploration as it continuously questions whose lived experiences are valuable and how is this value made manifest in the field.

Baker (2004) has advanced the ways in which curriculum inquiry can be achieved through a postmodern historical perspective. Her edited work on the uses of Foucault in educational and curriculum scholarship, *Dangerous coagulations*, traces the way in which postmodern positions have been employed in educational scholarship, as well as they ways in which it presents both possibilities and dangers. Baker (2002, 2004) has also employed a postmodern historical orientation in her studies of the development of “(dis)abilities” and categorizations in the historical development of public schooling and the historical relations to larger societal movements of eugenics.

As the work of Huebner, Kliebard, Pinar, Kridel, Short, Munro, and Baker point out, Curriculum Studies can be understood and explored in meaningful ways through a historical orientation. Their historical works point to the necessity of understanding the ways in which the present and future struggles within the field, and in the more public discourse about curriculum, are tied to their pasts. The historical orientation emphasizes our temporality, and that as we look back on the past, we are also looking at our present and towards our future.

Among these, Baker (2004) is particularly beneficial because of her postmodern understanding of history. She employs what she terms a “glancing history”, in which she recognizes the incompleteness inherent in any singular history. She employs the idea of a “glancing” because it “problematises the assumed relationship between seeing directly, knowing completely and uttering with confidence” (p. 10). The acknowledgment of the incompleteness of any singular history, as well as the emphasis that she places upon using history to broaden the context through which we
understand and approach present topics of conversation in education are both concepts employed within this work.

Each of these scholars above has paved important inroads into the understanding of Curriculum Studies from a historical perspective without which further openings and spaces would not be easily accessible for historical studies.

Outside of the field of Curriculum Studies, a number of scholars have done tremendous work in documenting the different histories of public school. Joel Spring has also contributed greatly to our understanding of curriculum, and more generally education, in his radical revisionist writings of the history of American schooling. Spring (2001) presents different and competing histories of American education in his text, *The American school*, with the purpose of providing “a variety of ways of viewing educational history” (p. 2). This approach emphasizes the subjective nature of historical studies of curriculum. In various works, Spring (1993, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2001) presents the histories of majority and marginalized groups side by side to emphasize the ways in which these histories connect and disconnect at different moments, and how they inform our present understanding.

Lawrence Cremin has also done tremendous work in documenting the history of public schooling in the United States. Cremin (1964, 1988, 1990) has published several volumes of work documenting different time periods and aspects of the concept, formation, and implementation of public schooling in the United States. His work speaks to the importance of understanding schooling historically and is employed throughout this work to present dialogue about and from the institution of public schooling.

David Tyack (1974) has also done important and insightful historical work on public education in the United States. In his work, *The one best system*, Tyack traces the ways in which the development of the public school system has been intertwined with differing conceptions of the means, ends, and societal purposes of public education. This work is important in its focus between schooling and society, in its refusal to divorce one from the other. Tyack (1967, 2003) has written several works that have examined the interconnectedness of the larger culture in the United States and the development of the public school system.

The histories of schooling in the United States written by Spring, Cremin, and Tyack are beneficial in their inclusion of perspectives of different voices and the issues of power relations that are inherent in the curriculum as well as their attention to the ways in which larger societal and cultural movements have and continue to influence our perceptions and constructions of public schooling.

The above mentioned authors have focused much on public schooling. There are a few leading authors who have focused on independent schooling as a distinct subset of private schooling.

Pearl Rock Kane has written and edited several works that address the lived experiences of students and teachers within independent schools. In her work, *Independent schools, independent thinkers*, Kane (1992) edited and compiled reflections from alumni, teachers, and administrators on their experiences in different types of independent schools and from different time periods. These pieces serve to paint a picture of the experiences that are lived within independent schools, as well as emphasize the diversity in missions, curricula, and patrons.
CHAPTER 1

The colors of excellence, Kane and Orsini (2003) document and discuss the lived experience of faculty and staff of racial minority backgrounds in independent schools, as well as their valuable contributions to the independent school community at large.

In addition to Kane’s works, Patrick Bassett (the current president of NAIS) and Louis M. Crosier (1994) are editors of another anthology on independent schools. In Looking ahead: Independent school issues & answers, current educators involved in independent schools offer reflections on past, present, and future challenges to education in independent schools. Some of these challenges are unique to independent education, while others are indicative of the field of education more generally. This work serves to emphasize that independent schools are not worry-free environments where everything always runs smoothly. It documents the unique challenges of the present, but the past and future as well, that independent schools face because of their unique structures as institutions.

Independent School magazine, published quarterly by NAIS, represents and provides an ongoing documentary of the lived experiences of students, faculty, administrators, and researchers of independent schools. The magazine, founded in 1946 as Independent School Bulletin, has published thematic issues that feature contributions from stakeholders involved in independent schools. These pieces provide personal narratives and histories of independent schools, and are invaluable source for understanding the present moments as lived in independent schools.

Otto Kraushaar’s (1972) work, American nonpublic schools, serves as one of the only historical texts that focuses solely on nonpublic forms of schooling and traces their unique histories from the time of colonial period until the 1970s. This work is indispensable in understanding the unique histories of nonpublic schools, as well as the intricate differences among nonpublic schools. He focuses on the histories of independent schools in one chapter, representing one of the only unified and cohesive histories of independent schools from the colonial period onward.

These authors have done well to document parts of the history and approaches to education in independent schools; however they are rarely examined in relation to the larger societal and cultural movements in the United States or in their relation as another to public schooling. This work is unique in its juxtaposition of public schooling and independent schooling in a postmodern historical orientation.

This work is also cognizant of the works of cultural critics that include commentary and critiques of schooling and its connections with culture such as Foucault (1970, 1972, 1994), Jacoby (1994), and Lasch (1995). The perspectives of these authors will be incorporated throughout this text with relation to the various topics of study - the inability to separate and differentiate the public/private divide and how this is interwoven in our debates and understandings within the institutions of public schooling and independent schooling around the issues of identity politics, accountability, and globalization. I maintain that this divide can only be understood around the concept of “otherness”.

12
Through a postmodern historical orientation, I plan to explore the histories of public schooling and independent schooling (as a distinct subset of private schooling) around the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization. By examining the various histories that have been written about these institutions, and in exploring them in conjunction with one another, I hope to expose the different and complex make-up of voices that compose the histories of these types of schooling, and make points of relation in how one is not fully possible without its relationship to the other. This work opens spaces for the understanding of curriculum reconceptualized, as lived experience, in that it shows the different approaches and experiences of different notions of schooling.

