Currere, Subjective Reconstruction and Autobiographical Theory

Wanying Wang[1]
University of British Columbia, Canada

> Education in this sense means taking what is observed and understood and incorporating it, swallowing it whole, and allowing it to alter one's intellectual-chemical-psychic condition.
>
> William Pinar (1975, p. 15)

Introduction

This is an exploratory study of a Chinese woman who is studying in Canada. The study provides understandings of subjectivity from both West and East perspectives as well of the method of *currere* to articulate the issues I face as student, teacher, woman, and Chinese in Canada. It provides an example of how I use *currere* to acquire a deeper understanding of self. This study comprises three sections: 1) a review of several key concepts, including *currere*, subjectivity, and subjective reconstruction; 2) a discussion of the autobiographical method, 3) my practice of it –a writing of my own autobiography, organized around these themes: a search for understanding my self-growth, confronting my cultural background, and understanding autobiographical research.

Currere, Subjectivity and Subjective Reconstruction

The review involves three sections. First of all, Pinar's perspective on curriculum is discussed; after the review of the concept of subjectivity, the concept of subjective reconstruction is briefly discussed.

Currere

William F. Pinar (2015, 1976) initiated the systematic effort to understand curriculum as autobiographical and biographical text in the 1970s. He introduced a method "by means of which students of curriculum could sketch the relations among school knowledge, life history and intellectual development in ways that might function self-transformatively" (Pinar, Reynold, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 515). Pinar proposes the concept of *currere*, revolutionizing in a radical manner the notion of curriculum as a noun to curriculum as a verb, thereby extending the definition of curriculum. He defines curriculum as complicated conversation, which includes the lived experience of curriculum - *currere*, to run the course - but it also includes the social, political, cultural, etc, enactment of experience through conversation:

Curriculum becomes a complicated, that is, multiply referenced, conversation   in which interlocutors are speaking not only among themselves but to those not present, not only to historical figures and unnamed people and places they may be studying, but to politicians and parents alive and dead, not to mention to the selves they have been, are in the process of becoming, and someday may become. (Pinar, 2011, p. 41)

Curriculum as complicated conversation takes people far beyond the conception that curriculum is simply a body of academic knowledge separated from us who study it; on the contrary, curriculum as a conversation emphasizes the ongoing reconstruction of knowledge-- subjective reconstruction of academic knowledge and life experience which courses through one's life. This method of *currere* understands curriculum as a lived path as well as an object and a course of study. Curriculum is not a "thing" to be studied; it is a path that is lived. Because the running of the course occurs socially and subjectively through academic study, the concept of *currere* highlights the meaning of the curriculum as a complicated conversation, and thereby encouraging educational experience. It is a conversation threaded through academic knowledge. In other words, the method of *currere* seeks to understand the interaction between academic study and life history in the interests of self-understanding and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2012). As Pinar (2012) further argues:

The method of *currere* re-conceptualizes curriculum from course objectives to complicated conversation. It is a conversation with oneself (as a private person) and with others threaded through academic knowledge, and ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engagement in the world. Conceived as a complicated conversation, the curriculum is an ongoing effort at communication with others that portends the social reconstruction of the public sphere. (p. 47)

Currere is a conversational process in which participants, threaded through academic knowledge, reactivate the past, reconstruct the present and look to the future by talking with themselves, with figures across time and space. "The running of the course – *currere* – occurs through conversation, not only classroom discourse, but dialogue among specific students and teachers, and within oneself in solitude" (Pinar, 2011, p. 1). Therefore, it of course transcends the boundaries of classrooms or schools since it involves working from within. Participants embark on a journey of conversation.

The concept of *currere* emphasizes the interaction between academic knowledge and life experience. It is "a conception of curriculum that directs school knowledge to individual's lived experience, experience understood as subjective and social, that is, as gendered, racialized, classed participants in understanding and living through the historical moment" (Pinar, 2012, p. 195). In this complicated conversation, academic knowledge and life experience are intertwined with each other, mutually informative and constitutive. Academic knowledge enables a more sophisticated understanding of the world. With academic knowledge one can understand life experiences more deeply and can make connections that may not have been noticed or may not have been previously recognized as important. One may begin to think about pressing issues more deeply. While searching for the connection

between the private and the public, *currere* also creates opportunities to consider the particularity of each experience. It is a temporal and recursive process.

While acknowledging society, culture and history, the concept of *currere* underscores individual's experience. *Currere* emphasizes the everyday experience of individuals and his or her capacity to learn from experience, to reconstruct experience through thought and dialogue to enable understanding (Pinar, 2012). Through this everyday experience one can learn and reconstruct experience and consequently, gain a deepened understanding of the world. *Currere* emphasizes how each individual is socially and culturally situated in a particular historical moment and what his or her situatedness means to each. Informed by phenomenology and existentialism, this autobiographical theory of curriculum suggests a shift in focus "from external, behaviorally oriented learning objectives and predetermined subject matter content to the interrogation of students' and teachers' inner experiences and perceptions" (Miller, 2010, p. 62). Therefore, Grumet (1976) argues that *"currere* is what the individual does with the curriculum, his active reconstruction of his passage through its social, intellectual, physical structure" (p. 111). As Pinar points out, "the method of *currere* seeks to understand the contribution academic studies makes to one's understanding of one's life, and how they both are imbricated in society, politics and culture" (Pinar, 2012, p. 45). *Currere* enables one who situates socially, politically, and culturally, to understand the meaning of educational experience. *Currere* portrays the individual's lived experience. This lived experience can be understood as educational experience (Pinar, 2016). Pinar designed four steps (regression, progression, analysis and synthesis) to reveal educational experience, understanding what principles and patterns have been at work in one's educational experience (Corttazi, 2014, p. 13). Educational experience allows people to consider the world from different perspectives, understand various possibilities, further question the unquestioned, and thus bring about transformative change. Educational experience fosters one's interest in a certain field of study. Educational experience may impact, enrich, even contradict with academic knowledge learnt from school curriculum. As a result, this might trigger or foster real learning and a deepened understanding might ensue.

