

# CURRICULUM STUDIES IN BRAZIL: AN OVERVIEW

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## **Introduction**

This article provides an overview of the nature of curriculum studies in Brazil. Brazilian curriculum field can be roughly divided into three phases: Pre-Marxist (1950s-1970s); Marxist (1980s-mid 1990s); and Post-Marxist (mid 1990s-present). The pre-Marxist phase of curriculum thinking in Brazil was dominated by a Tylerian instrumentalism variously depicted as positivist-behaviorist-technocratic-administrative-scientific (Macedo, 2011). The Marxist phase focused on school-society relationship employing concepts like power, ideology, hegemony, and reproduction. Marxism dominated the Brazilian field until the middle of 1990s when postmodern, poststructural and postcolonial discourses—which emphasized subjectivity, everyday life, hybridity, and multiculturalism—replaced Marxist curriculum thinking.

In the following sections I turn to discuss in detail the nature of curriculum discourses in Brazil during the Marxist and the Post-Marxist periods. I must point it out here that by no means these are sharp divisions; indeed, there is co-existence of various discourses (positivist, Marxist, and post-Marxist). But such periodization does reflect general trends. Moreover, as an outsider to Brazilian curriculum theory and guided by Elba Siqueira de Sá Barretto's (2011, p. 88) remark pinpointing “the lack of research on the historical perspective of the curriculum [in Brazil],” such an organization helped me organize the intellectual history of the field.

## **Marxism (1980s-mid 1990s)**

The New Sociology of Education, and the critical theories on curriculum as a whole shifted the discussions, until then prevailing in the psycho-pedagogy field, to issues of power, ideology and culture...

Elba Siqueira de Sá Barretto (2011, p. 85)

During the 1960s and 1970s Brazil was in a great political turmoil characterized by underdevelopment, imperialism, and the widely felt need for structural reforms. There was as well intense hope that

a socialist revolution would create a more just and equal society in the country (Barretto, 2011). This period was also characterized by debates on the relations between education and social development. Notably, the links between education and social development had already been the subject of attention of sociologists, among them Florestan Fernandes, Otávio Ianni, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Luiz Pereira, who focused especially on urbanization and industrialization. The importation of sociological perspectives represented a new focus in the educational field, which had been marked by “psycho-pedagogical studies” (Barretto, 2011).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s scholarly production in curriculum studies was not extensive. An article by José Luis Domingues, based on the ideas of Habermas, was one of the first works, articulating the main curriculum categories of technical-linear, circular-consensual, and dynamic-dialogical. At that time, only the texts by Michael Apple and Henry Giroux had been published in Brazil. Abraham Magendzo’s (1986) *Curriculum e Cultura na América Latina (Curriculum and Culture in Latin America)* was also an important reference for the first courses introduced in Brazil (Barretto, 2011). Antonio Flávio Barbosa Moreira’s (1990) *Currículos e programas no Brasil (Curricula and Programs in Brazil)* became a key, indeed, canonical text.

During the first half of the 1990s, articles on the New Sociology of Education, then a subject little known to Brazilian began to circulate, introduced by Brazilian scholars who had obtained their doctoral degrees in the United Kingdom, among them Antônio Flávio and Lucíola Licínio dos Santos (Barretto, 2011). Such critical scholarship focused on the selection and distribution of school knowledge, an attempt “to understand relationships between the processes of selection, distribution and organization and teaching of school contents and the strategies of power inside the inclusive social context” (Moreira and Barretto, 1994 in Macedo, 2011, p. 136). In their *Currículo, cultura e sociedade*, Moreira and Silva (1994) defined curriculum as school content; they also identified ideology, power and culture as the main themes of the curriculum theory. The New Sociology of Education and the critical theories on curriculum shifted discussion from psycho-pedagogical themes to issues of power, ideology and culture. Moreira and Silva and others have played important roles as disseminators of studies conducted by scholars working primarily in the United States and United Kingdom.<sup>ii</sup> The concept of “class *habitus*,” theorized by Bourdieu, as well as studies by Rist, Howard Becker, Rosenthal and Jacobson, as well as the contributions of Basil Bernstein, and his frame of “invisible pedagogy,” provided a conceptual framework for many in this period (Barretto, 2011). Scholars questioned instrumentalist conceptualizations of curriculum as a set of psychological or epistemological principles concerned with the developmental order of the contents, adapted to the students’ age, according to methods of curricular integration. In such analysis investigations were carried out problematizing the organization of knowledge that constitutes the dominant forms of curriculum (Lopes, 2011). However, the domination of Marxism gave way to the postmodernism.

