



10-31-2020

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#### **Recommended Citation**

Hill, A. S. (2020). Pedagogy of Tarot: simultaneity of past, present, and future. *Summit to Salish Sea: Inquiries and Essays*, 5(1). Retrieved from <https://cedar.wwu.edu/s2ss/vol5/iss1/4>

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# Pedagogy of Tarot: simultaneity of past, present, and future

Ashley Hill, Western Washington University

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## Abstract

*A three card tarot spread can represent the past, present, and future. As a reflective practice, tarot does not divine the future; rather it invites the practitioner to consider context and imagine multiple futures. Simultaneously experiencing the past, present, and future of education is valuable and is possible through a pedagogy of tarot. A pedagogy of tarot connects feminist and democratic approaches to education through non-hierarchical relationships that honor lived experiences - calling teachers and learners to remain conscious and awake to one another. By acknowledging the possibility of multiple truths within current sociopolitical and historical contexts, we can make space for multiple paths forward.*

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**Keyword:** tarot, nonlinear learning, democratic education, context, pedagogy, critical education

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## Why Tarot?

Shuffle, pull, read. Shuffle, pull, read. Shuffle, pull, read.

Her hands move the cards compassionately.

Like children rearranging themselves in line tallest to smallest,

the cards hop

skip

jump

each move creating a new thread to tug on an uncertain future, past, present?

Like waves moving at uneven rates, colliding to create a foamy, confused surface

the cards collide and slide

her energy in them, she prepares to pull.

One

Two



### Three, futurity.

#### Why will we imagine an unimaginable future?

We walked along the creek, disrupting the dappled sunshine on the trail with our sandaled feet. Carrying few things, our journey was short to a warm rock big enough for us and our belongings. The rock, likely deposited by glacial movement, provided an excellent sunning platform. It was summer and the sun trickled down saturating our cells and quieting our minds. Like sleepy, content cats we lounged for a time, warming and giggling while listening to the chatter of the cold creek water. While we sat, she pulled out her deck of tarot cards, doing a reading for herself. I waited until she completed her reading, and then it was my turn.

This was the second time we had looked at the cards together. The first time, she read for me, teaching me about the cards and how they relate to one another. In my first tarot reading I saw only what are called minor arcana cards—these cards carry earth, water, fire, and air themes with characters embodying traits like humility and leadership. I felt drawn into the practice immediately and, upon further reading, connected with the writing of Michelle Tea in her book *Modern Tarot: Connecting With Your Higher Self Through the Wisdom of the Cards*. She says that what tarot “does is, through the use of vibrant, detailed imagery, engage...creativity and intuition and allow” us “to see a story, a pattern, and use that to help the seeker make sense of where they’re at and where they’re headed” (2017, p. 5). Stepping into a relationship with myself and someone else and divining what the future could hold felt good.

It quelled my anxiety around the immense not knowing. It provided a sweet, close moment to be in relation to a friend and reveal our hearts—to learn about one another.

I wonder, what can a practice like tarot reveals to us about teaching and learning. I believe if you engage with a practice like tarot with intention, it can provide a glimpse into a way of making meaning outside of normative expectations taught in schools. In tarot we are invited to explore relationships to our bodies, minds, and souls, and to the place we inhabit and the communities with whom we live. I see tarot as a feminist act, a deviation from a decided future, a liberation from controlling systems. The non-hierarchical teacher-learner relationship fostered through tarot embodies a praxis (a combination of theory and practice) and pedagogy (a way of teaching) where “our creativity, imagination, and intuition consciously direct our energy for the good of ourselves and others” (Tea, 2017, p. 14) As in tarot, teaching and learning can ask us to understand multiple truths, participate and listen in relation, and think critically. Teachers and learners can share in critical thinking to better understand historical contexts and how those contexts inform our present—ultimately becoming critically literate together. In these practices of teaching and learning I believe critical educators must engage the past, present, and future with simultaneity. We can use the pedagogy of tarot to invite learners into the multifaceted nature of time and dig deeply, past superficial interpretations and stories offered.