The way in which history is understood in the postmodern shapes the way in which I explore the histories of public and independent schools. The postmodern account of history addresses the multifaceted nature of history. Like language, it deconstructs the structures that were previously and continue to be employed to make it a monolithic, scientific, and positivistic institution. Any responsible historical account of schooling must take into account this deconstructing, and recognize the subjective nature of the voice with which it speaks.

In this work, I will explore the ways in which the postmodern, multifaceted understanding of schooling can be understood as history as an art. There are a number of authors who have explored well the issue of postmodern history, an awareness of the power and authority relationships that are vested in a modernist approach to history. The works of these authors, as well as the concept of postmodern history, will be explored in detail in Chapter 2.

POSSIBILITIES...

The approach of the topics of public school and independent schools from a postmodern historical orientation raises many important questions. Through the body of this work, I plan to examine some of these questions from a postmodern, historical orientation. This exploration is a dialogical history. It approaches histories as threads and voices of meaning, which can be woven and unwoven together to create different tapestries or weavings. The threads that one chooses to follow and weave together create dialogues amongst different voices, each being understood as a thread of the past. By tracing and combining threads around the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization, I hope to create a weaving of sorts. The “dialogue” which the weaving of these threads creates represents a personal interpretation, and I intentionally invite others to join in this dialogue, knowing that these threads can be woven and unwoven to create more than one tapestry or (un)finished product. This continual tracing of threads and weaving and unwrapping is fitting for the movement and exploration of the “lived experiences” as understood through the curriculum.

As the epithet by Schubert used above suggests, the curricular and human are of the same fabric. The concept of dialogical history suggests that we each create our own fabrics of meaning and purpose. However, our shared and communal
experiences in history suggest that we share many threads, and it is our placement of these within constructs of meaning that are what create spaces for new tapestries and understandings. Recognizing that there is still much work and weaving to be done in and around each of the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization, this work begins a tapestry of understanding within each. I invite you to weave and unweave the threads of histories of public and independent schoolings around each of these topics.
CHAPTER 2

TROUBLING THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE DISTINCTION:
THE IN-BETWEENS OF (NO)WHERE

The word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 284).

William Schubert (1995) stated that we could/should view the history of curriculum and the search for curriculum coherence as a debate over which of three competing factors should have primacy: the individual, the society, and the subject matter (p. 151). Schubert’s analysis is accurate in many respects, but could be restated as a debate over whether private (the individual) or public (the society) interests should have primacy in the curriculum. The third factor, the subject matter, brings to light an interesting problematic in that it does not lend itself to an easy classification as either private or public. Where we might place this in a traditional (read modernist) public/private divide might depend upon from where this subject matter originates, who is advocating its employment in the curriculum, and what the actual subject matter is. In curriculum reconceptualized, the question regarding this aspect of the curriculum has changed from “what knowledge is of most worth” to “whose knowledge is of most worth?”

However, if we re-evaluate Schubert’s comment from a postmodern perspective, the history of curriculum as a debate over the primacy of the individual (the private), the society (the public), and the subject matter (private or public), an analysis and even an understanding of such an analysis becomes infinitely more complex. The third factor of subject matter hints at this complexity, in that this analysis questions the place and understanding of the private and the public within the curriculum. In a reconceptualized reading of this analysis, the question is asked whether it is actually possible to separate the private and the public, to identify and categorize certain aspects of the curriculum as such if we understand the curriculum as “lived experience.” Is it possible to categorize different aspects of the “lived experiences” of students, teachers, parents, members of society, etc. as either private or public? Postmodernism moves this question forward asking, what do private and public signify? Can they signify anything? What does it mean to signify and to what does the signifier refer?

The intention of the discussions in this chapter is to explore these questions, to trouble the notion of the public/private divide that exists within modernism and is essential to a further reading and dialogue about independent schooling (traditionally classified under the umbrella of private) and public schooling. These questions also relate to and are part of the larger rhetoric regarding curriculum and schooling more broadly. While it is impossible to answer these questions definitively, an exploration
and troubling of the private/public divide serves as a framework for the topics in the later chapters in this work, as well as providing a unique perspective from which to explore the dialogical histories of independent schools and public schools.

I intend for this work to be a dialogical history of independent and public schooling. Therefore, I also use this chapter to examine the ways in which this troubling, particularly of signification, is tied to the notion and possibility of dialogue in the postmodern. While some may argue for the impossibility of dialogue in the postmodern, and therefore a dialogical history, I argue that the nature of dialogue does change, perhaps radically, but that to insist on its impossibility would be contrary to postmodern thought in many respects.

It is not difficult to find instances in the present where it seems troubling to distinguish between the public and the private. An exemplary task in this troubling is an attempt to simply define what one means when referring to the “public” and the “private”, a task I stumbled upon unsuccessfully. What does “public” signify? Is it that which is accessible to everyone? We generally think of government as public. Is government accessible to everyone? I assumed earlier that society was public. Is society accessible to everyone? I suppose it depends upon what it means to be “accessible”? And who is “everyone”? Perhaps government is accessible in one form or another to citizens, but what about foreign aliens? Are they everyone? Who makes up “everyone”?  

Perhaps it is easier to understand “private”? What does “private” signify? Is it that which is accessible only by select criteria? We generally think of businesses and corporations as private. Businesses and corporations are usually only accessible by select criteria, either employment by such organizations or employment of such organizations. But, what happens when private corporations use public monies or legislature for their gain? Are they still private? The reverse can be asked, what happens when public institutions use or are influenced by private monies? Are they still public? Can public exist without private and vice versa?

I do not intend to answer these questions definitively, or even to suggest they are the only way in which to understand private and public. Rather, they serve as examples of what postmodernism explores as problematic in the distinction between signifier and signified. I approach the troubling of the private/public distinction from a postmodern, linguistic perspective. To accomplish this task, it is necessary to trace the evolvement of the postmodern understanding of language from the structures out of which it grew. This tracing exposes the ways in which language compares and contrasts with a modernist or structuralist perspective, what was referred to earlier as traditional. This tracing allows for a better understanding of the inability in postmodernism to make concrete the difference between signifier and signified, which I will employ to further trouble the notion of public and private. As stated earlier, this troubling is essential to the consequent approach I take to understanding the dialogues between public and private schools historically. I also use the discussion of the postmodern perspective of signifier and signified to explore the nature and possibility of dialogue in the postmodern.