Pinar also proposes an associated curriculum concept: "allegory". Understanding curriculum allegorically is to self-consciously incorporate the past into the present, gesturing toward an educational significance of what is studied. "In speaking allegorically, we are not merely exchanging information. When we speak allegorically we do not do so for the sake of a future in which such information will, we imagine, become usable. Rather, we self-reflexively articulate what is at hand, reactivating the past so as to render the present, including ourselves, intelligible" (Pinar, 2012, p. 50). The past is not stuck in the past. It implies that something may not be identifiable immediately or may not be identified by "simple" means, and calls for excavation. Through allegory, subjectivity, history, and society become articulated through one's participation in the complicated conversation that is the curriculum. "Allegory underscores that our individual lives are structured by ever-widening circles of influences: from family through friends to strangers, each of whom personifies culture, symbolizes society, and embodies history" (Pinar, 2012, p. 53). Allegory further elaborates that how each individual is socially and culturally expanded by highlighting the "mechanism"—reflexively incorporating from the outside world.

One can reactivate, reconsider, re-examine the past, and one's or another' experience. Reactivation is different from reexamination, as the latter is conducted from the standpoint of

the present, the very standpoint reactivating the past aspires to dissolve or at least augment. Reactivating the past is another conceptualization of the regressive phase of the method of *currere*. A case study allows us to examine others' experience, whereas autobiography emphasizes one's own lived experience which might also function educationally, enabling us to learn from experience. Broadening memory, together with a new perspective, renders past experience into a new outlook.

Subjectivity

> To enact curriculum conceived as subjectively situated, historically attuned conversation means associating academic knowledge with the individual him or herself, teaching not only what is, for instance, historical knowledge, but also suggesting its possible consequences for the individual's self-formation in the historical present, allowing that knowledge to shape the individual's coming to social form. Doing so is an elusive and ongoing threading of subjectivity through the social forms and intellectual constructs we discover through study, reanimating our original passions through acting in the world. William Pinar (2015, p.31)

> Subjectivity takes form, achieves content and singularity, in the world, itself reconstructed by subjectivity's engagement with it. Green and Reid (2008, p.20)

According to Pinar (2009), "by subjectivity, I mean the inner life, the lived sense of self, non-unitary, dispersed, and fragmented—that is associated with what has been given and what one has chosen, those circumstances of everyday life, those residues of trauma and of fantasy, from which one reconstruct life" (p. 3). Subjectivity refers to the inner life, the process of becoming, which can be ongoing if one engages in "becoming" all the time. From the moment one begins to experience, subjectivity is to take shape. Weedon (2004) asserts that "an individual's conscious and unconscious sense of self, emotions and desires" (p.18) constitute subjectivity, whereas "identity is perhaps best understood as a limited and temporary fixing for the individual or a particular mode of subjectivity as apparently what one is" (Weedon, 2004, p. 19). In this sense, identity is the boundary between subjectivity and sociality, between one's inner self and one's public or social self. Suggesting that identity is an effect, not a cause, Jonsson locates identity at the intersection between an individual and the social, a site of negotiation between subjectivity and society (in Pinar, 2009, p. 33). For Jonsson, subjectivity refers to that "ineffable agency that precedes language, culture and ideology" (2000, p. 17). Thus, subjectivity surrounds and saturates identity (Pinar, 2009, p. 33). Agency animates action but does not presume transcendence of the given, only the possibility of its reconstruction. Subjectivity enables engagement with the world, informed by study and experience (Pinar, 2009). Subjectivity, compared with identity, tends to be more genetic, and it is a sense of self, manifested discursively. Subjectivity may contradict with identity since identity may be imposed by a group or a culture. This enforces a gap space between the subjectivity and identity, but Pinar affirms the importance of non-coincidence.

Identity is in between subjectivity and the social world. It is informed by "inward" pre-linguistic even private "self" and by your social "self," what others have made of you, and the qualities they ascribe to you (Pinar, 2014). For example, I am identified as a "woman" and this social, gendered identity of a "woman" is informed, even constructed, by my culture, my family, my interactions with others. It has changed over time (for example, in Hong Kong and

now Canada, etc). Within this fluid mix of influences, I can detach myself from being (only a) "woman" by affirming my structural principle of "non-coincidence", thereby creating a subjective space in which I can act (e.g. reconstruct what I and others have made of me). I can act in the world differently from what others expect and from what I expect. One may subjectively experience tensions due to cultural expectations around the concept of a woman. Over thousands of years, Chinese society has adopted a set of moral principles to govern women. Chinese women had been requested to follow the "three obediences and four virtues" which governs all walks of life. There are four edifying behavioral characteristics for women: the first is womanly virtue (*fude*), the second is womanly speech (*fuyan*), the third is womanly manner (*fuyong*), and the fourth is womanly merit (*fugong*).What is womanly virtue? She does not distinguish herself in talent and intelligence. What is womanly speech? She does not sharpen her language and speech. What is womanly manner? She does not seek to be outwardly beautiful or ornamented. What is womanly merit? She does not outperform others in her skills and cleverness. All these principles seem to still function today in China to some degree, and people tend to view women in terms of these principles—an identity assigned by the public. But many women in China may choose to live differently at their own will. As a result, they might be judged as "abnormal" or "weird", and may experience tensions due to historical and cultural expectations clashing with her own inner sense of herself.