I share my story about tarot because it illuminates a practice that I use to make meaning of my education in past, present, and future contexts. I feel the translatability of tarot to education through integrating intuition and imagination, viewing ourselves and our impact through time. I seek to make the simultaneous experience of time obvious throughout our conversation today. After all, this is how tarot cards are meant to be read – acknowledging order but exploring the contextual connections. I hope that you all will leave this presentation with a sparked curiosity for complexity and critical thinking, questioning how a practice like tarot demonstrates resistance to expectations in classrooms. With tarot and lots of books at my fingertips, I am continually learning and unlearning. With each turn of a card, I am learning to let go of control. During each reading whether alone or with someone else, I am building a relationship. When looking at the cards, I am offering myself a combined option of reflection and action, individual and collective, theory and practice. I can be flexible. I can become critically literate. I can grow. Would you like to grow alongside me?

As I discuss the connections I make between tarot and education today, please know that this is not prescriptive. I do not claim expert level knowledge in tarot or education **and** I value the gravity of my lived experience. I reflect to you all my unique understanding of education, which is built on known knowledge and understanding – and this is all known. By considering tarot as pedagogy, I inherently accept the inclusion of spirituality in education. Among body and mind, spirituality, for me, is the reason that my body slows and my mind quiets when my cat purrs or the spiritual bliss I feel when my body floats and my mind opens as water surrounds me. Many of us reference Native Hawaiian scholar, Manulani Aluli Meyer. I believe this happens because there is a profound permission she gives for us to FEEL in education. She writes and speaks about the development of knowledge and addresses viewing the world with an Indigenous mind. She says that “spirituality has become an...embarrassment to all forms of Science” but that there is possibility to integrate ourselves and understand our shared existence more fully. She continues “for us to move forward in the exploration of Indigenous ideas and to actually *see* other views of the world there is first a call for the suspension of currently held-thought patterns particularly around knowledge, science, and reality” (Aluli Meyer, 2013, p. 98). Tarot could be classified as an embarrassment to science – but I think it motivates us to suspend current thought patterns and consider what is in front of us.

Today, we will consider the most straight forward tarot spread, a three card spread, to consider how past, present, and futures of education intersect. Three cards challenge our brain’s tendency for binaries. These dichotomies bind us and stifle the exceptional freedom in fluidity. bell hooks, feminist African American writer, activist, and scholar says that in her writing she “wanted to show that we are all complex thinkers who can be both specific in our focus and universal” and that “the inclusive nature of both/and thinking allows us to be inclusive” (hooks, 2003, p. 39). This both/and thinking illuminates one of the theories underpinning the praxis of tarot. Buying into binaries tells a particular story about past, present, and future involving only two options in education: success or failure. But through a pedagogy of tarot, more stories can be told and we can more deeply engage. How can we resist superficial thinking? In the context of education,

the practice of tarot pushes back on dominant ways of knowing by resisting the removal of intuition and love from education.

As I wrote and rewrote my capstone I wondered how I could invite all of you into a conversation about tarot, teaching, and learning without the time to sit one-on-one and actually do tarot. I grappled with the dissonance of wanting to demonstrate what I learned alongside who I am becoming while inviting you all in, collectivizing our lived experience.

With the help of my community, I came to realize my learning is not separate from the development of myself and that by sharing these pieces of myself with you all I am inviting you be with me, here, in this moment. That is a gift of collectivized learning, it is always imperfect. It is, as we learned earlier this week, a way to show radical love.

I invite you all to embrace, as I learn to do the same, nonlinearity as we proceed in this conversation. The stories I weave are not stagnant and I urge us all to consider how our collective past, present, and future are always occurring. Throughout *my* stories, you will notice a recurring character. Her name is Water. Though Water is not at the forefront of this conversation today – she seeps into my writing as poetry and pieces of literature, moving us from one thought to the next. When you hear about Water, know that change is coming. Water remains a theme in my life, showing up all the time in my tarot readings.

The simultaneous experience of water is well spoken in this poem called *The Path of Water* by James Bertolino.