The exploration of signifier and signified is a linguistic task. It is a difficult task to explore language within the object of study. Therefore, I proceed with a certain sense of humility. Through a survey and exploration of various linguistic theories
that contain insight into this question, I will highlight the manners in which the way one understands the purposes and (de)constructions of language contribute to a postmodern perspective of the signifier and signified, the public and the private, and the (im)possibilities of dialogue. Through this dialogue on dialogue, I trouble the notions of private and public, humbly knowing my conclusions cannot be very conclusive at all.

DIGGING INTO THE PRESENT OF THE PAST

The philosophies of language and hermeneutics are epistemic, in that they study the ways in which we know through language, as well as what we can know about the knowledge of language. These are complex in that, as stated above, one cannot move outside of language in order to study it from some objective standpoint. The work that is done in this philosophical area must use the subject of study as the tool of study.

Postmodernism is related ultimately to the movements that preceded it. “After structures are in direct relation to overturning structures” (Morris, 2005, p. 3). Therefore, in order to understand the relationships concerning language within postmodernism, and thereby trouble the private/public distinction and understand the (im)possibilities of dialogue in a postmodern era, an understanding from where these concepts have evolved is insightful. These insights help in understanding the troubling of the distinction between signifier/signified, as well as what is and is not possible for dialogue in the postmodern era; why postmodernism holds certain tenets about the nature of language and dialogue.

THE MODERNISMS OF POST: STRUCTURES AND EXPERIENCE

As stated above, the philosophic and revolutionary discourses within postmodernism are related and best understood as outgrowths of the structures that they overturn. Therefore, in order to explore the topics outlined above in postmodernism, an understanding of the purposes and possibilities of language within the overturned movements of structuralism and phenomenology is necessary.

In its current usage, postmodernism is an umbrella term that also generally incorporates poststructuralism and deconstruction. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2004) note the evolution of postmodernism,

Postmodernism initially referred to radical innovations in the arts, in technology, and in science… Recently it has been used to refer to an epistemic and cultural break with modernism. In this version of postmodernism, deconstruction and poststructuralism are subsumed as theoretical and cognitive modes consistent with the cultural logic of the postmodern. (p. 451)

The heritage of postmodernism, and its two constituent parts, poststructuralism and deconstruction, gives insight into the ways in which the claims of postmodernism are responses to earlier claims. An understanding of the claims of the prior discourses of structuralism (of which constructionism belongs) and phenomenology with regards to the purposes and uses of language informs us as to the reasons for and the responses themselves in postmodernism.
The theory of linguistics as outlined by Saussure is perhaps the most representative example of structuralist linguistics. Saussure’s (1997) interpretation of what the object of linguistic study was reflected his entrenchment in structuralist thought, “The linguist must take the study of linguistic structure as his primary concern…” (p. 9). For Saussure, the way in which to understand language was as a system of natural rules and orders, rather than as its manifestations in speech and practice. These elements, of course, were important and helped us to understand an aspect of language, but were secondary to the study of the actual structure of language, which made speech and other manifestations of language possible.

A language as a structured system, on the contrary, is both a self-contained whole and a principle of classification. As soon as we give linguistic structure pride of place among the facts of langue, we introduce a natural order into an aggregate which lends itself to no other classification. (p. 10)

In Saussure’s linguistics, there are culturally agreed upon meanings that create the linguistic. These are paradoxical in that meanings are originally arbitrary yet still unalterable by the individual community member. This paradox is rooted in the idea that language is created historically and collectively, and therefore no individual has the right or the ability to alter the past that is present in language. However, because individuals also share in the society that contains the past in the present, they have access to the system and structure of their language, and can understand the collective meanings present within the linguistic sign.

All individuals linguistically linked in this manner will establish among themselves a kind of mean; all of them will reproduce—doubtless not exactly, but approximately—the same signs linked to the same concepts. (p. 13)

Saussure’s linguistics, and other structuralist understandings of language, are reflective of the Western heritage of logos, in which it is thought that there is an objective relationship between the signifier and the signified, one which is knowable. This follows from the Platonic concept of the ideal form, the signified, of which we have indications and referent shadows, the signifiers. In Saussure’s linguistics, language, the structure, is the ideal form while speech is its shadow.

Although there are variances and individual alterations within speech, the affects of these collectively do not alter the structure except through the long passage of time. Therefore, there is a public (commonly acknowledged) “signifier” which always refers to a specific “signified”. While the signified may be considered private in that each individual may experience the signified in a personal way or context, this does not alter the relationship between it and the signifier, according to Saussure. Dialogue from a structuralist perspective would be understood more as the use of language by more than one individual to communicate a knowable meaning, in which each participant is both listener and speaker. The listener can understand that which the speaker states because the signifiers point to the same signified objects, external and collectively understood objects, for all participants. None of the participants can alter the collective meanings or understandings of signifiers individually.
Structuralism was in some respects a response to the humanism and sovereignty of the individual in phenomenology. Phenomenology privileges the experience of the individual over all else. Structuralism’s use of systems and rules was in some ways an attempt to bring a collective coherence, a way of understanding, how individual experiences can be understood collectively to make sense of the disciplines and bring order to produce more structure in the social sciences. Pinar et al. (2004) remind us, “Merleau-Ponty regarded the world as the answer to the body’s question” (p. 453). In such an understanding of our relation to the world, Pinar et al. quote Descombes,

And so, perspective, for example, should not be considered as the perceiving subject’s point of view upon the object perceived but rather as a property of the object itself. (p. 454)

This understanding of perspective was advocated by Heidegger (1993) in his phenomenology and in his understanding of language. In basic concepts, Heidegger outlines the way in which being is completely present in language. When we speak, we do not simply state our perspective or opinion, but are actually exerting our existence and the existence of the object of which we speak. Being and language are intimately tied together.