McKnight (2010) argues that the notion of passionate inwardness resembles the concept of subjectivity proposed by Pinar. According to the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, passionate inwardness is an intensification of one's focus on the particularity of his or her life that calls into question universal codes and conventions presented as true and good by any community. McKnight uses an example of the "unconscious despair of the teacher" (2010, p.502) to make his point clear. This teacher, in "unconscious despair" (McKnight, 2010, p.502), who views him or herself as a professional acting upon the written and unwritten ethical rules prescribed or implicitly prevailed within the institution of the schooling, never challenges who these rules serve and for what purpose these rules were made. They assume that the rules are morally good or are politically neutral acts of instruction. Therefore, "his or her identity becomes overly determined by the finite institutional attributes, and less by the subjective reflection upon the infinite possibilities of 'what could be' that always call into questions any such claim or privileges of those individual and discourses that dictates the real of material existence" (McKnight, 2010, p. 508). Deriving from the particular, concrete situation, a teacher can search and explore for a better or more appropriate way of teaching. He or she opens up possibilities and seeks to create a space for teachers and students to engage in creatively. No universal rule dictates belief or conduct. The misrelation is intensified when a teacher succumbs to the "normalizing tendencies" instead of engaging in the tension of the finite and infinite that enables a process of self-becoming in a critical way (McKnight, 2010, p.508). As McKnight (2010) argues:

> A proper relation would mean that a teacher develops a disposition to create an ironic distance from institutional conversations that claim reality. Such a disposition is necessary to navigate and alter the landscape in subtle ways that begin to favor the principles of critical pedagogy and existential becoming. This disposition is a passionate inwardness that existentially removes one from the ethos of the institution,

always presented as universal, normative and common sense, in an effort to confront the concrete particularities of the existing world. (p. 510)

McKnight notes that passionate inwardness is to remove one from the institutional ethos, and to confront the particular world. Such a move that resembles putting oneself back into a tension characterized by struggle with despair, is an "existential leap" (p. 510). "Such a doubled move, a reasoned madness creates possible spaces for the individual to advance criticality and generate a new, proper relation that dissipates that specific form of despair" (McKnight, 2010, p. 510). However, instead of rejecting the institutional ethos, Kierkegaard argues that to make a passionate, concentrated turn toward subjectivity is of great importance though it leads to paradox and suffering. As Dooley (2001) explains, a critical distance is a useful method:

> Inwardness is the movement the individual makes while becoming subjective; that is, in order to transform impersonal objective reflection into engaged and passionate subjective reflection, the individual is required to adopt a critical distance from the prevailing ethical, political and religious truths governing his or her reality, with the object of responding to the claims of singularity. (p. 5)

The subjective challenge is to balance between finite demands of sociopolitical milieu and that which is eternal within us. When the individual stays closest to inner or subjective being, s/he lives at the "highest pitch of subjectivity". The individual can deliberate upon existential becoming within this particular time and space, a comprehensive analysis of the degree to which one participates in as an actor within social milieu generated. As McKnight (2010) argues:

> Passionate inwardness produces questions: who do the rules serve? Who and what do the rule protect? How do the rule discriminate and what inequities are embedded? And, to what degree do I as a moral agent existing within this institution embody, reflect, and participate in the maintaining of those ethical constraints presented by the institution as universal good? How can I engage in a meaningful act of becoming alongside other existing individuals within this institution? (p. 513).

McKnight (2010) argues that the notion of passionate inwardness resembles the curriculum theory work of William Pinar, who developed what could be called a method of passionate inwardness; in Pinar's work, it is known as *currere*. Much like *currere*, passionate inwardness also seeks to begin with the principle that one must interrogate any claim to universal ethics forced upon the individual. In other words, passionate inwardness does not indicate a blind repudiation and permanent exit from institutional ethics. Very similarly, *currere* is an educational structure of subjectivity, emphasizing reflective thinking on the past, present and future. According to Pinar and Grumet (1976), the future is present in the same sense that the past is present. The method of *currere* is a strategy devised to disclose this experience, so that we may see more of it and see more clearly (Pinar, 1975). With such seeing can come deepened understanding of the running, and with this, can come deepened agency (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. vii). As Pinar (2012) argues:

> Curriculum as currere emphasizes temporal distinctions, not for the sake of simplistic proceduralism, but to enable the reconstruction of the present through the reactivation of the past, differentiating present-mindedness into the co-extensive simultaneity of temporal attunement, expressed individually in social context through the academic knowledge. (p. 51)