### **Post-Marxist Phase (Mid-1990s to the Present)**

By the mid-1990s Marxism came under serious criticism due to its devaluation of everyday life. Such criticisms, rooted as they were, in the so-called post-discourses, allowed a fundamental and epistemologically remarkable step leading to the “deterritorialization”<sup>iii</sup>—a passage of flux, change or transition in the existing models, theories, and paradigms—of curriculum, which has resulted in the exhaustion of macro-analyses and territorializing tendencies typical of Marxist scholarship. Brazilian curriculum studies is now preoccupied with everyday school life, hybridization of curricular policies, cultural studies and the emphasis on differences, the latter marked by the identity politics of postmodernism (Amorim, 2011). I turn first to studies of everyday life in schools.

## Curriculum as Everyday Life

Research that is concerned with educative everyday lives and with different practices, knowledge and significations . . . originate . . . from the idea that it is in multiple and complex process that we learn and teach.

Nilda Alves (2011, p. 47)

In each quotidian<sup>iv</sup> reality, the struggle [for social emancipation] happens in different forms, and the better we understand our reality, the better are the chances of entering in this struggle in an efficient way. That explains the need [of] plunging into the quotidian. It is not possible to fight in the abstract field!

Inês Barbosa de Oliveira (2011, p. 159)

[Everyday life research] conceive[s] the curriculum as articulated around social practice for the purpose of inverting the hierarchical relationship between theory and practice.

Elizabeth Macedo (2011, p. 138)

“Research into/on/with everyday life” (Alves, 2011) conceives the curriculum as social practice (Macedo, 2011), often focused on the network of relationships between practitioners and the “routines” of public schools (Ferraço, 2011). The major everyday life researchers in Brazil include Nilda Alves, Regina Leite Garcia, and Inês Barbosa Oliveira, whose work questions the linear organizations of knowledge and view knowledge as the situated consequence of networks of subjectivities in everyday life (Lopes, 2011), problematizing the view that the official prescriptions are directly translated into the curriculum as practiced. In this research curriculum as an official document becomes curriculum as articulated in action and power networks, woven in the school’s daily life, whose threads, with its Deleuzian “knots” and “lines of flight,” are not only discernible in daily life, but extend beyond them, reaching into various settings where participants live (Ferraço, 2011). What matters for understanding curriculum is not only formal documents but what is practiced in schools and related contexts (Macedo, 2011). Everyday life researchers ask: what narratives and images are produced and shared in school routines in processes of “negotiation,” “translation,” “mimicry,” and “uses”? How do those processes empower practices of “resistance” and “invention” in relation to the homogenizing mechanisms of the official prescriptions? (Ferraço, 2011).

Everyday life research emerged in Brazil in response to criticism of technocratic conceptions of school life, conceptions imported from the United States. Abstracting students and teachers as variables, technocratic studies disregarded the subjectivity, assuming the “impossibility” of knowing what goes on inside the school. Technocratic studies seemed to assume that what happens inside is not important, even frequently wrong. Everyday life research also derived from Marxist overemphasis upon reproduction and hegemony; it found that students and teachers not only reproduce what is, they also create, every day, new forms of being, making, and knowing. Macro-changes in history are woven into people’s day-to-day lives, if in ways not often detectable at the moment when such changes occur, but in incidents that people do not foresee (Alves, 2011).

In everyday life, subjects practice different ways of “experimenting-problematizing” the official curriculum, sometimes “transgressing” it in “powerful,” and “inventive” ways, constituting networks of

“antidisciplines.” Everyday life researchers have discovered that when participating in the daily curricular experience, even if following pre-established curricular materials, teachers and students weave “practical alternatives” with the threads provided by the networks they are part of, in and outside school. Thus, it can be said that there are multiple curricula in action in schools, in spite of the different “homogenizing mechanisms” (Ferraço, 2011).