*Water builds.  
Water waits.  
Water grows heavy  
with its own wounding.  
Earth is the planet of water.  
We are water. We are the history  
of water in this star system. We sip  
molecules that brought oxygen to the tissues  
of blind fish. Our breaths remember ice.  
Sweat remembers pterodactyls  
on leathery wings. Water rises and sinks.  
Water that traveled by comet for thousands of years  
finds news of the universe in the urine  
of Tibetan priests. Water teaches.  
Water is the path that takes us  
in. We swim  
the mind of water.*

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## **The Past**

As a critical educator, someone who looks critically at the past, present, and future of their field, it is foundational for me to look at the history of schooling in the US. As I do

this, I acknowledge the position from which I speak. I identify as a white, cisgender (identifying with the gender I was assigned at birth), middle class, able-bodied, settler womxn. These components of my identity – race, gender, class, ability, and settler status, though not comprehensive, inform my lived experience during schooling and ways I make meaning of that experience—as some of you heard in previous capstones, transparency around our positions in education matters. I want to address a few pieces of my position and hxstory, specifically around whiteness and settler colonialism. For me this comes down to an examination of the version of truth I have been given throughout the course of my schooling and the version truth I now examine. I agree with bell hooks who says “no education is politically neutral” (hooks, 1994, p. 30). I unpack the hxstory shared with me through my education by talking through two influential narratives: imperialism and settler colonialism.

In Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz’s book, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* (2014), she includes the words of Willie Johns of the Brighton Seminole Reservation in Florida. These words seem appropriate now.

*We are here to educate, not forgive.  
We are here to enlighten, not accuse (p.1).*

We must understand the global hxistorical context that props up education in the US. This is related to the violent acquisition of knowledge, bodies, and land that are falsely romanticized in Western stories of exploration.

These stories describe global imperialism and eventually settler colonialism in the US. John Willinsky, Canadian educator, activist, and author, states that “Britain was the largest of a series of European empires that in the last five centuries managed to annex the Western Hemisphere, foster a global slave trade, divide the African continent, and create a revolution in the arts and sciences (Willinsky, 1998, p. 2). He goes on to say that “we need to learn again how... studying, classifying, and ordering humanity within an imperial context gave rise to peculiar and powerful ideas of race, culture, and a nation...that the West used both to divide up and educate the world (Willinsky, 1998, p. 2-3). Imperialism was based on exploration, learning new and novel things by which the existing knowledge and advanced education structures among Indigenous, Black, and Brown folxs were devalued and erased.

As an example of this devaluing, Willinsky restructures of the story of the Arawak natives in the Bahamas and the Christopher Columbus myth in the context of education. The elimination and systematic discounting of Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, this is called cultural genocide. Not talking about it, this is called erasure. By Columbus naming himself superior to the Arawak natives, he described his positionality and eliminated their story (Willinsky, 1998, p. 55). He cultivated what remains as an unfounded perception of civil versus primitive people, superior versus inferior ways of knowing the world.

In critical theory this positional power dynamic reveals itself in education, it defines what we all likely think of when considering the teacher-learner relationship—

authoritarian by nature. Though power masquerades as necessary authority for the achievement of students, it is about control of the narrative. This is seen in the US school system—where imperialism fostered settler colonialism and where elevation of Indigenous knowledge is still rare.

Joel Spring, an American academic states that “deculturalization combines education for democracy and political equality with cultural genocide—the attempt to destroy cultures” (Spring, 2001, p. 4). Alongside Spring’s assessment of schooling, Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz says that “the history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism—the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and policy of genocide and land theft” (2014, p. 2). These ideologies, like white supremacy, extend their reach into education. Let me be clear that by white supremacy I do not mean openly racist language or hate crimes in schools, though this does occur and did on Western’s campus this year. By white supremacy in schools I mean the more insidious language around being “colorblind” or tokenizing the experience of students of color and financially profiting of the advertisement of these students.

As I learned about the hxstory of schooling during my graduate education, and witnessed the ways whiteness currently profits off a presumed “post-racial” perception of society, I processed shame and disappointment-but why? I wondered how I made it through an elementary, middle, high school, and college education where the foundations of schooling were not made clear? These hxstories inform the context of my education and I did not know. I came to realize that my understanding of hxstory perpetuated erasure. I consider the power dynamics that allowed me to move through the US school system without ever learning about settler colonialism alongside the concept of genocide, learning about slavery but never engaging in critical discourse about continued racism in schools, learning about my personal identity without knowing the ways it is privileged by whiteness. But I can and am doing this work now.