Grumet (1976) notes that in the research method described by Pinar, *currere* is pursued not in reflective retreat from the world but through a response to literature. As a research methodology, *currere* proposes to use literature as a foil for one's own reflection. As the reader voluntarily recreates that which the writer discloses, he too creates a fictive but true (as lived) world, drawn from the substance of his experience and his fantasy. This participation in an aesthetic experience is one way of demonstrating the reciprocity of objectivity and subjectivity and their interdependence. It is also about how subjectivity operates in the individual. Weedon highlights the influences of discourses on subjectivity, as Weedon (1987) explains:

> The individual is both a site for a range of possible forms of subjectivity and, at any particular moment of thought or speech, a subject, subjected to the regime of meaning of a particular discourse and enabled to act accordingly…Language and the range of subject positions that it offers always exists in historically specific discourses which inhere in social institutions and practices and can be organized analytically in discursive fields. (p. 34)

As for Pinar, he tends to focus on how subjectivity can fail to coincide with the discourses that inform it, how subjectivity can be reconstructed, such as by lived experience and academic study. He delves into how subjectivity can be studied, animated and finally reconstructed. Pinar highlights how academic study and lived experience play a crucial role in reconstructing the subjectivity and how subjectivity is stimulated and reconstructed by engagement with the world.

How is subjectivity constructed?
How does a person show his subjectivity? There is an example that may illustrate it. When students being asked to write an essay, it might not be possible to identify the same writing (the same word selection or way of thinking) among these students though the same topic discussed. Different persons tend to demonstrate different perspectives that could be said to be associated with their subjective standpoints. How experiences work might not be able to be described exactly or predicted, and this may even transcend language, for some experiences do not just add up, but transform fundamentally. Subjectivity can become animated and expressed when a person addresses a situation, a challenge, or a question. By studying, one begins to understand one's subjectivity.
I reference Jane Addam's story to illustrate how subjectivity is informed by study and experience (Pinar, 2009). Addams went to a youth center in east London, which was similar to the People's Palace in the novel she read, and this experience led to the opening of the settlement house—Hull House. "Moved by her experience in London, informed by her

ongoing academic study, she was able to imagine her future course of action" (Pinar, 2009, p. 62). As a result, she opened the settlement house—Hull House. Pinar (2009) explains:

> Her experiences---along with key books she read provided the passage from the individualistic, absolutist, benevolent ethics of her father and her own class in favor of what she perceived to be the working-class ethic of cooperative justice, which she found less selfish and self-righteous. Though no doubt idealized, such an ethic enabled Addams to distance herself from the self her upbringing has formed, thereby providing the self-reflective opportunity to reconstruct her subjectivity according to the commitments she had acquired and cultivated through study and experience. (p. 64)

Driven by her newly formed ethic of "cooperative justice", she distanced from the previous self, and this experience, together with the self-reflective opportunity, led to the reconstruction of her subjectivity. "It is self-reflection---including social and self-criticism—that enable experience to be illuminated" (Pinar, 2009, pp. 64-65). It might be termed as persistent rethinking, according to Knight. Knight (2005) argues that "persistent rethinking", which integrates lived experience with one's points of view, reconstructs subjectivity:

> This persistent rethinking, and not only the experiences, that produced her profoundest insights and taught her the most about her class, her gender, and herself. Addams' love of abstract theory, of sweeping generality, of uplifting philosophy had almost trapped her in her given life of reading, but it was the same passion for larger meaning that drove her to break free of that life, to struggle to integrate her experiences with her thoughts, and to change her mind. (p. 86, cited in Pinar, 2009, p. 64)

It might be understood that when reflectively examining experiences, and through academic study, one may engage in the process of forming (reconstructing) one's own subjectivity informed by experience and consequent rethinking. When these rethinking demonstrates stable, consistent, subjectivity might be reconstructed thereafter. Therefore, from experience, self-reflection, and academic study, Addams "synthesized a coherent self capable of sustained, critical, and creative engagement with the world" (Pinar, 2009, p. 62). Addams' story shows how subjectivity functions—a site of engaging with the world, possibly coherently, innovatively, with a critical spirit.

To sum up, subjectivity entails beliefs, thinking, commitments, desires, feelings that may not be nameable but locate the site of experience; lived experience and its reconstruction – i.e. educational experience - that constitute the uniqueness of a person, with which a person differentiate him/herself from what is.

Pinar further illustrates how Adams' reading influenced her and helped form her subjectivity. As mentioned by Pinar, "study does not just yield information, it restructures one's subjectivity, animating and focusing one's engagement with the world" (2009, p. 63). Several writers – among them W. H. Fremantle, Brooke Foss Wescott, Giuseppe Mazzini, Mathew Arnold – influenced her. By reading Arnold, for instance, she strengthened her commitment to improving society and cultivated a moral and social passion for doing good; by reading Mazzini, she was able to combine two ideas: education was central, but so was the

opportunity for people from social classes to come to know each other. All the influences given by these readings become reconstructed when she established the Hull House and enacted her ideas on social improvement.

How lived experience – and its study – functions for each individual is often Meanwhile, it seems unpredictable. Study or reading a book may help offer useful supplements on issues concerned, or cause very radical change that might be regarded as turning points; study may provide contradicting perspectives that make people to further reflect on what they already hold; study may help experience different situation and events that only happen to others. Reading literature and philosophy can definitely produce different results. Nussbaum (1997) appreciates what different academic discipline can do to personal growth. For example, she argues that Philosophy can render people the ability to reason and analyze, and look for evidence to support their opinions; literature can help people acquire sympathetic imagination by envisioning that they are in a vulnerable position. Pinar also mentions Addams' teacher - Caroline Potter, who taught rhetoric and history: "Potter's influence is discernable in an essay Addams wrote in her sophomore year in which she employed George Sand in an argument for women' rights" (p. 65).