Everyday knowledge has been dismissed as mere “common sense,” to be replaced by scientific knowledge assumed to be superior to that discovered in the quotidian (Oliveira, 2011). Such social science pays no attention to the multiple “meanings and uses” the “common senses” have for practitioners. Interacting with the complexity of the daily life in schools structured by various networks, and sharing the “action-knowledge” of teachers and students produce appreciation of the complexity of curriculum. Everyday life researchers realize the impossibility of control over the diversity of the curricular practice by means of categories that purport to measure them (Ferraço, 2011). In addition, such social science assumes that it is possible to study an object by itself, without understanding the multiple processes, contexts and interrelationships in which it is inserted (Alves, 2011). Everyday life researchers labor to understand events invisible to the quantitative-scientific methods of research models intent on generalizing the singular. For everyday life researchers, the curriculum is constituted in networks of significations and, thus, is performed by people incarnated in specific social, historical, cultural, political, and economical settings that are interconnected and that influence each other mutually (Ferraço, 2011; Oliveira, 2011). In opposition to the “interposition” and the “censorship” that science imposes on narrative knowledge, everyday life research is dedicated to listening to the common, affording attention to the daily practices of the subjects in schools. Such an aspiration requires a research methodology sufficiently open and flexible to describe the daily communicative interactions through situating the subjects in their own world (Ferraço, 2011) thereby acknowledging all their experiences that schools have neglected in the name of scientific knowledge and Western white bourgeoisie culture (Ferraço, 2011).

Additionally, everyday researchers question the idealist and utopian visions of State curriculum proposals. They argue that although people may have idealist and utopian visions and believe in a promising future for education, there is no possibility of an instituted consensus, of a common ideal prescribed to be reached with the same intensity and by everybody, as implied by the official curriculum policies. The complexity of daily life diffuses any utopian intentions. That realization construes education as lived in the present, not something to be achieved in the future. Curriculum is what actually happens in schools, in the concrete conditions and contexts where the students and teachers act. Finally, everyday life research constitutes a rejection of the increasing dominance of common/universal/standardized curricula and the installation of global systems of evaluations—which define what to teach and when to teach, thereby, reducing the freedom of schools and local systems to adapt to different realities. Given such market-driven homogenizing educational policies, everyday life researchers, like Oliveira (2011), endorse struggles against economic thinking and for social emancipation in the quotidian contexts of the school lives. In each quotidian reality, Oliveira (2011) argues, this struggle is undertaken in different forms, and the more fully subjects (researchers and the researched) understand their reality, better are the chances of smart struggle for emancipation. Present conditions, Oliveira (2011) argues, provides the need for plunging into the quotidian.

What have been the major theoretical positions behind the development of everyday life research in Brazil? The first major theoretical influence came from Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, particularly Habermas, which greatly impacted the works of Ana Maria Saul and José Luiz Domingues, who exercised a decisive influence on research into everyday life. For these researchers, introducing the concept

of the quotidian into curriculum studies was necessary in order to understand school life and its relationships with the broader social reality. Methodologically, everyday life researchers felt that the subjects' active participation was indispensable and developed a process called "participant research" (similar to action research in North America). Notably, it was due to their methodological approach that such studies made strong relationship with the social movements based on the thinking of Paulo Freire (Alves, 2011). The second major influence on everyday life research was related to the works of Robert Stake, who recognized the need to observe what happens daily in the school with the impossibility of generalizing conclusions. Stake emphasized the "multiplicity" and "complexity" of everyday school life. The representatives of this tendency in Brazil are Menga Lüdke and Marli André whose works are a necessary reference in everyday life studies (Alves, 2011). Also influential in Brazil was research done in Mexico conducted by Justa Ezpeleta and Elsie Rockwell (Alves, 2011), underscoring the importance of studying schools as they are, seeking to understand what is created by teachers and students. Also influential was the great English curriculum specialist Stenhouse and his the idea of "teacher-researcher," and his followers, like Elliot, who also underlined teachers' reconstruction of official proposals, especially as they participate in research regarding those same daily practices of reconstruction (Alves, 2011). Finally, the research on everyday life was influenced by Cultural Studies, including the work of Lefebvre, Certeau, Boaventura de Souza Santos,<sup>v</sup> Humberto Maturana and Bhabha (Ferraço, 2011),<sup>vi</sup> in order to understand the roles of cultural artifacts with which the practitioners weave networks of relationships. Moreover, the dialogue with postmodernity, especially with Deleuze, in the 1990s, brought the metaphors "tree" and "rhizome," and the networked curriculum, marked by a conception of "rhizomatic"<sup>vii</sup> knowledge (Macedo, 2011).