As a critical educator, it is my responsibility to continue learning about the past and understanding how it is embodied and reproduced in current and future classrooms. When I reference classrooms I imagine nearly any place as a classroom, or rather, anywhere as a site for learning.

We must remember that education does not happen in a vacuum and we are all teachers and learners all the time. I hold myself accountable to telling the truth and subverting systems that prevent meaningful access to this truth. Coming back to tarot, I am reminded of the ways tarot uncovers unpleasant truths and asks us to do the work to understand and change. Tarot helps me to see the multiplicity within stories and to sit with the complexity and discomfort of dissonance. I’m constantly asking, with my positionality how do I make change and resist perpetuating oppressive systems? I hope that hearing this hxstory sparks each of you to investigate the context for your schooling experience, perhaps you will even feel curious to read more or have conversations. For me, though, there is a caveat to curiosity. It does not protect us from ignorance or act as a veil for the genuine effort to do the necessary work around self-awareness and reflexivity that is necessary to change the narrative in schools.

As we transition to talking about the present, I would like to share a quote from my favorite book, *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin. The central character, Edna, is complex and willful. She is flawed and she grapples with her existence. I resonate with these words.

*In short, [Edna] was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her...but the beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such a beginning! How many souls perish in its tumult! The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation.*

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### **The (almost) Present**

As much as imagining and divining the future quiets my anxiety, I accept that tarot—like education—does not always serve to illuminate the immediate path to take, but reveals where we may be now, sometimes with a side of unpleasant truth. As I build a praxis around tarot I believe each person I encounter is a tarot card. Each place I encounter is a tarot card. Each conversation is a tarot card. Tarot summons us to be present and through being present, there is a reclamation of learning in community. Each person involved brings their whole self to the classroom and what is born from sharing ourselves can embody deep learning. As direct action and resistance to the heteropatriarchal and capitalist agenda still present in schools, vulnerability and reciprocity—like tarot—push against individualization and erasure. As another component of the praxis and pedagogy of tarot, democratic education offers a way to subvert the system from within.

For me, democratic education is the best way to remain present in teaching and learning. bell hooks, says that “teachers who have a vision of democratic education assume that learning is never confined solely to an institutionalized classroom” (hooks, 2003, p. 41). In this assumption, teachers can acknowledge and invite students to bring themselves in their entirety into learning. This can create space for students to become curious and for teachers to share their curiosity.

hooks compares authoritarian teachers and democratic teachers describing how democratic educators can be viewed as less rigorous and not invested in standards. In these words, I hear my inner narrative. “If you don’t demonstrate you learned something, if you don’t get that A, if you don’t get that job...then you are not worthy”. What a lie.

*In becoming a critical educator, I am constantly rewriting this inner narrative so that I can best serve students and my community. We teach who we are. How can I show up for students as an authentic democratic educator when I tell myself stories of unworthiness? I remember preparing for a short presentation in December of last year. I thought and read and utilized all the techniques I developed as an undergraduate to prepare for a presentation. At some point though, I considered the ramifications of letting go of control. What if I did not prepare fully, what if I brought myself into the room and shared myself as I was? After the presentation, a cohort member and friend approached me and told me*



*she appreciated my transparency about my process and that I shared how unprepared I felt in that moment. Our connection and conversation illustrated the value of opening myself to democratic education both in and outside the classroom. bell hooks says that “democratic educators show by their habits of being that they do not engage in forms of socially acceptable psychological splitting where in someone teaches only in the classroom and then acts as though knowledge is not meaningful in every other setting” (hooks, 2003, p. 44).*

By opening myself to genuine conversation with peers and students, I can hold my entire self as a teacher and learner. This helps me to act on my values of resisting dominant stories of unworthiness and unintelligence—this is part of why I utilize tarot today. Though it may be viewed as fringe magic with little clout in academia, I argue that it brings joy and deep inquisitiveness to learning and bringing love and joy into classrooms is another way to enact democratic education. Democratic educators seek to eliminate the gap between classroom and “real world” and provide opportunities for rigorous study of the world. For me, this process occurred through graduate school and it revealed to me the ways I collude and am complicit in systems of oppression. However, democratic education provides a platform for critical consciousness whereby I can question the systems. bell hooks posits that we need to “[change] our educational system so that schooling is not the site where students are indoctrinated to support imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy or any ideology, but rather where they learn to open their minds, to engage in rigorous study, and to think critically” (hooks, 2003, p. xiii).

