

## Foreword<sup>1</sup>

William F. Pinar

Too often love seems in short supply, sometimes even in private life. Certainly, it seems to have slipped away from the public sphere. Take, for example, the research of Charlotte Brand, Alberto Acerbi and Alex Mesoudi, research that analyzed more than 150,000 pop songs released in the United States between 1965 and 2015. During that period, the occurrence of the word “love” in the top-100 hits fell fifty percent. Meanwhile, the incidence of such songs conveying negative emotions - specifically hate - increased sharply.<sup>2</sup> Other evidence of love’s “decay”<sup>3</sup> comes not from pop culture but journalism. David Rozado, Ruth Hughes and Jamin Halberstadt analyzed 23 million headlines published between 2000 and 2019 appearing in 47 different news outlets popular in the United States. They found that there, too, love was in short supply, as headlines had become increasingly negative, emphasizing events associated with “anger, fear, disgust and sadness.”<sup>4</sup> During the last two decades, they found that headlines in left-leaning media had become increasingly negative; headlines in right-wing or right-leaning publications were worse.<sup>5</sup> “The negativity in the culture reflects the negativity in real life,” David Brooks suggests.<sup>6</sup>

A recent Gallup survey of 150,000 people in 140 countries signals that the situation is even worse outside the United States.<sup>7</sup> Stress, sadness, angry, sorrow and physical suffering all showed up at historical highs. (Gallup conducts this survey each year.) “We live in a world of widening emotional inequality,” Brooks observes, as the top twenty percent of humanity reports high levels of happiness and well-being while the bottom twenty percent reports low levels.<sup>8</sup> “The emotional health of the world is shattering,” Brooks concludes.<sup>9</sup> And it was never – to stay with Brooks’ gerund – exactly intact.

What's love got to do with it, you might ask. You can't eat love if you're hungry. Nor does it provide a roof over your head if you're homeless. If you're a soldier on a front line in Ukraine, loving your enemy could get you killed. But love could – does – prompt many to share food with those without it, provide shelter to those stuck on the street, press politicians to negotiate peace. Food, shelter, and peace may be prerequisites for staying alive, but love makes being alive worthwhile. The promise of love is what Christianity communicates, as do other institutionalized (and non-institutionalized) religions.<sup>10</sup> Faith may affirm the power of love to those who listen to the ordained, but too many others sitting uncomfortably in church pews hear prompts for self-righteousness, sexual repression, racial superiority. Much of what plagues the planet can be traced to failures of the Church, and that institution has had – presumably – God on its side. Can curriculum achieve what catechism cannot?

Don't count on it, Jales Coutinho seems to say. In fact, due to pervasive “hierarchization and unprincipled competition,” he knows, “people may be inclined to position love as make-believe.” Materializing “make-believe” is, I suggest, exactly what this text achieves: Jales Coutinho makes love in front of your eyes. In part curriculum theory, in part prayer – that last term invoking the legendary James B. Macdonald's very conception of curriculum theory<sup>11</sup> – Jales Coutinho theorizes how we might study and thereby materialize this omnipresent – if accented by its heart-aching absence – aspiration. This text is a labor of love, a text of admirable erudition, self-examination, and scholarly explication, all enacted as this most remarkable scholar – as “seeker” - studies the ways curriculum studies has grappled with the ongoing crisis that is humanity. Wisely, shrewdly, he starts with himself:

Every time I step out of my door which is my self, I am asked to meet someone's else hospitality, but it seems that I have lost my own, for I can no longer give with a full heart. I now wonder what has been left of my humanity: *will the course ever be able*

*to gift it back to me?* At this historical juncture, I do not think so. My only option then is to try to change it by seeking and studying, by returning to genesis, to love.

As Jales Coutinho knows, studying the words of others provides signposts for each of us journeying on a path that is uncharted, a course on which one might – with study - find one’s way, might find love. While that love may be embodied in another – a loved one – studying one’s educational experience of curriculum can constitute a labor of love, a course to be run on one’s own if also in the company of others. No finish line – except death – no winners or losers in this running of the Course, only the fundamental fact, curriculum as a “collective public moral enterprise,” a curriculum of love.

This text testifies to love as reconciliation, a secular version of Christian redemption, yes one’s own but hardly only one’s own, as in the absence of others love is utterly elusive, an aspiration - laudable and necessary as aspiration is - but not (yet) material reality, “both in global-north and -south contexts.” Such elusive love becomes, for Jales Coutinho, in this “Post-Reconceptualist” era, tortuously tenuous, requiring “fortification.” The mind may be no muscle but there are movements in the running the course that affirm fortification, specifically ongoing engagement with alterity, curriculum design construed as “juxtaposition,” design encouraging “bi-focality.” Feet on the ground, decoding the signposts that appear on his path, Jales Coutinho fortifies love as a curriculum theorist must: “I deliberately engage and juxtapose scholarly texts and promulgate *care/giving* in the unfolding of autobiographies to support calls for reconciliation with self, alterity, nature, and the cosmos.” Like Walt Whitman, Jales Coutinho contains “multitudes.”<sup>12</sup>

Among the contributions this text makes is “the tracing of the intrinsic connection between love as an ethics of *care/giving*, autobiography, law, and reconciliation for the unfolding of curriculum in Post-Reconceptualization,” positioning “reconciliation” as *the* pinnacle of curriculum conceived as a “collective public moral enterprise.” Jales Coutinho reconstructs reconciliation as an “praxis for becoming *consciente* (and loving) in the world,”

rehabilitates relationships as “respectful,” affirming “iterative and symbiotic processes of giving and receiving *from within*, which can ultimately enact a new form of power sharing in the world.” Such “work from within,” he continues, “sets *the tone* of complicated conversations towards justice and, within justice, reconciliation.” And tone turns into “mindsets and attitudes in our collective engagement with alterity in the hierarchical, antagonistic, and agonistic structures of societies, especially (neo)liberal ones.” Jales Coutinho explains:

Reconciliation is conceived as a *state of becoming* wherein people from all walks of life *collectively* transform their bellicose ways and shift their “judgementalities” to fortify love *and* depart their complicated conversations from that very nexus of love—caring for and about “self,” “alterity,” “nature,” and the whole “cosmos.”