### **Curriculum as Postmodern and Poststructural Text**

These [postmodern] studies seek a methodological way out of the totalizations and metanarratives, and look out for possibilities of analyzing the singular, the local and the partial.

Elba Siqueira de Sá Barretto (2011, p. 86)

During the 1990s poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives began to be more widely disseminated in Brazil, but it is primarily curriculum scholars who have most contributed to debates regarding the significance of postmodernism for educational theory (Barretto, 2011). An important article by Moreira and Silva went beyond the New Sociology to acknowledge the so-called linguistic turn, e.g., postmodernism. Later, while A. F. Moreira began to advocate an association between modernity and postmodernity; the work of Tomaz Tadeu da Silva underwent a strong change in the direction of post-structuralism (Macedo, 2011). Silva's (1993) published collection of essays, *Teoria educacional crítica em tempos pós-modernos (Critical Educational Theory in Postmodern Times)*, which critically reviewed Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Rorty, and others, is a landmark publication, addressing the central issues of postmodernism as well as establishing continuities and ruptures with the existing curriculum discourses in Brazil (Barretto, 2011). The work of Silva gave centrality to the curriculum as a "practice of meaning," altering the prevailing conception of culture as the primary source of content to be taught. He worked as a supervisor of many researchers in the field. A study of the dissertations defended between 1996 and 2002 showed that A. F. Moreira, N. Alves, and T. T. Silva (specifically his work incorporating critical perspective) were the principal Brazilian references in those studies.<sup>viii</sup> Research conducted according to postmodern perspectives occurred mainly in the University of Rio Grande do Sul, influenced by Tomaz Tadeu da Silva, Alfredo Veiga-Neto, Rosa Maria Fischer, Guacira Lopes

Louro, Sandra Corazza, and Marisa Vorraber. According to the survey conducted by Paraíso on the postmodern research literature, the studies emanating from the University of Rio Grande do Sul have primarily focused upon (1) relations of power and subjected identities (inspired by cultural, feminist, postcolonial, ethnic, and queer studies); (2) on subjectivation, challenging the assumptions about the “subject” based on critical and traditional theories; and (3) and the problematization of the “educational truths,” of curriculum knowledge considered as “legitimate,” evidencing the constructed and contested nature of knowledge production in education. These studies attempt to seek a methodological way out of totalizations and metanarratives, looking for possibilities of analyzing the singular, the local and the partial (Barretto, 2011). Key in this development was the work of Antonio Flávio Moreira, Alice Casimiro Lopes, Elizabeth Macedo and Lucíola Licínio Santos, which sought to understand both the theoretical assumptions that have influenced the Brazilian curricular thinking and hybridizations of the current curricular discourses, as well as proposing perspectives for action (Barretto, 2011).

Influenced by the poststructural critique of “disciplinarity,” Alfredo Veiga-Neto has developed a Foucault-based research program to argue in favor of interdisciplinary studies centered on a “humanist-essentialist” perspective. In view of a “humanist-essentialist” perspective, the “pathology of the knowledge,” resulting from the separation of knowledge from the complex environment, leads to an instrumental approach subservient to the interests of capitalist development. Veiga-Neto questioned the conception of “disciplinarity” based on a unitary vision of reason that disregards the knowledge-power relations that engender the disciplinary knowledge. For Veiga-Neto, the school has its rituals of space and time marked by the “disciplinization of the knowledge” that maintain relationships with the processes of “governmentability” (Lopes, 2011).

For Veiga-Neto, the curriculum is an artifact of school culture centered on order, representation, and transcendence. As a consequence, school subjects exhibit specificities similar to scientific knowledge. In such a scenario, the knowledge-power relations that form subjects are not part of school knowledge. Thus, such a “scientific” school subject does not reflect institutional specificities of the subjects, nor does it aim to consider the trajectories of various communities. As a consequence of this critique of school subjects the Brazilian field has undertaken research into the history of school subjects in Brazil (Lopes, 2011). Such research is being conducted under the coordination of Antonio Flavio Moreira, Elizabeth Macedo, and Alice Lopes. Based especially on the works of Ivor Goodson, Thomas Popkewitz and Stephen Ball, these researchers investigate the transformation of scientific knowledge into school knowledge. This research helps understand how social hierarchies and divisions of culture—erudite culture, popular culture, systematized knowledge, and common sense knowledge—are maintained at the same time cultural hybrids are produced (Lopes, 2011). As well, this socio-historical research focuses on the stability of the subject-centered curriculum as an organizational technology of school control. It is with this understanding that Macedo maintains that the subject-centered organization does not prevent curricular integration movements, but submits them to its logic. To question the social goals implied by school curricula, whether disciplinary, integrated or even simultaneously disciplinary and integrated, becomes criticism of the power relations embedded in the curricular organizations (Lopes, 2011).