Being is said along with every word and verbal articulation, if not named each time with its own name. Speaking says being “along with,” not as an addition and a supplement that could just as well be left out, but as the pre-giving of what always first permits the naming of beings…(p. 53)

For speaking… is not some arbitrary appearance and condition that we discern in man as one capability among others, like seeing and hearing… For language stands in an essential relation to the uniqueness of being. (p. 54)

Heidegger’s (1993) understanding of language is one that is concerned with the ways in which we experience language, in speaking and in hearing. Language, according to Heidegger can be understood as a pointing, a way of showing reality. In our speech we show that of which we are speaking.

The saying is showing. In everything that appeals to us; in everything that strikes us by way of being spoken or spoken of; in everything that addresses us; in everything that awaits us as unspoken; but also in every speaking of ours- showing holds sway. It lets what is coming to presence shine forth, let what is withdrawing into absence vanish. The saying is by no means the supplementary linguistic expression of what shines forth; rather, all shining and fading depends on the saying that shows. (p. 414)

The phenomenological understanding of the individual’s relation to the world has several implications for the purposes and possibilities of language. First, it means that experience and language are primary. The employment of language is an exertion of our existence. Second, such an understanding means that language is a subjective synthesis between the object and the subject. In such an understanding
of language, dialogue validates the claims of all speakers, but also creates the impossibility of the listener fully understanding the reality within the claims of the speaker. The concern in phenomenology is within the experience of speaking and saying.

Therefore, in phenomenology, individual reality and language is a subjective experience, language is a manifestation of that reality. Structuralism rejects the humanism and idealism of phenomenology, yet remains within the Western tradition of the ability of the human to create through the act of naming, logos. However, in structuralism, this is done collectively, and these systems reflect a natural order that exists outside of and above the individual. Structuralism attempted to account for the ways in which the collective body of language restricts its subjective applicability in the phenomenological sense, as the signifier and signified carry the historic roles assigned to them in their opposition to what they are not.

DECONSTRUCTING: POSTING ON EXPERIENCE AND STRUCTURE

In exploring the signifier/signified relationship and the possibility of dialogue in the postmodern era, it is important to realize the breadth of disciplines, theorists, and individuals referred to as postmodern. Therefore, any attempt to speak of the postmodern more generally inevitably does not describe some of these accurately. Furthermore, any attempt to speak of the postmodern in general terms speaks against the postmodern project, which privileges the subjective and avoids generalizations and categorizations.

As mentioned earlier, each philosophic paradigm is an outgrowth of the previous schools of thought. Postmodernism stands as the child of structuralism and early phenomenological thought. As such, it contains remnants and interpretations of both movements. However, it also stands as a response to the inability of these movements to provide a paradigm for understanding the present in which we live.

With regards to language, the critique of the understanding of linguistics in earlier movements is linked with these understandings as perpetuating the Western concept of logos. Postmodernism rejects the Saussurean linguistics belief in the direct and unchanging relationship between the signified and the signifier. It also rejects the hierarchical pattern of language, speech, and writing, claiming these to be manifestations and acts of equal importance. These hierarchical and structural claims are to the postmodern an act of power, rather than an explanation of reality. Postmodernism rejects the didactic relationship between experience and language, understanding them as one and the same.

Foucault (1970) understands the classical version of language as an attempt to create a structure to remove the risk in language. This risk consists of a “slipping” between the links, what Foucault terms “roots” and “representations”, these concepts being referred to in Saussurean linguistics as “signified” and “signifiers” respectively.

The theory of derivation indicates the continuous movement of words from their source of origin, but the slipping that occurs on the surface of
representation is opposition to the single stable bond that links one root to one representation. Finally, derivation leads back to the propositions, since without it all designation would remain folded in on itself and could never acquire the generality that alone can authorize a predicting link; yet derivation is created by means of a spatial figure, whereas the proposition unfolds in obedience to a sequential and linear order. (p. 115)

Foucault’s understanding of the classical, and thereby structural, account of linguistics is one which attempts to use the two dimensions of time and space to structure and regulate language, preventing its subjectification. Rather than a risky endeavor, Foucault believes that this subjectivity privileges language as a human institution.

Once detached from representation, language has existed, right up to our own day only in a dispersed way: for philologists, words are like so many objects formed and deposited by history; for those who wish to achieve a formalization, language must strip itself of its concrete content and leave nothing visible but those forms of discourse that are universally valid; if one’s intent is to interpret, then words become a text to be broken down, so as to allow that other meaning hidden in them to emerge and become clearly visible; lastly, language may sometimes arise for its own sake in an act of writing that designates nothing other than itself. This dispersion imposes upon language, if not a privileged position, at least a destiny that seems singular when compared with that of labor or of life. (p. 304)

The privileged status of language, for Foucault, opens its possibilities, and therefore our possibilities, for new realms of thought and creativity. Unlike the fear in earlier philosophical movements of the disconnection between signified and signifier, Foucault (1972) and postmodernism celebrate this freedom in certain respects. Language, in the postmodern sense, consists of signifiers that point towards other signifiers, with no signified to anchor this chain. This lack of anchoring, a fixed meaning, provides space for new creation and understanding.

In the examination of language, one must suspend, not only the point of view of the ‘signified’ (we are used to this by now), but also that of the ‘signifier’, and so reveal the fact that, here and there, in relation to the possible domain of objects and subjects, in relation to other possible formulation and re-uses, there is language. (p. 111)

While celebrating the opening and possibilities in language, Foucault also warns against the attempts to anchor and restrict it. Any such attempt “reveal its links with desire and power” (1972, p. 216). The attempts of the structuralism and Western thought more generally to secure the objective relationship between signifier and signified represent a desire to harness the other, the possibilities and freedoms that are potentialities of language. Foucault (1984) believes,

…[T]he real political task in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticize
them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them. (p. 6)

Language, understood as an institution, is often regarded as “neutral.” The understanding of language as neutral is hazardous in its openness to being used for the political and personal exercise of power. This, for Foucault, and postmodernism, is what the individual must guard against. The individual must be very aware of their own intentions in speaking/writing, and in exploring the writings of others. Any attempt to make permanent or a claim to Truth is an attempt to exercise power over the other. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) share this perspective stating, “[t]he unity of language is fundamentally political” (p. 101).

Derrida has worked in his texts to carry out the task Foucault outlines above, to subvert the use of language for political power and oppression. Derrida (1977) shares in a critique of Saussurean linguistics, linking its claim to structure as a claim to be recognized as a science, a positivistic claim for validation.