"Without study – knowledge, reason, self-reflexivity - one cannot experience subjective meaning or participate in one's self formation, an idea centuries old" (Jay, 2005, p. 89, cited in Pinar, 2009, p. 7). Without knowing, one cannot acquire understandings completely or pertinently; without reasoning, one cannot obtain deepened thoughts. Moreover, "without academic study, subjectivity succumbs to narcissism, presentism, and commodification of experience consumer capitalism compels" (Pinar, 2009, p. 65); all these "isms" work at the surface level when subjectivity fails to obtain insights or inspiration from academic study. Subjectivity without academic study may not be able to foster humbleness, historical consciousness, and judgement. To what does academic study refer? What does it offer? The academic study, might provide important elements and offer enduring insights for better understanding the world. "Such a curriculum for cosmopolitanism juxtaposes the particular alongside the abstract, creating collages of history and literature, politics and poetry, science and art. Such a curriculum provides a passage between the subjective and the social, between self-subjectivation and alterior interpellation" (Pinar, 2009, p. vii). This curriculum always builds connection between the private and public.

Engaging the Lincoln Center of philosopher of education Maxine Greene, Pinar (2011) points out that aesthetic education also engenders subjective and social reconstruction. By emphasizing the "lyrical moments" (Pinar, 2011, p. 92) that comprise the "vivid present" (Pinar, 2011, p. 92) in aesthetic education, Pinar argues that such intensification of perception is not only about art apprehension on its own terms, but also about the person undergoing such experience can break free of one's socially determined location. Pinar further argues that "For me", Pinar continues, "such intensification of experience implies self-shattering insofar as the boundaries of the self dissolve into aesthetic experience that extricate us from identification with—even submersion in—the banal, the provincial, and presses us into the world" (2011, p. 96). After the self being shattered, subjective reconstruction can occur. As Pinar argues: "What the art offer us is the releasing of our imagination, enabling us to move into the as-if---to move beyond the actual into the invented world, to do so without our experience. The experience of art pulls us into the world as it refracts the world through our subjectivity (2011, p. 100)". As McBride (2006) says:

> The ecstatic experience triggered by aesthetic feeling favors a reshuffling in the individual's perception of reality and disrupts formulaic modes of experience, releasing the individuals from the spell of established pictures of the world and opening up a space for the imaginative play with, and the emancipatory reaggregation of, given elements of experience. (cited in Pinar 2011, p. 99)

Aesthetic experience shatters the self because it breaks the boundary within which the self inhabits, extends imagination beyond experience, and finally invites a new way of living or thinking, all of which encourage the reconstruction of subjectivity. Greene (2001) argues that teachers are like artists--teachers submit themselves to inner transformation as they refashion their "raw material" through communicative enactment of their subjectivities with others, specifically their students. By reanimating the speech of others, teachers incorporate their understanding to their teaching in class:

> Such aesthetically structured teaching encourage students to reconstruct their own lived worlds through their reanimation of the material they study. This subjective restructuring—that process is also an animation, rendering one's intellectual passions contagious, is a matter of bring to surface forces, stirring, desires we often cannot name. (Pinar, 2011, p. 103)

With new perspectives incorporated, teachers might be able to broaden and/or deepen the topic being discussed, and lead students to think differently. Transformation in students may proceeds thereafter. This could lead to a fundamental transformation of classroom teaching, in the sense that the whole process parallels to art creation. Like artists, teachers seek means to express and engage others in the journey of exploration.

Methodology--Autobiographical Inquiry

> There is no better way to study curriculum than to study ourselves (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 31).

> The narrative, an autobiographical account of educational experience, serves to mark the site for excavation. What is returned in the process of excavation is hardly the original experience but broken pieces of images that remind us of what was lost. What is restored is our distrust of the accounts, as the experience, pieced together and reassemble, fails to cohere. There in the interstices, the spaces where the pieces don't quite meet, is where the light comes through. What the restoration returns to us is doubt in the certainty of our own assumptions. (Grumet, 1981. p. 122-123).

The autobiographical project describes what can be revealed through a reflective lens in understanding – and through understanding, perhaps intensifying - own experience of education (Grumet, 1981, p. 118). William Ayers (1990) argues it as "understanding the situation from within" (Ayers, p. 272). Such research provides a passage for me to describe my educational experience. The autobiographical lens can be an act of self-creation and

potentially transformative (Ayers, p. 274). Autobiographical inquiry approach helps me make sense of and reflect on the situations by contributing more detail, more instances and more cases. This research method draws from phenomenology. As argued by Grumet (1991), "Reliance on the lived experience of the individual in autobiographical method of inquiry draws support from Husserl's conviction that it was only in the freshness and immediacy of encounter that certain knowledge can reside" (p. 34). This phenomenological approach offers a more vivid, fresh description of lived experience.