Currently, curriculum theory is also being developed based on concepts of Deleuze’s philosophy, namely, the relations among time, being and event; the relations among time, image and duration, of cinema studies; and the relations among time, sign and sense. Amorim (2011) views curriculum as a “sensation field,” which frees itself from the humanist substance that saturates it while searching for survival in a post-human state: “somnambulistic, unconscious, actionless, uninhabited.” For Amorim (2011) to visualize the curriculum as a “disfiguration context” cinema studies are influential. In this

view, the curriculum field anticipates new forms of living, generating creative acts in a world grounded in virtuality, on temporal comprehension, on nomadic movements and, provocatively, on “barbarism.” Despite the postmodern emphasis of his research, Amorim (2011) criticizes postmodernist scholarship for exhibiting the same bases and the same referents as modernist scholarship, among them: (1) the figure of the subject, specifically his/her conscience, autonomy, and power of transformation; (2) the relations of power structured on a plane subject to interpretation by cultural (class, gender, ethnic) and ideological categories as well as those of hegemony; (3) the continuous unyielding effort for the elaboration of “just ideas” (involving interpretation, analysis, judgment) connected to claims of representation of understanding the world; and (4) the “re-effort” towards critical transcendental thought. Moreover, Amorim (2011) observes a strong analytic tendency among postmodernists to reduce registers to text. Efforts to understand the relations between cultures and languages are collapsed into “discourse” as a metanarrative of cultural curriculum studies. Such centrality of identities and the subjectivist substance represent a tendency, Amorim (2011) argues, similar to structuralism.

### **Curriculum as Hybrid and Multicultural Text**

[O]nly a conservative identity, closed on itself, could experience hybridization as a loss.  
Ernesto Laclau, 1996 (cited in Lopes, 2011, p. 128)

In recent times hybridism has characterized a major theoretical tendency in Brazilian curricular thinking. Hybridism signifies the ways in which diverse curricular traditions struggle for representation in the form of distinct curricular choice and organization, and in that struggle have their meanings reconfigured. Such hybrid identities in no way mean to disregard the history of existing traditions, the negotiations that are made with such traditions, and their multiple libraries—of books, theories, films, theater plays, images and memories. Hybridism has, without doubt, greatly contributed to the complexity of the understanding of curriculum in Brazil, which is evidenced in the production of articles, books, theses and dissertations. New theories from philosophy, politics, sociology and from cultural studies are being incorporated, creating a hybridism that, at times, renders the curriculum so multifaceted that it risks losing resonance with the history of curricular thinking (Lopes, 2011). Nevertheless, hybridism is important for opening up new perspectives. For the field to advance hybridism must be critically embraced as an opportunity, not as a loss. As Laclau (1996 in Lopes, 2011, p. 128) notes, “only a conservative identity, closed on itself, could experience hybridization as a loss.” Hybridism does not always lead to overcoming the somewhat prescriptive nature that marks research as instrumentalism. It is still a common practice to consider research as a means for constructing proposals for schools to guide practice. Relationships among proposals/guidelines/theories and practices are treated in a “verticalized manner,” which assumes that it is up to theory, even if in a theory of poststructuralist inspiration, to illuminate the paths of practice (Lopes, 2011).