Saussure thus begins by positing that writing is ‘unrelated to [the]..inner system’ of language. External/internal, image/reality, representation/presence, such is the old grid to which is given the task of outlining the domain of a science. (p. 33)

Derrida’s linking of classical linguistics’ structural and positivistic claims exemplifies Foucault’s insistence of the relations between structural linguistics and power. As Derrida points out, this attempt to be recognized as a science is an attempt to gain power and legitimacy in modernism.

With Foucault, Derrida critiques the concept of the sign, logos, in Western thought, as an objective reality.

We are disturbed by that which, in the concept of the sign- which has never existed or functioned outside the history of (the) philosophy (of presence)-remains systematically and genealogically determined by that history. It is there that the concept and above all the work of deconstruction, its ‘style’, remain by nature exposed to misunderstanding and nonrecognition. (p. 14)

Logos, understood by Derrida (1981), represents an appeal to a “transcendental signified.” In the questioning of the possibility of knowing this transcendental signified in postmodernism, “one recognizes that every signified is also in the position of a signifier, the distinction between signified and signifier becomes problematic at its roots” (p. 20).

Derrida further critiques the Western privileging of language, as a set structure or system, over its manifestations in speech and writing. For Derrida, there is no possibility of language without an exteriority, its manifestations constitute its existence.

Foucault and Derrida’s critiques of classical linguistic understandings of language connect on many points, however they diverge in purpose. Foucault most comfortably sits amongst the poststructuralist, and his rejection of structuralism is a critique of its insistence on structures as “foundational and invariant” rather than
recognizing that their discourses were “historically and socially contingent” (Pinar et al., 2004, p. 462). Derrida furthers this critique, and works not only to expose the way in which these structures or forms exert and vie for power, but works to deconstruct them. Derrida accepts the premise of post-structuralism, but then moves further to say that the history or meaning of a signifier, and therefore any attempted structures, is never attainable.

What it seeks to express or represent, and its meaning will always be necessarily deferred. Such a challenge results not in negating history but in replacing the meaning of history with the history of meanings. (Pinar et al., 2004, p. 468).

Therefore, both Derrida and Foucault critique the Western concept of logos. Foucault enters this critique from a poststructuralist perspective, seeking to expose classical linguistics ties with social and historical forces and wills to power. While Derrida agrees with this critique, he furthers it in continuing to deconstruct the power structures around logos, revealing the constant deferral of the signifier, disallowing meaning to be anything other than subjective.

However, for Derrida (1995), there is also the impression of the signifier, which he refers to as the archive. This archive leaves a “notion,” or imprint. This imprint does not fix or make permanent the meaning, but rather points to the future of a notion.

To the rigor of concept, I am opposing here the vagueness or the open imprecision, the relative indetermination of such a notion. “Archive” is only a notion… We only have an impression, an insistent impression through the unstable feeling of a shifting figure… Unlike what a classical philosopher or scholar would be tempted to do, I do not consider this impression, or the notion of this impression, to be a subconcept, the feebleness of a blurred and subjective pre-knowledge… but to the contrary… I consider it to the possibility and the very future of the concept, to be the very concept of the future… (p. 29)

The idea of “archive” points back to the celebratory nature in postmodernism of the flexibility and creativity once the signifier is freed from the permanence of the signified. Meaning is not and cannot be made permanent, or completely understood inter-subjectively. However, the notion of the archive can carry and communicate temporary meaning, pointing to the future possibilities of language. Therefore, while there is a skepticism and cautionary approach in postmodernism to language as an institution, there is also a celebration and privileging of language. It represents in the postmodern a simultaneous pointing to and away from ourselves, and the freedom of the signifier thereby points to our freedom and possibilities.

PRIVATIZATION PUBLICIZED-PUBLIC PRIVATIZATION

As explained above, in a modernist, structuralist perspective, discourse is used to communicate experience. It is assumed that experience can be clearly communicated because of the existence of socially constructed signifiers that refer to particular objects or events, known as the signified. While structuralism does not deny that
their can be individual or personal variability in the experience of the signified, this variability does not alter the meaning of the signifier substantially because of the hierarchy and divide of structure to manifestation in language, a logo centrism. Put in other terms, from the structural account of language, there is a clear divide between discourse-the signifier-that which is public, and the experience-the signified-that which is private. It is possible to communicate the experience-the signified-the private because of the existence of independent discourse-the signifier-the public.

This divide or distinction becomes substantially troubled within the postmodern perspective. There is no longer the distinction between discourse and experience. Discourse is experience. Experience is discourse. Signifiers point to signifiers, there is no transcendental signified to root or ground the signifier. The earlier questions about what private and public signify point only back at themselves, because any attempt to make a clear distinction between the two would require a transcendental signified to which they would refer. Any attempt to define them only points to more signifiers, and so on. Examples of this troubling abound in the current present of our schools. What are commonly signified as “public” schools and colleges are employing and being influenced by the acquisition of what are commonly signified as “private” funds from corporations and donors. Similarly, what are commonly signified as “private” schools and colleges receive what are commonly signified as “public” funds. If we use the traditional definitions to classify and sort between “public” and “private” schooling based upon the source of funding, this distinction becomes problematic when both types of schooling employ both types of funding and we cannot point to a signified for either public or private.

To remain here would be to be left in a conundrum without much hope for the possibility of communication or understanding. This is indeed where some postmodernists reside. However, I believe that Derrida’s (1995) concept of the archive provides some illumination about the possibility of communication and/or dialogue. The archive is a “notion” or an “impression”, the “possibility of the concept” (p. 29). With regards to how this relates to communication, Derrida (1981) states,

I try to write the question: (what is) meaning to say? Therefore it is necessary in such a space, and guided by such a question that writing literally means nothing. Not that it is absurd in the way that absurdity has always been in solidarity with metaphysical meaning… To risk meaning nothing is to start to play, which prevents any word, any concept, any major enunciation from coming to summarize and to govern from the theological presence of a center the movements and textual spacing of differences. (p. 14)

The free play of the signifiers within postmodernism, without the anchorage of the transcendental signified, disallows a “meaning”, and therefore Derrida suggest that writing “means nothing.” However, this nothing is itself a signifier, an impression or archive, and therefore does point to something. This allows for a playful and celebratory approach that prevents the anchoring of the signifier to the signified, which is sought after and seen as necessary in modernism. The notion of the
archive is helpful here, in that the signifier does leave an impression, it points to the possibility of the concept without demanding a permanent meaning.

