

***We are not Alone* - the Subject of Teachers and the Auto/biographical in Curriculum Studies**

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Still, “complicated” does not mean “impossible,” and we must continue the project of intellectualization, both individually and organizationally, if we are to take back our profession as teachers, not technicians. William Pinar, *What is Curriculum Theory?*

William Pinar once reflected: “we are not alone” - a thought that first appeared in his preface to *Toward a Poor Curriculum*, the volume that launched the reconceptualization of curriculum studies against the then deadening language of objectives and scripts (p. viii). We invited authors to contribute papers to a special issue of *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry* on the subject of teachers and the auto/biographical in curriculum studies, hoping to hear that we were not alone in seeing in autobiography a counter-response to the “dark times” that are the present in education (Arendt, 1968, p. ix). For some time, curriculum scholars have been problematizing the instrumentalization of curriculum and teaching, newly evident in such programs like the Common Core, Curriculum Foundations, Back to Basics, and Benchmarking, and in policies like ‘No Child Left Behind’ and ‘Race to the Top’ (in the United States) and the National Schools Reform Agreement (in Australia) (Aoki, 2005; Au, 2011; Ball, 2002, 2005; Grumet, 2015; Price, 2014; Ritzer, 2004; Spector, 2019; Taubman, 2009). It is in the present highly politically charged context fixated on standards and assessment that we have found ourselves returning to autobiography as a *place* to think, and rethink, the relations between power, difference, alterity and subjectivity on the part of teachers and within classrooms; more specifically, we wished to invite authors to engage with, and bring into academic debate, multiple aspects of the auto/biographical in teacher identity and practice -on any aspect of auto/biography that they thought might permeate, illuminate, provoke, or concern this subject, which the contributing authors have, with essays that range widely in how they engage with the auto/biographical. *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry*, further, has afforded us an open international forum within which to engage in dialogue with scholars coming from various locations geographically (Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil) and different subject positions in curriculum studies (discourse theory, narrative, phenomenology, psychoanalytical). We agree with Pinar (2012) that such a proposal - to reinvest in the auto/biographical, especially at the present fraught time - is “complicated” yet “not impossible.” “By reintegrating ‘teaching’ (or instruction or pedagogy) into the concept of curriculum, this



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phrase puts the teacher in his or her place” and where that place is not as an instrument but as “a participant in an ongoing multi-referenced conversation,” Pinar (2009) clarifies (p. 11). In line with Maxine Greene’s as well as Ted Aoki’s commitment to teachers, as well as those who like Lawrence Stenhouse saw the classroom as a central site for curriculum experimentation, the teacher is a central contributor to complicated curriculum conversations. To rethink the curriculum, curricular projects in which we are immersed, and how teachers can confront the deadening culture of performativity and accountability entrenching itself in school spaces worldwide—and to do so from the perspective of the auto/biographical, which points towards to the ‘alive’ possibilities that might be opened by a fluid, contingent and provisional counter-discourse—this is the complicated conversation to which we invited authors to contribute.

One thread running through the articles is a turning towards autobiography to counter a dominant performativity culture that would exclude the textured and felt nuances of memories and lived experiences, however this turn is neither naïve nor uncritical. Another common thread is methodological—different ways of deploying autobiography to critically examine situations or phenomena, or to engage critically and dialogically with autobiography/*currere* itself. In the first article, Jessica Saada provokes us to inquire into *who* is teaching and researching teaching. In the second article, Sarah Bausell invokes autobiography (a genre she typically uses *with* students and teachers) to instead listen critically to the power dynamics in her own practice as a humanities teacher/teacher educator. In the third article, Clarissa Craveiro proposes a critical dialogue between Discourse Theory and autobiography as discourse, using *currere* with teachers to deconstruct hegemonic curriculum discourses. In the fourth article, David Lewkowich explores the psychoanalytical meanings of remembering, invoking anamnesis - a reaching back into forgotten knowledge - as a lens through which to interpret novice secondary teachers’ (adolescent) memories and drawings. In the fifth article, Teresa Strong-Wilson looks at the intersections between the life writing of Hannah Arendt and W. G. Sebald as a way to think about teacher auto/biographical writing and acts of discernment in dark times. In the sixth article, Maria Luiza Sussekind and Stefanie Nascimento linger over the theoretical implications of a *currere*/lived experience lens for bringing their Pedagogy/undergraduate students’ self-writing into complicated conversation with democratic education. In the seventh article, Anne Phelan and Matthew Clarke explore the synthetical (*currere*) possibilities of aesthetic encounters to disrupt the instrumentalization of teaching and teachers under a neoliberal, capitalist regime and provoke new ways of seeing, and feeling, political change. In the final article, Melanie Janzen re-visits the significance of the territorial acknowledgment (of living on the original lands of Indigenous peoples) in teaching, autobiographically probing meanings that can breathe life into acts of acknowledging.

Our hope is that this special issue will contribute to “the project of intellectualization” initiated by William Pinar (2015), encouraging its continued exploration through projects of thinking through teachers and the auto/biographical.

Notes

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