Hybridism in curriculum research has also been accompanied by multiculturalism. The turnaround of the field of the curriculum in the direction of multiculturalism coincided with the greater consolidation of democracy in Brazil and with the expansion of the political space won by the cultural minorities, especially the Black Movement (*Movimento Negro*). The racial equality law, the recognition of Zumbi dos Palmares as a national hero, the implementation of affirmative actions in the universities and in the public sector, and the inclusion of the Afro-Brazilian History and Culture in the curricula of all Brazilian schools by a presidential decree in 2003, are indices of multiculturalism’s curricular importance (Barretto, 2011; Macedo, 2011). With the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1988,

the medium of instruction for indigenous peoples in the first grades of compulsory school was to be in their native languages. A movement to rescue native languages and cultures has emerged. In 2008, the federal government made compulsory indigenous studies at all levels of education. Cultural organizations, ethnic movements, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), universities and other research institutions have produced studies and curriculum materials to enhance multicultural education. At the same time, teacher education initiatives, addressing multiculturalism, has also started to appear. In the field of curriculum, scholars such as Vera Candau, Ana Canen and Antonio Flávio B. Moreira are known for conducting multicultural studies (Barretto, 2011).

Influenced by postmodern perspectives, multiculturalism has played a central role in the transition from the Marxist emphasis on “social classes” to the forefronting, indeed celebration, of “difference.” This emphasis upon “cultural differences” has overlooked those who struggle to obtain basic social goods. The discourse on “differences,” some contend, has functioned to obscure the issue of inequalities as they become relevant only as they affect certain discriminated groups. Barretto (2011) thinks that the “racialization” of certain identity movements deserves a more profound reflection in the field of curriculum. Ferraço (2011) maintains that multiculturalism risks conceiving the school as a museum of different cultures, as if it could exhibit these by means of commemorative dates, characters, habits and other categories of curricular prescription. In this multicultural perspective the Other is “visited” from a “tourist perspective,” which stimulates a superficial and voyeuristic approach of “exotic” cultures. A post-colonial perspective would demand a “multicultural curriculum” that would not separate issues of knowledge, culture, and aesthetics from power, politics, and interpretation. It fundamentally demands a “decolonized curriculum.” The “museum” of multiculturalism has also been criticized as controlling the dynamic processes of “cultural difference” as it administers a false consensus structured by “cultural diversity.” Although the idea of cultural diversity is welcomed, minoritarian cultures become located in their own self-enclosed circuits (Ferraço, 2011).

### **Curriculum as Cultural Enunciation**

I feel it is necessary to radicalize the possibilities of overcoming those binarisms [formal and experienced curriculum; scholastic culture and culture of the school; scientific and everyday knowledge] . . . it is necessary to deconstruct the logic in which they [binarisms] can be thought, which in the case of the curriculum I imagine could be done [by] treating it as cultural enunciation.

Elizabeth Macedo (2011, p. 140)

The fundamental shift in the field—from the Marxism of the 1980s to the “post” discourses of the 1990s—constituted a moment of transition between a “political concept of curriculum” and the “centrality of culture” in curriculum. In the political conception, curriculum (school knowledge) is a shared repertory of cultural meanings as well as a means of cultural reproduction. The primacy of cultural reproduction dissipated as cultural production and “practices of meaning” underscored teachers’ and students’ agency. These binary pairs persisted: between formal and experienced curriculum; scholastic culture and culture of the school; scientific and everyday knowledge. To overcome such binaries, Macedo (2011) and Ferraço (2011) began to view curriculum and culture as sites of enunciation.

Studies of curriculum policies make such distinctions very clear both in critiques of the “top/down models” (which argues that curriculum documents are imposed by the government schools) and in the proposition of “down/top models” (which argues that curriculum should develop from the everyday life situations of the schools). The former focus was associated with the new sociology of education and



critical theory with their emphasis on the notions of “official curriculum” and the notion of “reproduction.” Although fewer in number, there were also policy studies focused on curricular alternatives present in the everyday life of schools. These studies emphasized the creative dimension of everyday life while minimizing its reproductive function and criticizing the inflation of the importance accorded to “official” curricula in Marxist models. In both approaches (Marxist and everyday life studies), the distinction can be seen between “production” and “implementation” of the curriculum that accentuates the dichotomies outlined above. These dichotomies, Macedo (2011) argues, can be surmounted by theorizing curriculum as the space of cultural enunciation. The process of enunciation is dialogical as it tracks dislocations and realignments resulting from cultural antagonisms and articulations, and thereby, subverting the “hegemonic moment” and replacing it with hybrid, alternative places of “cultural negotiation” (Ferraço, 2011).