Currere has projected itself into the world through autobiography and theatre (Grumet, 1976). In education, autobiography are those forms of self-revelation with focus on "a transfer of our attention from these forms of themselves to the ways in which a student uses them and moves through them" (Grumet, 1976, p. 68). Felman (1993) notes that "one goal of autobiography is to create, use, and explore readings and writings of autobiography that recognize their own social construction and cultural conditioning" (cited in Miller, 2005, p. 53). Leggo also affirms the importance of writing autobiographically. As acknowledged by Leggo (2007), "Because so much of my teaching, writing, and researching emerges from the intersections of the personal and the public, I contend that autobiographical writing is always both personal and public, and that we need to write autobiographically in order to connect with others" (p. 121). By pointing out that autobiography involves the realms of the private and public, Leggo shows why autobiography is important. Grumet (1976) discloses how autobiography can reveal the genesis of the assumption and common sense attitudes:

> Autobiographical entries reveal the genesis of the assumptions and commonsense attitudes of the individual. When in reflection, the student brackets those assumptions and identifications with the everyday world, it is not to remove himself from that world, but to move closer to it by seeing through the structure of objectivity to the pre-objective, pre-reflective contact with the world upon which they rest. (p. 70)

Through autobiography, one can detach oneself from the structure of objectivity, and move closer to pre-reflective realm. As a result, Pinar says, "Writing, and in particular, the craft of autobiography, can soar, and from the heights, discern new landscapes, new configurations, especially those excluded by proclamations of Government, State and School" (1995, p. 217). One will see new landscapes, new configurations hidden previously. At the same time, "interpretations of autobiography are always incomplete, always interminable" (Felman, cited in Miller, 2005, p. 53) since the constantly expanding self "incorporates what it fears and resists as well as what it desires" (Pinar, 1985, p. 220). We may need to accept that we can never fully understand ourselves, through autobiographical work we can perceive and reconstruct our subjectivity and our subjective sensitivity to the biographic and educational significance of our lived experiences. Autobiographical theories have provided me with a way to have a more authentic relationship with myself and to be more fully myself, as I hope to demonstrate in my own autobiographical dissertation research.

As to how to conduct autobiographical research, Grumet (1976) argues that autobiography involves two steps:

> Autobiography is two steps removed from the pre-reflective events enacted by the body subject. The first step requires the reflection upon the moments already lived that that leads to a conscious grasp of their meaning. The second step involves the

> presentation of those events and their meanings as they now appear to the storyteller in terms of his relation with his audience. (p. 73)

In other words, first of all, autobiographical inquiry requires storyteller to reflect on the "meaningful" moments; and then, the storyteller needs to present those events and their meanings. As formulated by Grumet (1976), autobiography presents the past within present perspective of storyteller, and uses the past to reveal the present assumptions and future attention of the storyteller.

Grumet associates autobiography with students and teachers, illustrating how students and teachers use autobiography to enhance learning and teaching. Grumet (1976) describes how the academic disciplines provide forms for students to express their private life:

> The student can observe his use of the objective forms provided by the academic disciplines as public symbol through which he can express his private experience…. By concentrating on the students' biography and life-world, we will examine the ways in which these disciplines provide metaphor for daily experience, functioning as models of and models for human thought and behavior. (pp. 75-76)

As for teachers, Grumet (1976) argues that autobiographical writing can help teachers examine the ways in which they have moved within conventional forms to express their own subjectivities. Leggo (2008) also mentions the autobiographical writing can help his professional development: "All my autobiographical research is devoted to my own professional development and the professional development of other educators. Autobiographical writing is both transcendent and immanent, both inside and outside, both internal and external, both personal and public" (p. 124). In order to write personally, Leggo (2008) argues that:

> A different culture is needed, a culture that supports autobiographical writing that is marked by an understanding that writing about personal experiences is not only egoism, solipsism, unseemly confession, boring prattling, and salacious revelation. We need to write personally because we live personally, and our personal living is always braided with our other ways of living—professional, academic, administrative, social and political. (p. 90)

Leggo acknowledges the interplay of personal living and other ways of living such as professional, academic and so on.

In the following, I will summarize the characters of autobiography. Autobiography can serve as a method for enlarging, occupying and building the space of mediation. It can enlarge the space of subjectivity by pushing back the edges of memory, disclosing more of what has been forgotten, suppressed and denied. The stories one tells cannot function to embellish and disguise the past and present, for an imagined effect. Rather, autobiography which makes the architecture of self more complex moves below the surface of memory, requiring the dismantling of self-defense. It allows a re-entry into the past, a re-experience of the past moment now somewhat present in its multidimensionality and orderlessness (Pinar, 1995, p. 217).

Autobiography invites one to look at the past in a more critical way and identifies problem embedded in the past which may still have impact on oneself at the present. In *Zhuangzi, Zhuangzi,* an Ancient Chinese Philosopher, describes a story that a man keeps running to avoid his shadow while never stopping to reflect. Likewise, autobiography enables slowing down, to reflect on and engage in inner dialogue with one's shadow. Autobiography provides the opportunity to gaze back and investigate.