Reconciled, each of us can contain “multitudes” too.

Turns out there are multitudes of meanings of love hidden in the intellectual history of curriculum studies. Jales Coutinho excavates these too, framing his efforts as enactments of “Post/Reconceptualist method/ology,” emphasizing the “employment of juxtapositions,” by means of which he seeks “understanding(s)” that nourish “*nexus*.” He does so by working his way through the scholarly “literature produced by scholars within and outside curriculum studies to juxtapose interpretations and meanings,” thereby composing “a new synoptic text,” one that depicts “*the way we go about loving* in curriculum work.” Significantly, “rather [than] ... a rupture with the 1970s ‘Reconceptualization’ ... this ‘Post-Reconceptualist’ text opens up space for ‘complicated conversations’ regarding love within and across the con(texts).”

From these labors of love Jales Coutinho concludes that “care” is that which “brings our work together as a collective endeavor in Post-Reconceptualization and internationalization—shifting our labor of love from negotiation towards *proliferation*.” Such “proliferation” performs love as “nexus,” a concept that is not only personal but also

profoundly political. As Che Guevara knew, “the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love.”<sup>13</sup> Such solidarity across difference enables, Jales Coutinho explains, “the fortification of love through the unfolding of autobiography,” underscoring that subjectivity is “the real site of education, a praxis for becoming (loving) and *consciente* in the world.” As he did in *Curriculum Work and Social Justice Leadership in a Post-Reconceptualist Era: Attaining Critical Consciousness and Learning to Become*,<sup>14</sup> in this text, too, Jales Coutinho performs such praxis autobiographically - and theoretically.

Invoking another term central to his emerging *oeuvre*, Jales Coutinho tells us that “I not only ‘bifocalize’ my ‘self’ and ‘work’ to uncover circuits of privilege and oppression in the course of running—the systems of power that shape(d) my life *and* the lives of those with whom I (have) consciously and unconsciously relate(d)— but also to fortify the meanings of love in my life, relationally and contextually.” Through such exegetical excavation he finds he is able “to reaffirm love, the ethics of care, in my life.” He speaks of parental love, brotherly love, religious love, romantic love, and labor love, and in so doing forges “nexus” and “proximity” with his “self” and “others.” “Because all curriculum work is autobiographical” – indeed the very “heart of education” - Jales Coutinho knows that “the hard labor of fortification (and reconciliation) is best conceived through the unfolding of written, spoken, and performative autobiographical lexis.” Such self-disclosure enables each of us “to fortify love, collectively, to give care *from within*.”

“I write this text,” Jales Coutinho emphasizes, “thinking of love and of my own autobiographical encounters in the world to inspire new becomings.” He knows what he’s up against: “Despite good levels of criticality, full skepticism should not dominate the shapes and colors of our hearts.” Indeed, he recognizes “the decay of love as the most profound crisis of curriculum.” Even when we’re unable to offer courses on love, we can aspire to offer whatever course we teach with love. “After all,” he reminds, “the

educational significance that we nurture with love, the ethics of care/giving, is intrinsically educational: it is purely an educational experience *as lived*.” He concludes:

Running and dwelling, we put our hearts in the front line of our daily actions, in every step we take in the course and on that bridge, mobilizing “the what” (knowledge) so that “the way” (the course) becomes less like a locus for “judicious interpretation,” and more like a nexus for relational and contextual encounters: a locus for/of love and reconciliation, a place for self and collective awakening, a nexus for new becomings.

In this world of intensifying emotional inequality, Jales Coutinho’s heartfelt affirmation of love constitutes “knowledge of most worth.”

#### References

- Brooks, David. 2022, October 28. The Rising Tide of Global Sadness. *The New York Times*, CLXXII, No. 59,590, A24.
- Jales Coutinho, Allan Michel. 2022. *Curriculum Work and Social Justice Leadership in a Post-Reconceptualist Era: Attaining Critical Consciousness and Learning to Become*. Routledge.
- Macdonald, Bradley J. Ed. 1995. *Theory as a Prayerful Act: The Collected Essays of James B. Macdonald*. Peter Lang.

#### Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Forward to *Love in the Post-Reconceptualist Era of Curriculum Work*, by Allan Jales Coutinho. Routledge, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Brooks 2022, October 28, A24.

<sup>3</sup> Jales Coutinho’s characterization. Unless indicted otherwise, all quoted passages come from his text.

<sup>4</sup> Brooks 2022, October 28, A24.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Canadians rank eleventh in surveys of world happiness:

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/latest/are-canadians-happy>

---

<sup>8</sup> Brooks 2022, October 28, A24.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Jales Coutinho concludes “that if we are going to teach students about religions, we should attempt to teach them about how religions approach and teach care, how we can become more caring towards our ‘selves’ and our ‘neighbors’ within and beyond our own religion, in our own spirituality, whilst minimizing divisions to promote some convergence, to reverberate love within *and* beyond schools.” Such a curriculum might communicate – even for the secular – the centrality of love – of care – in subjective and social reconstruction.

<sup>11</sup> Macdonald 1995.

<sup>12</sup> <https://poets.org/poem/song-myself-51>

<sup>13</sup> <https://globaljusticecenter.org/papers/che-guevara%E2%80%99s-concept-revolutionary-love>

<sup>14</sup> Jales Coutinho 2022.