The devaluation of the “experienced” vis-à-vis the “official” curriculum expresses the fantasy of verisimilitude in representation. The written nature of the “official” curriculum effaces the effects of the mediation of language in everyday life. Studies of the experienced curriculum can seem to assume a self-evident, even “natural” relationship between representation and meaning. It is as if the official or formal curriculum were disassociated from the thinking that produced it, as if it were a distortion of the lived experience in relation to which it was presumably written. The formal curriculum cannot (this reasoning goes) produce resonance, because it is the “illegitimate expression” of the reality, a stance assumed by some works in the down/top model used in analyses of curriculum policies in Brazil. The majority of the studies, however, insist on the authority of the curricular documents produced by the state. Ferraço (2011) rejects any contraposition between “official curricular prescriptions” and “performed curricula.” In fact, he argues that in the routine of the schools, the “curricula performed” or “curricula practiced” or “networked curricula” are expressed as potential possibilities for the problematization and/or broadening of the official curriculum. Ferraço (2011) considers schools, teachers, and students as hybrid subjects in culture’s in-between, who use the curricula without being imprisoned by political or cultural, original or fixed identities and indeed threaten the official discourse of the whole system. Given this analysis, Ferraço (2011) argues that it is imperative to have a political perspective based on unequal, negotiated, and translated political identities, neither fixed nor uniform, which are able to act in the gaps. Political identities must be multiple and inventive, as the uses and translations of the curriculum in schools take the forms of different logics, ethics, and esthetics. This “knowledge-action” of the school subjects is ambivalent even slippery, dislocating the instituted, creating unforeseen possibilities, at the same time as it conserves what is given as official reference.

Curriculum theory, Macedo (2011) and Ferraço (2011) argue, must deconstruct binary distinctions between formal/experienced, reproduction/production and school knowledge/scientific knowledge. Derrida’s notion of “supplement,” Macedo (2011) suggests, is useful for overcoming such binaries, functioning like a non-essential increase to something that is already complete but which paradoxically lacks something. The supplement provides the incompleteness that it identifies in the supplement. It is impossible, Macedo (2011) emphasizes, to conceive “experienced curricula” or “cultural production” inside schools without historically shared meanings, without the iterability that characterizes signs and that allows signification (in this case formal curriculum). Consequently, the experienced curriculum would share with the written curriculum a past understood as “instituted outlines.” Experienced curriculum, to which the fantasy of the perfect representation attributes the possibility of referring to something concrete, is like the official or written curriculum, only infinite deferments that do not reference any origin (Macedo, 2011).

If there are only deferments, Macedo (2011) continues, distinctions like those between formal/exper-

enced and reproduction/production become unsustainable. Such distinctions support a scheme in which creation exists only as resistance to past impositions. In a situation of infinite deferments, the movements among past, present and future meanings necessitate articulation and antagonistic negotiation. The curricular document only interrupts the flow of meanings created by the infinite deferment, fixing them momentarily. Without such a “fixing” there would be no text or meaning, but at the same time these interrupt the actual fluidity of the creation. This is something that could be roughly named as an “impossible fixing” and, in the same movement, necessary (Macedo, 2011).

The idea that textual structure is decentered, without limits, but momentarily fixed around a provisional center every time a text is produced, opens up into new possibilities of meanings. Derrida’s concept of “brisure,” Macedo (2011) notes, articulates this idea. Curricular texts, like open structures, are overdetermined and, thus, closed, constructing modes of address which in themselves have a “provisional quality.” In the perspective of the curriculum as cultural enunciation, dichotomies no longer make sense because the curriculum as enunciation emphasizes dialogues with traditions, thereby, spawning a “zone of ambivalence,” an “in-between space” that is neither past nor future, but both and neither of them (Macedo, 2011). In this “frontier zone” all that exists are “cultural flows” that represent the complexity of the social and of the human. According to Ferrazo (2011), such an understanding allows curricularists to become researchers of daily life in multiple networks of ongoing negotiations, permeated by ambiguities, ambivalences of the possibilities that are presented in interstices, never fixed or immutable.