Exploring the troubling of the private/public distinction from this perspective allows us to see the ways in which private and public can be archives that leave the impression of the other in postmodernism. While we can employ the terms private and public, they are signifiers that point to the possibility of concepts while evading a permanent meaning or understanding. An example of this evasion in the postmodern might be the concept of privatization in consumer capitalism. Consumer capitalism encourages that which is generally termed public to be co-opted/taken over by the private assignment of meaning/ownership. However, for its survival as a privatized entity, it requires that it is then projected back onto/into the public in order to be recognized as an entity. As it is points back to the public for recognition, it is already imbued with private meanings (which are simultaneously tied to other notions or impressions from other signifiers), which are then projected back onto the privatized entity. In other words, the signifier is privatized, turned into the signified, and then reformed into a signifier, a necessary step for the signifier to remain in existence as either. The signified then becomes a signifier again- so this entity is, and must be, at once a signifier and signified, public and private, each pointing to other signifiers with no permanent signified. The signifier does leave/produce an archive, an impression, but this impression is a rather fleeting signified that evades anchorage for any permanent definition.

DIALOGUING ON DIALOGUE

The writings of Bakhtin (1981, 1986) on the concept of dialogue stand somewhere between a structuralist perspective and a postmodern perspective. Bakhtin adheres to some structuralist understandings of language, such as the belief in the universality of the basic elements of language in the abstract, but distinguishes between these elements and that which he defines as an utterance. The utterance is the employment of language, the manifestation of that language, and leans toward the postmodern in many respects. The utterance is the basis of dialogue, and as the employment or manifestation of language, recognizes the always present other within language. Bakhtin (1986) states,

Thus, addressivity, the quality of turning to someone, is a constitutive feature of the utterance; without it the utterance does not and cannot exist. Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes for centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participation in such speech diversity… Such is the fleeting language of a day, of an epoch, a social group, a school and so forth. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272)
While Bakhtin is not willing to succumb to a completely postmodern perspective in his unwillingness to surrender the ability to study language as a structured system in the abstract, his understanding of the utterance as the manifestation of that language is very similar to the fleeting nature of language in the postmodern. The simultaneous “centralization and decentralization”, “unification and disunification” are similar to the notion of the archive in Derrida. For Bakhtin, the word spoken, and utterance, enters into a unique environment where it is simultaneously in a dialogical relationship with itself and other.

Dialogue is studied merely as a compositional form in the structuring of speech, but the internal dialogism of the word… the dialogism that penetrates its entire structure, all its semantic and expressive layers, is almost entirely ignored. But it is precisely this internal dialogism of the word, which does not assume any external compositional forms of dialogue, that cannot be isolated as an independent act, separate from the word’s ability to form a concept of its object- it is precisely this internal dialogism that has such enormous power to shape. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279)

It is Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogue that I think is most useful within a postmodern perspective. This dialogue can be between speakers, but takes place even within the word itself, which is always necessarily populated with the other.

The radical interpretation of the signifier in postmodern accounts of linguistics as having no permanent signified that it claims has implications for the notion of dialogue. Contrary to an understanding of dialogue in the structural linguistics, there are not collective understandings of the signified in postmodernism. Therefore, the use of language is a completely heterogeneous and subjective experience. It is this that gives the word its “power to shape” as Bakhtin states.

This does significantly change the nature of dialogue, but does not, in my opinion, negate the possibility of dialogue. Any attempt to negate the possibility of dialogue in the postmodern would mean that there was an attempt to make permanent the meaning of dialogue, which in itself would be a manifestation of the “will to power”, in the words of Foucault. It is this deconstructing of permanent meaning that the postmodern attempts. Rather than negate the possibility of dialogue, a postmodern understanding of language comes much closer to that which Bakhtin describes as dialogue, where the presence of the other within each word creates a playful, dialogical space.

The singular message achievable in a structural understanding of language, and the assumption that a collective meaning can be communicated between individuals, is denied in postmodern dialogue. The emphasis shifts towards an understanding of dialogue as interpretations of interpretations. The participants within dialogue can still be considered speakers and listeners, which can also be one and the same, but it cannot be assumed, and is actually negated, that the listener can clearly understand the intention of the speaker. Paradoxically though, it is only in the existence of the other, in language and in body, that this subjective freedom is a possibility.

Several postmodern philosophers and scholars employ the idea of a third space, which is understood as an in-between space. This space is somewhere between the
signifier and signified, between self and other, between private and public. This is the space where creativity and freedom are possible, precisely because this space is not made concrete through fixed and permanent relationships.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) understand this in-between space as a plateau, and that knowledge is made of many such plateaus, constituting a rhizome. “A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus (p. 21). This middle space is not fixed in location or meaning, but is always in free play between dichotomies.

The middle is by no means average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up in the middle. (p. 25)

For Deleuze and Guattari, concepts are expressions of events, they do not aim to express the essence of something (Deleuze, 1990, p. 25). In this way, the meaning of concepts does not become dictating, but always allows for movement and creativity.

Serres (1991) also explores this in-between space for its possibilities in birthing knowledge, referring to it as a third space of knowledge.

The swimmer… knows that a second river runs in the one everyone sees, a river between the two thresholds after or before which all security has vanished: there he abandons all reference points… The real passage occurs in the middle. (p. 3)

Serres describes this third space as “slippery” and outside of time, easy to overlook in a modernist outlook and approach to understanding and knowledge. Whereas equilibrium is normally desired, Serres promotes the disequilibrium of the third space to find new ways of knowing.

In the course of these experiences, time springs neither from assuming a position (the equilibrium of the statue) nor from opposition, a second stability from which nothing can come, nor from their relation – an arch or static arc of perpetual immobility- but from a deviation from equilibrium that throws or launches position outside of itself, toward disequilibrium, which keeps it from resting, that is, from achieving a precarious balance… (p. 12).

