

## DR. SETH A. McCALL

### Research Statement

My research agenda explores the unseen potential of archives, by focusing on how they continually get pulled into new events. This work challenges current conceptions about archives as stable foundations, whether this involves the growing archive of conventional qualitative research or the expanding archive of problematic curricula. My research asks how teachers might experiment with these problematic archives to bend them toward socially just ends.

My first book project, *A Troubling Inheritance: Experimenting with Problematic Curricula* (contract with Rowman and Littlefield: Lexington Books), explores what it might mean for curriculum studies to engage with problematic curricula, codified curricula that perpetuates social inequities. While the field of curriculum studies exercises limited influence in large-scale curriculum development, teachers and lay audiences grapple with these curricula every day. Specifically, this book uses arts-based educational research methods with E. D. Hirsch's *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy* to repurpose problematic curricula for social justice ends. I discovered that Hirsch's problematic curricular project, if deployed in particular ways, can actually foreground conversations about white supremacy and settler colonialism. In conclusion, this book merges decades of curriculum studies work focused on understanding how curriculum works with an experimental approach for engaging with the field's troubling inheritance.

In my dissertation, "Becoming Otherwise: A Speculative Ethnography of Anarchival Events," I studied how people and things interacted with archives. Specifically, using ethnographic methods and arts-based educational research, I examined the Harriet Tubman memorial in Harlem, Facebook, and a group dedicated to reading generative, philosophical texts. I discovered that events rippled through these archives. For example, a pink hat appeared on Harriet Tubman, claiming the icon for mainstream feminism, a controversial move that generated critical dialogue about interlocking systems of oppression. Events like this affected what the archive did at any given moment. I conclude that the way archives come together affects what they do.

My research intervenes into enduring debates about how qualitative researchers, curriculum scholars, and teachers relate to archives. However, rather than finished products to dismiss or obey, my research demonstrates how events today continue to affect what these archives might yet become. This approach renders the archive a work in progress, opening space for teachers, scholars, and researchers to rework problematic archives to create a more just world.

My paper, "Radical Edits" (*The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2021) addresses how qualitative researchers relate to archives in the context of post-qualitative research by turning to an artist's engagement with problematic narratives in newspapers. Another paper, "A Troubling Inheritance" (*Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 2022) brings together the anarchival and assemblage art to rethink how teachers and curriculum studies relates to problematic curricula. I co-authored a chapter in *Writing and the Articulation of Qualitative Research*, a book published at Routledge in 2023. For AERA 2023, I presented a paper on the preoccupation with being/feeling right for Division B: Curriculum Studies. At AERA in 2021, I presented a paper on creative writing at the Qualitative Research special interest group, which is now a manuscript in development. For AERA 2020, I organized a panel for the Arts-based Educational Research special interest group that returned to Rhoda Kellogg's archive of children's art, using it as a springboard for meditations on arts-based methods. I plan to submit this text to the *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* and develop it into a book project in the future. In 2021, I presented "Unsettling Silence" at the Bergamo curriculum conference, a

paper that brings creative writing into deliberations over the archiving of work in curriculum studies.

My second project builds upon my work at the Center for Technology and School Change by focusing on the convergence of disciplines around STEM. In convergence education—or transdisciplinarity—disciplines converge around complex social problems that require the application of knowledge and skills from different disciplines. In recent years, government agencies interested in STEM turned their attention to convergence education, in large part because of the complex problems that youth will need to address in their lifetimes. While these problems offer authenticity for STEM education, they also fit into citizenship education at the heart of social studies. After all, democratic society depends upon people who apply knowledge and skills from different disciplines to address complex, real-life problems. However, in the rush to engage students in real-life problems, educators sometimes lose track of their students' voices. This study considers how transdisciplinary STEM based on student-generated problems affects teacher and student perceptions of STEM education. I will use fieldnotes, interviews, and surveys to study perceptions of STEM and the feasibility of this approach to education. In November 2024, I plan to submit a proposal to NSF Discovery Research K-12 (DRK-12) for an exploratory grant. This project will involve working with three different schools. In each school, I will work with teams of teachers engaged in ongoing, situated professional development. The professional development will engage teachers in curriculum design for transdisciplinary STEM focused on student-generated problems. Drawing on the significant challenges facing future generations and the interest in transdisciplinary STEM, this project employs mixed methods research to understand the effects of transdisciplinary STEM on teachers, students, and schools.

While my research engages with debates about how to relate to problematic archives in qualitative research and curriculum studies, it contributes to scholarly conversations about the ethics of what an archive might yet become. As archives seep into all aspects of life, my research reinforces the importance of experimenting with troubling inheritances to maintain an ethical relationship with what these archives might become.