In mid-February, in the throes of preparing this presentation, I had a conversation with a friend. We were discussing what we would write for our capstones and the value of our graduate education. She turned to me and said...“knowing what you know now, if you were doing what you did in your job before this how would you do it differently?”

Her question revealed to me the many ways I would go about my previous job in educational outreach integrating what I have learned, I rattled off a few changes I would make immediately. She looked at me, in a way that I knew meant, “See? Look what you’ve learned and how you have grown to be the person you have been waiting for”. She reminded me that democratic educators value a complex past that informs the present and imagines the future. She reminded me that democratic educators listen and that this work cannot be done alone.

In being present in education, we can better honor that we are whole people: body, mind, and spirit. Like tarot cards, body, mind, and spirit are experienced together. This concept is explained well by Manulani Aluli Meyer. As several of my cohort members have mentioned previously, in her work, *Holographic Epistemology: Native Common Sense*, she talks about multiple ways of knowing and the intersection of body, mind, and spirit in learning. She identifies holographic knowing as a (k)new concept and a way to actualize Indigenous ways of knowing in combination and with mutual benefit from “cross fertilizing” with Western classical sciences. She says “a hologram is made with modern techniques, but its implications are best understood with an ancient mind: The whole is contained in all its parts” (Aluli Meyer, 2013, p. 94)

She goes on to say “holographic epistemology details the simultaneity of this trilogy without collapsing knowledge into dogma or well-intentioned patterns of philosophy that instead oppress, dismiss and make uniform” (Aluli Meyer, 2013, p. 94). Aluli Meyer specifically calls out the oppressive practice of knowledge acquisition in education saying:

Don't make it only about cognitive accumulation of information. Discover what interdependence really means by listening to others, by watching how those who have more experience do things, and by sharing ideas when asked. Then go out and watch the moon rise and swim in waters freshly seasoned with Spring rains (2013, p. 99).

When was the last time you watched the moon rise or felt so present you remembered you were alive? What did you learn from being alive? How does that feeling of being alive nurture reverence? What place does reverence have in teaching with a pedagogy of tarot? How can tarot remind us to be present?

At the beginning of our graduate program we canoed the Skagit River and studied the east and west side of the Cascade Mountain Range. On the traditional territories of the Upper Skagit, the Sauk-Suiattle, the Nlaka'pamux, and the Swinomish tribes we made connections with human and more than human communities. These connections demonstrate the necessary understanding of the Indigenous past, present, and future and the settler colonial story. As a settler, my relationship to place is complex – fleeting and temporally attached, I am not tied to the land/water/air as if these are myself, my own body. My reverence for this place asks me to elevate Indigenous knowledge and understand tribal sovereignty.

But what does this mean in education? As a settler educator, it is my task to reflect on how I might build relationships with tribes built on reciprocity. In tarot, it is important to understand the gravity of our choices and the paths we create – the characters in tarot go on a cyclical journey through life just as we do. In tarot, we are reminded and reflected back the ways we are reciprocal.

I reviewed my journals from the time when I developed a deeper understanding of how my reverence of place is caveated just like my curiosity – knowing that my reverence is directly linked to experiences on stolen land and water. I hold this complicated notion alongside my soulful writing about place and as I come alive through education.

*August 12, 2017*

*I think I've been struggling to journal because it lacks structure, this is exactly what I need though. The release of structure to reform and create another foundation-a layer of educator growth! I want to educate myself on this Earth and on its children- both human and inanimate, both mammal and avian, both flower and stardust. Bringing the world a little closer to students, to my loved ones, to my cohort. Listening to Gina and Eric play has inspired me to continue (and not be afraid) of learning about the unknown. What at time to be alive! ...In meeting the people...I already see new mentors and leaders...and I can feel their intentional and unintentional moments of teaching. I think this where the marriage of place-based learning and experiential education are most prominent. In the*

*unintentional moments of grace and conversation, when what is learned naturally flows from one's being and it is genuine!*

I string together ideas about body, mind, and spirit, about reverence, tribal sovereignty, and democratic education because they illustrate the influence of feeling alive and present in learning—they demonstrate the messiness of my aliveness, of our present in education.