The notion of the in-between is useful in the postmodern for the creativity and freedom it proposes. Whereas modernism attempts to achieve meaning through the fixation of signifier and signified, postmodernism critiques this dichotomy in its shutting down of spaces to create new meanings and new knowledge. Rather than prevent meaning from becoming, as its critics might imply, postmodernism celebrates the possibility of new meaning in this dynamic space of the in-between.
CHAPTER 2

HISTORY CHAMELEONS: HISTORY AS SCIENCE, HISTORY AS ART

In the quest to be recognized as valid field of study, a modernist approach to history has evolved within the framework of structuralism, seeking to validate the discipline as an objective social science. Like many other disciplines, education included, this quest for acceptance as a social science was a quest for validation, and therefore a discipline with the power to speak and be heard. Foucault (1994) notes this heritage in the discipline of history.

The first thing to note is that structuralism, at least in its initial form, was an undertaking that aimed to give historical investigations a more precise and rigorous method. Structuralism did not turn away from history… it set out to construct a history, one that was more rigorous and systematic. (p. 420)

This rigorous and systematic view of history is criticized in postmodernism, as it requires that the disciplinarians of history attempt to speak anonymously, with one voice, in order to present “objective” facts that constitute the actuality of the world. Hebdige (1996) describes it as aspiring towards “omnipotence,” and the desire for “supposedly full knowledge, when people feel fully present to themselves and their destiny” (p. 191). Kellner (1987) warns of the problems of rejecting postmodern history because of subjectivity.

To champion or reject a certain kind of story as the model of historical studies, and to overlook the implicit narrativity of virtually all forms of historical writing leads to problems. (p. 12)

The quest for a unanimous, anonymous voice is criticized in its aspirations for dominance, in its oppression of individual subjectivities. This is linked with postmodernism’s critique of Western logo centrism, a critique of structural linguistics, and the attempt to create definite and rigid patterns of meaning.

In The archaeology of knowledge and the discourse on language, Foucault (1972) traces these patterns of domination through the representation of history, which is closely linked with logo centrism in linguistics. Foucault comments on the pre-eminence of language in the study and telling of history.

…[H]istorians have constantly impressed upon us that speech is no mere verbalization of conflicts and systems of domination, but that it is the very object of man’s conflicts. (p. 216)

Speech, and therefore linguistics, is not merely the voice with which we tell of conflicts in history, it is the very source and object of conflict. It is the “will to power”, in which humans have struggled to have their voice considered valid, to establish their patterns of meaning as correct.

There is great resistance to understanding the history of history as a subjective act, in the manner that Foucault explains. Many historians (Hobsbawm, 1977 & Zaggorin, 1998) call the postmodern understanding of history a relativistic attempt to destroy the field, a call for the end of history. Foucault (1972) is aware of this resistance, which he identifies as a resistance against the dismantling of ideology, which gives a sense of security and order.
But one must not be deceived: what is being bewailed with such vehemence is not the disappearance of history, but the eclipse of that form of history that was secretly, but entirely related to the synthetic activity of the subject: what is being bewailed is the ‘development’ (devenir) that was to provide the sovereignty of the conscious with a safer, less exposed shelter than myths…. What is being bewailed, is that ideological use of history by which one tries to restore man everything that has unceasingly eluded him for over a hundred years. (p. 14)

Kellner (1987) echoes Foucault commenting,

The reasons for these misunderstandings are easy to see. The debate is not really over narrative and “science.” It is about power and legitimation with the profession, not how best to present or conduct research. (p. 13)

Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, and Taubman (2004) defend Foucault’s statement, calling not for the end of history, but a refocusing within the discipline. With the deconstructionist view of language in postmodernism, in which there is no fixed relationship between signifier and signified, and therefore the elimination of the signified, there is only a string of signifiers (Derrida, 1977). This understanding of language, with its fluidity, if applied to Foucault’s (1972) understanding of speech as the object of history, gives us a very different focus in historical study. Pinar et al. (2004) articulates this refocusing well.

[W]hat it seeks to express or represent, and its meaning will always be necessarily deferred. Such a challenge results not in negating history but in replacing the meaning of history with the history of meanings. (p. 468).

This work traces the history of some of the articulations of the private/public divide as manifested in schooling, seeking to trouble this divide through these articulations.

Kuan-Hsing (1996) also articulates a postmodern understanding of history. Kuan-Hsing recognizes the critique of postmodernism as the “end of History,” but not the end of the historical study. With the refocusing of the field in view of the postmodern understanding of language, instead of having a “History,” we have “the beginning of histories” (p. 311). Fay, Pomper, and Vann (1998) phrase the postmodern reframing of history as a move away from the question of “how is history like and unlike science?” to the question of “how is history like and unlike fiction?” (p. 2).

The deconstruction of language as being an objective description of reality, and the move towards understanding language to be a tool through which we describe our subjective perspective and experiences, leads us towards an aesthetic understanding of language, and therefore history.

Because of the relation between the historiographical view and the language used by the historian in order to express this view- a relation which nowhere intersects the domain of the past- historiography possesses the same opacity and intensional dimension as art. (Ankersmit, 1998, p. 183)
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While this aestheticism of history is lamented by some, it is celebrated by postmodernism. It marks an opening, the possibilities for histories, for multiple voices to tell their stories. Postmodernism is a useful philosophic lens with which we may view different types and genres of history. To claim the authority of one particular view, or the postmodern perspective of history in general, as the authoritative and only true vision of the discipline would be to establish a metanarrative, a concept that is rejected within postmodernism. Rather, the postmodern celebration of histories cannot make absolute truth claims, but explores and expresses the subjective. History from the postmodern perspective invites the disruption of chronology and strict disciplinary formalities. Ankersmit (2001) describes the shift in emphasis from a modern approach to history where the focus is on establishing a coherent and organized truth that is consistent with previously established thought, to a postmodern approach where truth is not the stake to which history should be measured against. “And truth thus is not at stake in the disagreement about such definitions- what is at stake is what truths are more helpful than others for grasping the nature of the period in question” (p. 38). Put in other terms, Ankersmit describes the shift from modern to postmodern history as one that approaches history not in terms of a description, but in terms of representation. He distinguishes between the two in the following manner:

In a description… we can always distinguish a part that refers and a part attributing a certain property to the object referred to… No such distinction is possible in a representation… We cannot pinpoint with absolute precision in a picture those parts of it that exclusively refer to… and those other parts of it that attribute to it certain properties… as is done with the predicative part of the description. Both things, both reference and predication, take place in pictures at one and the same time. (p. 39)

Whereas the modernist historical project aimed at history as a description of the past, Ankersmit and others point to the fallacy of this perspective. He notes that whereas a description “refers” to some “real” object to which we can make reference, representation “is about” something, acting as a substitute or replacement for that which is absent. Postmodernism does not deny temporality, but as Ankersmit points out, denies truth as a criteria for the validity of history, just as truth would not be a criteria for the validity of an artistic representation. The proliferation of various representations in a postmodern approach to history represents an advantage, as representations can only be judged in reference to one another, as substitutes or replacements for that which is absent, rather than some empirical criteria.