Autobiography enlarges and complicates the telling subject, as well as the listening subject. "We are not the stories we tell as much as we are the modes of relation to others our stories imply, modes of relation implied by what we delete as much as what we include" (Pinar, 1995, p. 218). What we delete can be as significant as what we include in autobiography. Or as argued by Clarke (2012), "I am deeply implicated in the retelling. The story and I are interwoven and although the difference between the two might not be readily apparent … the rendering of the other is always the rendering of self" (p. 61). Autobiography allows lived experience to be revealed and expressed, whereas mainstream educational research which is in its obsession with measurement quantifies and threatens to destroy subjectivity. With autobiography, one might reconfigure elements of oneself, and find a unity within the diversity of oneself: "…with every word, this most affirmative of all spirits; all opposites are in him bound together in a new unity" (Nietzsche, cited in Pinar, 1995, p. 225).

Autobiographical method invites us to struggle with those determinations and decisions. "It is that struggle and its resolve to develop ourselves in ways that transcend the identities that others have constructed for us that bonds the projects of autobiography and education" (Grumet, 1990, p. 324). Autobiography invites us to see these constraints are internalized, how we consciously, semi-consciously and unconsciously comply and/or modify them. There are, then, multiple ways that one can comprehend, even struggle, with determinations. First of all, when you are aware of something restrictive or disruptive, one might begin to ask, to interrogate them, and one's responses to them. One comes to remember the marks and influences that structure one's subjectivity.

Miller (2008) introduces the concept of institutional autobiography, which is "a genre which, as I have sought to demonstrate here, unites the seemingly opposed worlds of the personal—where one is free, unique, and outside of history—and the institutional—where one is constrained, anonymous, and imprisoned by the accretion of past practices" (p. 138). He lists questions that shows the institutional autobiography can be very specific: What experiences have led you to teach, study, read, and write in the ways you do? What institutional policies have promoted or inhibited your success? What shape and texture has your life in the institutions given to your dreams of release? To answer these questions, it needs understanding of the two opposed worlds of the personal. Miller (2008) suggests that "the challenge lies in how to work within and against its constraints simultaneously, so as to acknowledge without overstating the influence of past teachers and one's own work in the classroom" (p. 139).

Autobiography helps portray the path on which one evolves. Autobiography has become one means of "rewriting the self in relation to shifting interpersonal and political contexts" (Martin & Mohanty, 1986, p. 208). As suggested by Miller (2005): "Autobiography can be a means by which individuals draw their own ever-changing portraits and trace as well as interpret multiple versions of their educational experiences, perspectives, assumptions and

situations" (p. 152). And also, autobiographical writing allows one to express personally, as noted by Riley-Taylor (2002):

> The autobiographical interludes woven through my work allow me to write in the language of personal voice, a language based in lived experience, experience that exclude neither rational thought nor the more aesthetic possibilities for coming to know the world. We are creatures of both reason and emotion, mind and body, matter and spirit. The language of personal voice lends a dimension to academic writing that cannot be filled by expository scholarship alone. (p. 67)

Riley-Taylor captures the inseparability of conceptual and ontological existence of human being, akin to Pinar's biographic situation. The use of autobiography can more vividly reflect the lived experience filled with multiple way of thinking and doing, and acknowledges the complex web of various relationships and modalities.

To sum up, *currere* focuses on an individual biography, forsaking general structures to discover the path of experience that has led a particular person to a specific choice, place, cognitive styles (Grumet, 1976, p. 84). In the essay that follows, I write autobiographically in hopes of disclosing the evolving process of my subjectivity, the process of becoming structured, by a subjective thread of coherence and continuity.

My autobiography
My autobiography is articulated and analyzed around three themes: the search for understanding self-growth, my cultural background and new research paradigm.

Understanding My Self-growth
The Decision to Pursue a Second Doctoral Degree—the Search for Self Care
"I am studying for my second degree." "What, are you crazy?" Very soon, I think, people will change their attitude toward me. They may become more polite, or more meticulous while talking with me, or….

I started studying again in September, 2013. Another doctoral study. My mother opposed my decision. But this time I did not take her advice. It seemed to me that there were some puzzles inside my heart to which I wanted to attend. There were still mysteries in my mind that I wanted to explore. It seems that I am not loyal to my culture. I am far away from the culture in which I am supposed to be mother, a female member who bear the responsibility of fulfilling certain duties. Am I the one destined to journey all the time?

What self do I want to become? What does my decision to study again mean? What has pushed me forward constantly? What call in my self is calling me? Is there a stranger inside calling me to do this? I started searching the answers to these questions from the time I was enrolled in the doctoral program in UBC. This educational experience allows me to engage in thinking about these issues. As argued by Foucault, "education should concern the care we take of ourselves in order to know and transform ourselves" (1986, p. 55). Foucault's ethics begins with the relationship to oneself, introducing a personal self-examination of how we should treat ourselves. As pointed out by Moghtader (2015), "The spirit in which one works on oneself, takes care of oneself is for the sake of conversion and self-transformation" (p. 4). To take care of self is to engage oneself in a complicated conversation, and then to expect a

self-transformation. "Foucault's oeuvre is demonstrative of an ethic of transformation that aims to change the way we accept, reject and come to know ourselves by attending to the ways we come to discover a truth about ourselves and take care of ourselves"(p. 4). What has led me to this specific place or choice? How shall I discover the truth about myself? I am going to attend to the path of transformation, and to take care of myself.