The idea of curriculum as enunciation has been criticized as neglecting the operations of power. Macedo (2011) counters by pointing out that such a concept enables curriculum theorists to work in a more rigorous way with the power and, specifically, with the agency of subjects, thereby, providing a way out of the doomed struggle against an absolutely hegemonic power that Marxist theories, including the New Sociology of Education, have devised. Such a possibility, however, Macedo (2011) urges, demands politicization of concepts like “brisure” and “hybridism,” which may lead to a “theory of hegemony” on post-Marxist bases. Such a “discursive theory of hegemony” can provide tools for understanding the overdetermination of the curricular texts and the discursive closings they allow, at the same time countering criticisms of relativism associated with poststructural and postcolonial curriculum theory.

## **Conclusion**

In recent decades curriculum studies in Brazil has undergone significant shifts: from a positivist, then Marxist, and now post-Marxist phase. Curriculum studies in Brazil is an intellectually vibrant and impressive field, one that will exhibit a strong presence worldwide. What can contribute to the continued intellectual advancement of the field? Research on the intellectual history of Brazilian curriculum studies is key, Barretto (2011) acknowledges. While focused on the “next moment,” attentive to theoretical, social and political developments in Brazil and worldwide, curriculum studies must remain attentive to the past, constantly reevaluating the significance and meaning of work conducted earlier. Such historicity includes ongoing attention to institutional politics that influence graduate education of future scholars (Lopes, 2011). Through a critical reconsideration of the “canon,” curriculum theorists return to their libraries to reconstruct their understanding and their identities. This ongoing reconstruction of what knowledge is of most worth is animated by the ongoing negotiation of meanings a complicated conversation implies. Emphasizing everyday life and enunciation as event, each represented as duration in images that reconfigure the very meaning of representation, curriculum studies in Brazil provides key concepts that contribute creatively to the ongoing formation of the worldwide field.

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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> This is a slightly revised version of my chapter (Kumar, 2011) that was published in *Curriculum Studies in Brazil* (Pinar, 2011).

<sup>ii</sup> The major theorists whose works have been disseminated widely in Brazil include Michael Young, Basil Bernstein, Michael Apple, Philip Wexler, Henry Giroux, Stephen Ball, Peter McLaren, John Willinsky, and Stuart Hall among others.

<sup>iii</sup> “In Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), a territoriality is depicted as any entity or institution that restricts the free flow of desire. The family and the state count as prime examples of territorialities, and they conspire to produce the modern subject—the controlled and, as Deleuze and Guattari see it, inhibited subject of liberal humanism and the Enlightenment project: “there is no fixed subject unless there is repression,” they insist. They argue that desire itself needs to be “deterritorialized,” and treat nomadic existence as some kind of ideal of deterritorialization” (Stuart 2001, 370).

<sup>iv</sup> Oliveira (2011) employs the term “quotidian” for everyday life.

<sup>v</sup> See Oliveira (2011) for a discussion on the implications of Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ ideas of “sociology of absences” and “sociology of emergences” for everyday life research. According to Oliveira, the concepts of “sociology of absences” and “sociology of emergences” allow the quotidian research to think concretely about the emancipating potential registered in everyday curricular practices and to think of the possibilities to diffuse these practices on a larger scale as an inspiration for others to develop them, respectively.

<sup>vi</sup> Ferração (2011) represents an important example of the influence of Cultural Studies in the conceptualization of everyday life research in Brazil.

<sup>vii</sup> In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari put forward the notion of the rhizome as a model for how systems should work in a postmodern world. Prime examples of rhizomes in the natural world would be tubers or mosses, and it is characteristic of a rhizomatic system that, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, any point on it can be connected up to any other (as in the intertwining of mosses). Rhizomes are contrasted to trees and roots, which, in Deleuze and Guattari’s opinion, ‘fix an order,’ and are thus implicitly restrictive and authoritarian. The implication is that since rhizomes do not feature the linear development pattern of trees and roots, they are more democratic and creative, thus forming a better basis for systems in a postmodern world than the tree-like hierarchies most Western societies tend to favor instead. In common with their post-structuralist and postmodernist peers, Deleuze and Guattari are firmly opposed to hierarchy and authority, and concerned to find alternative methods of constructing networks. Something like the rhizome idea can be found in the Internet, which similarly allows for connections to be established between any two points of the system, as well as having no clearly identifiable ‘centre,’ or central authority” (Stuart 2001, 350).

<sup>viii</sup> Notably, the studies that adopted a Marxist perspective during this period found theoretical support in the works of Antonio Gramsci, Dermeval Saviani, and Gaudêncio Frigotto (Lopes, 2010).