There is no a priori scheme in terms of which the representational success of individual narrative representations can be established; representational success always is a matter of a decision between rival narrative representations. It is a matter of comparing narrative representations of the past with each other, not of comparing individual narrative representations with the past itself. (Ankersmit, 2001, p. 96)
The criteria that Ankersmit encourages us to employ in such comparisons is the one which challenges us to think about the past in new and broader ways. He notes that this is often the one that is seen as most risky in terms of existing representations. For Megill (1995) this signals a turn from attempts at descriptions of the past to a use of historical space to address theoretical issues.

In a world that no longer believes in a single History, historians can awaken universal interest only insofar as their work addresses theoretical issues.... Accordingly, one envisages a historiography capable of bringing (localized) aid to theory…. A more self-ironic historiography than the current style, having a greater humility and reflexiveness concerning its own assumptions and conclusions. (p. 172)

Postmodern histories celebrate the subjective, and eludes the pinning down of signification that shuts spaces down and pushes out a multiplicity of voices. This freedom is what Greene (1995) celebrates in the arts.

When we hold an image of what is objectively “the fact,” it has the effect of reifying what we experience, making our experience resistant to reevaluation and change rather than open to imagination. (p. 126)

The understanding of history as a representation denies this reification, and allows for the telling of many histories, each of which opens our understandings, or at the very least our recognition, of the other. I will subscribe to the two characteristics that Ankersmit (1998) points to, “opacity” and “intensionality.” These characteristics view art (and representation) as a sort of practice in which the artist expresses their subjective views through the medium with which they work, the observer only being able to interpret the intensional nature of the work in a somewhat opaque fashion. Just as it is never completely clear to the observer the inner thoughts or expression of the artist, so the author or reader of history cannot be completely clear either. Such an understanding of postmodern history as art does, however, make us aware that history is authored, and as such has a subjective voice.

Through an exploration of the historical dialogue of the histories of public and independent schooling from the postmodern perspective, spaces are opened to expand understandings of schooling proposed in current policy. The multiplicity of narratives within public and independent schools serves to deconstruct and discredit a unitary history. Further, this work stands as a unique representation of the histories of public and independent schools by standing in the juxtaposition of dialogue between the two institutions around the topics of identity politics, accountability, and globalization. Through this juxtaposition, this work is guided by and attuned to the theoretical and philosophical in the troubling of the private/public distinction. It validates the experiences of the other, and recognizes the need for open spaces in which to tell those narratives. As the quote from Huebner (1991) at the opening of this work states, this exploration is primarily historical, in that we create our past and future through our present.

Like a weaver creating a tapestry from individual strings, we weave our present moment in education. The weaving can take on different styles, shapes, and
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patterns, depending upon the strings, knots, and braids to which we choose to listen and let speak.

To understand curriculum as deconstructed (and deconstructing) text is to tell stories that never end, stories in which the listener, the “narratee,” may become a character or indeed the narrator, in which all structure is provisional, momentary, a collection of twinkling stars in a firmament of flux. (Pinar et al., 2004, p. 449)

Within the exploration of schooling historically, a recognition of this creative voice in history works to deny a unitary understanding of history. This opens spaces for the subjective histories of the other, and validates the right to (re)present their own lived experiences. Therefore, in a historical exploration of public and independent schooling, there is the acknowledgement of voices of authors, rather than unitary realities that all have experienced. It is recognized that historical, and therefore present, accounts of the history of schooling create and (re)present subjective experiences.

Such an acknowledgement is important, in that it denies a “right” interpretation of the dialogue between public and independent schooling. Rather, this dialogue can be seen as a “series of narratives superimposed upon each other” (Pinar et al., 2004, p. 449). To participate in such weaving, in such story telling, is to participate in the art of history from a postmodern perspective that continues to give education, and curriculum theory more specifically, a present moment, a continual movement, and as such, a freedom.

The celebratory, subjective understanding of dialogue is the understanding employed in this work as a dialogical history. It troubles the notion of the traditional public/private distinction in schooling and curriculum more generally. As a dialogical history, it aims as at representation, in the sense attributed to the work of Ankersmit (1998, 2001). Description can be understood as a modernist approach, in which the historian aims to describe the past, to assign signifiers to point to signified entities of the past in a fixed and permanent manner. Representation, however, stands as a re-presenting of that which is acknowledged as absent. Here the signer points to other signifiers, each always competing and never permanent.

This notion of a postmodern, dialogical history and its inability to create fixed meaning does not invalidate or undermine this work. Rather, it recognizes that the voice with which I, public, or independent school speak or have spoken creates a representation, but is not completely representative of all understanding and perspectives. Importantly, it calls for attending to the relations of power in which different voices in the history of public schooling and independent schooling have attempted to speak authoritatively for the whole of education. It requires an attentiveness to that ways in which different voices have attempted to speak. It also means paying attention to which voices have been silenced, underrepresented, in this dialogue, which voices have not been allowed to speak or have been ignored.

By exploring the dialogical histories between public and independent school, I hope to add to the larger discourses within education, and the curriculum theory.
field more specifically. An exploration of this dialogue will further an understanding of the representation, of the differences and divergences of our interpretations (of interpretations) of the way in which the issues surrounding identity politics, accountability, and globalization are and have been lived in both public and independent schools today. The focus and exploration of these topics has centered primarily on those experiences within public schools. However, the existence and histories of these issues within both types of schooling are only possible as the existence of the other, and as such, their “utterances” on these topics are intimately connected to and already contained within the other.

The postmodern exploration of the dialogical histories between public and independent schools serves as a representation to explore the relationships and answers to the issues surrounding identity politics, accountability, and globalization, in order to open space for more questions. It troubles the distinction that is often placed between public and private, and points to the way in which the otherness of each is already contained within itself, and necessary for its existence. Such an exploration takes to heart the celebratory possibility of dialogue in the postmodern, and allows for further representation and possibility with the field of Curriculum Studies.