We find ourselves at another transition, we are nearing the end. I bridge the present and the future with these words from bell hooks (1994). This passage struck me as I read because of the critical view on the use of water, but it really hit me when talking with a mentor. She reminded me that we are complex, we sift the water from the dirt, so to speak, we love ourselves and our people as we embody contradictions. This is democratic education.

*To have work that promotes one's liberation is such a powerful gift that it does not matter so much if the gift is flawed. Think of the work as water that contains some dirt. Because you are thirsty you are not too proud to extract the dirt and be nourished by the water. For me this is an experience that corresponds very much to the way individuals of privilege respond to the use of water in the First World context. When you are privileged, living in one of the richest countries in the world, you can waste resources. And you can especially justify your disposal of something that you consider impure. Look at what most people do with water in this country. Many people purchase special water because they consider tap water unclean—and of course this purchasing is a luxury.*

*Even our ability to see the water that come through the tap as unclean is itself informed by an imperialist consumer perspective. It is an expression of luxury and not just simply a response to the condition of water. If we approach the drinking of water that comes from the tap from a global perspective we would have to talk about it differently. We would have to consider what the vast majority of the people in the world who are thirsty must do to obtain water (p.50).*

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## **The Future**

I stand here today simultaneously holding my past, present, and future stories of education. Like a deck of tarot cards, my stories create a larger, more complicated narrative of education. I am brimming with a confusing cocktail of pessimism, curiosity, hope, anger, rage, love, and tenderness. Owning and identifying feelings is an important practice within tarot. When looking at a three-card spread you will not simply look at the chronological passage of time. With each new pull of cards, you will look at a changed situation that will ask you integrate what you know and move consciously. I elucidated some of the reasons why I chose to use tarot as a pedagogical framework for education throughout our conversation so far. I said it is a feminist act, a deviation from a decided future, and a liberation from control. In considering these claims I want to revisit the idea of the praxis of tarot and how that translates to who I am becoming as a critical, democratic, feminist educator. What does all of that mean?

In my process of becoming an educator, I use theory as a way to understand what is happening around me. It is a way to make meaning of the waterfall of information delivered to my brain every second, which is why I connect it to the depth of meaning making offered through tarot. I believe, as lifelong learners, we are constantly seeking theories that underpin the way we move through the world. I came into this graduate program after leaving a job doing work I loved believing that I could do better work in the future if only I knew *how* to teach. I believed, as I was indoctrinated to believe was my privilege through prior schooling, that I would come into this space and open my brain. Professors and instructors would pour their knowledge and expertise into me and I would magically become an educator. I acknowledge, now, the shortsightedness of that stance and the importance of a question posed by a mentor; for whom and what is education for? As I learn more critical theory and keep reading and reading and reading, I find that I connect with the stories and actions shared by the theorists, their practice. Where their intellectual work meets the classroom and shows up in conversation, the praxis. I am offered words of guidance from bell hooks, “ when our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two-that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other” (1994, p.61).

My intellectual work is meeting practice today. In connecting with all of you, I have the opportunity to employ the pedagogy of tarot and invite us all to view our education, and ourselves, through a different lens. I embody a feminist educator stance by sitting all together in a circle and to let go of the need to control an outcome by inviting you all into MY immensely emotional work. I honor that all of us are whole beings coming into this space body, mind, and spirit and that our best work can be done democratically. I share my investment in critical thinking by disrupting our tendencies for binaries and authoritative structures—by using tarot we can offer each other time to peek into lived experiences that make us who we are right now. I intend to disrupt the normal narrative about school in the US with a critical telling of history, share what I know to be true but not assuming that we all share this truth. We can share in democratic education, at least in part, by knowing that we are all intelligent and knowledgeable beings with expertise to offer and that learning is not quarantined to the classroom.

I want to make it clear that though we moved through time in a linear capacity, that it is the collapse of time that serves as an impactful lens through which to view education. With each tarot reading I do for myself or someone else, the cards come out, get shuffled, and placed on the table. There is interpretation and integration, and there is a moment that it ends. When I use my cards I compile the three into one stack before returning them to their box. This brief moment, holding the three stacked cards, reminds me to think about what they mean together and ask what can be distilled from this simultaneous contemplation. I ask all of us now, what revolution and transformation can occur when we critically examine our past, present, and future in education? How can this become active, outside our minds and taken up in education? How can we dig deeply into this and push past a superficial understanding?

Considering these questions, and being in a community where folks are grappling with questions like these buoys me. The distillation and meaning found in combination of our sociopolitical historical past, present lives, and possible futures can be deeply explored through relationships. Though the individual interrogation and consciousness raising is important, I found that my growth hinged on interacting in my community. So, as we transition to the rest of our day together I urge you all to note how each presentation, each interaction with a new or known person alters your current experience and how that may illuminate a collective future. I hope to have instilled a curiosity for complexity today and shared that this complexity is valuable and that we are all walking contradictions. Perhaps a few of you will go onto explore tarot more thoroughly and think about the ways it demonstrates a contextual reflection of what our collective past, present, and future in education holds.

As I neared the end of the writing process, I met with mentors and friends to see what folks thought about my writing. One of the most profound conversations reminded me that visions of the future are imperfect and impartial. What a gift it is to have been left unfinished, impartial dreams and to have a fierce, quiet knowing that my dreams for the future will never be perfect.

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***This is not the end.***

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## **Acknowledgements and Gratitude**

I would like to start our day together with gratitudes. Writing these gratitudes brought me joy and excitement, but also angst knowing that I could not speak the name of every person I love or who impacts me...unless that was my whole capstone, which at moment of frustration, I did entertain. Please know I love you all. Truly, radically, even those of you I do not know. We are making a connection today that is worthy – we are worthy. I extend gratitudes as I stand on the territory of the Upper Skagit, Sauk-Suiattle, Swinomish, Nlaka’pamux and federally unrecognized tribes where myself and my family are Western European settlers, affording us privileges and instilling ideologies that I am beginning to unravel and understand. I’ll share some of this throughout my capstone with you all today. But first...

I am the granddaughter of Arloa Shipman and Robert Bingham and of Beverly Kincaid and Walter Hill Junior. I am the daughter of Roberta Bingham and Sean Hill. I share my grandparent’s and parent’s names today to honor those who are here physically and spiritually, to honor their hard work and love throughout their lives for themselves, their communities, and for me. They are who I am.

My family extends, now, to include Scott Henderson and Amy Jedlicka-Hill and I am lucky to have two sisters – Lindsey and Vanessa – who have been teaching me the value of sisterhood.

To Jon, my partner, thank you for loving me when I disappeared into the woods, into books, and into myself. Thank you for calling me into consciousness and reminding me of my strength. Thank you for never underestimating me and thank you for caring for our sweet fur baby, Luna. I’m only a little bitter that she loves you more than me.

In addition to my incredible family, I stand among the dazzling contributions and expansive love of friends and soulmates across time – both physically and spiritually present. I stand among the work of known and unknown elders, scholars, and previous North Cascades Institute graduate cohorts who brought words to the soulful work of education and amplified important stories.

Thank you to my teachers, educators, and mentors – who are also my friends. I extend gratitude for the ways you push me and hold me accountable through love. To Joshua and Lindsey – your synergy and teamwork are representative of the ways that reverence for community is built. You embody love and remind me that patience with myself is a gift. Nick, Dr. Hayes, Veró, and Gene thank you for broadening my understanding of what education is and who it is for.

To my family here at NCI, I extend gratitude for the ways you fed me – intellectually, through food, comfortable spaces, and leadership.

And finally, my dearest cohort family. Thank you for deeply experiencing life with me and reminding me that capsizing a canoe is NOT the worst thing that can happen. I am deeply grateful for the ways each of you enhance my life and bring joy to the world.

Amy, Charlee, Liz, Tanner, Zoe, Montana, Darcy, Brendan, Zoe, Marissa, Nate, Gina, Eric, Kira.

A handwritten logo consisting of the letters 'S2SS' in a cursive, stylized font. The logo is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page, overlaid on a light blue diamond-shaped background.

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