Moghtader (2015) noted, for Foucault, "care for others is already implied in care of the self " (p.43). The relationship of self implies the relationship with others. Self and others are not mutually exclusive, and they live together in the world. Essentially in order to care for others, one first must be able to care for the self. Foucault (1986) insists that, "care for self is ethical in itself, but it implies complex relations with others, in the measure where this ethos of freedom is also a way of caring for others" (p. 118). The "care of the self" is concerned not only with the freedom available to oneself but the freedom recognized in others (Moghtader, 2015). It seems that freedom can only be ethical when it is acknowledged by others for certain behaviors may bring inconvenience to others. For instance, students have the freedom to listen to music, but they have to turn down the music after midnight when the pursuit for the care of self is indispensable of the care of others.

According to Foucault (1986), the care of the self in the Greco-Roman tradition is embedded in the idea that one ought to attend and constantly return to oneself and care for oneself so that one's soul can be perfected by reason. Without sufficient reason, one may not take care of oneself well. The return might involve asking questions of oneself; it is a posture of attending to one's inner experience, as well as to the material aspects of one's reality. Therefore, asking these questions concerning the self might be important for caring for self. The care of the self is "a rational mastery of the self regarded as an object to be reflected upon and transformed (Wang, 2004, p. 29). The reflection for self becomes the main activity for the care for self. "It is a soul-oriented activity conducted throughout one's life…It is the practice of freedom through mastery" (Wang, 2004, p. 29). It is a freedom about looking at self and examining self pathetically and critically. It seems that everyone possesses the potential for subjective freedom. To look at oneself and examine oneself tend to the major aspects of the freedom. But, do I examine myself and reflect on myself? Still, "in the tradition of the care of the self, one is called upon to take oneself as an object of contemplation and knowledge and to follow the principles of rational conduct in correcting one's faults and perfecting one's soul." (p. 29). I hereby take myself as the object of contemplation.

The central truth might well be who I have been conditioned to be, and its realization is living in accordance with it (Pinar, 1994, p. 202). I reactivate my past.

My life has been centered on campuses, especially university campuses. After I finished my doctoral study in Hong Kong, my joy did not last long. Returning from the United States, I worked as a curriculum developer in one of the biggest education companies listed on Nasdaq Stock Exchange (The Company is located in Beijing). I kept busy: meetings, discussions, endless projects, evaluations, developing new curriculum. These were the major obligations of each day. I felt something strange. I felt unsettled, anxious to know why. I felt a call from inside. But what was it? I was lost in the midst of this work. I could not help asking myself: what does it mean for me to gain a doctoral degree? To get more knowledge? Or to be in more chaotic complexity? Am I the one who got trapped? After reading Pinar's essay on Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, I felt an answer. The essay was recommended by a professor who used to supervise me at the University of Hong Kong.

Joseph, K was arrested without knowing why. K. has been leading an unexamined life before his arrest. As pointed out by Pinar: "He is dissociated from his subjectivity, and consequently clings to outer character structure, i.e. social role" (1995, p. 33). He was lost to his role, dissociated from what was individual in him, attentive to only what was common with others (Pinar, 1995, p. 34). "K. is his career, his socio-historical identity, and thereby an arrested being (p. 36)." He was incapable of self-reflection, and arrested intellectually, psychologically, and socially. Pinar uses this example to express dilemmas people face. I asked myself: was I conscious of the problems I faced? Did I ask questions about probing why, not just when, what and how questions? Was I able to reflect on myself? How should I attend to myself, to my soul? As argued by Carl Jung, "I quite agree with you that those people in our world who have insight and good will enough, should concern themselves with their own soul's, more than with preaching to the masses or trying to find out the best way for them"(cited in Pinar, 1995, p. 53)". Am I arrested? "As one becomes conscious of one level of arrest, and through a self-reflexive understanding of that level, one moves to another level that will someday become experienced as static." (Pinar, 1995, p. 40). I decided to resign and to study for a second doctorate, driven by a passion to search for the deeper or central truth and for the home that houses my soul. As argued by Pinar (1995):

> What does it mean to be brought nearer to the central truth? For one who has been lost in Heideggerian public world of false self and false values, it means returning home. For Heidegger, it meant literally staying home, refusing to accept university appointment in large, sophisticated cities such as Munich and Berlin. He preferred to remain in Freiberg, a city nearby his birthplace. (p. 203)

Pinar suggests returning home means being relatively conscious of origins, being open to the disclosure of unconscious material (through dreams, waking fantasy and so on) and to integrating these origins with present circumstances (Pinar, 1995, p. 203). The consideration of origin might be twofold: physically and psychologically. "For many, returning home means moving away" (Pinar, 1995, p. 204). Maybe it is true for me. I returned to Beijing but I felt myself a stranger.

The care of the self is "more than an exercise done at regular intervals…is a constant attitude that one must take toward oneself" (Foucault, 1986, p. 63). Wang (2004) argues that it is "a lifelong project of creating an ethically and aesthetically pleasing life" (p. 30). I kept thinking, searching for these answers. Will I be able to create an "ethically and aesthetically pleasing life" unless I find answers to my questions?

I engaged myself in the contemplation during many quiet nights. As for Leggo (2010), rumination and writing are two major ways of investigation for me. I made my own decision (to pursue the second doctoral study). It is not just an act of independent will or the exercise of my autonomy. It is for me a deadly serious decision. It poses a big question to myself, to my life. It has meant a looking forward to exploring, an attempt to reveal the "truth" about myself. It is a decision under which many aspects (self, other and the world) are considered with rationality and study. I find myself now living with peace, which comes after I made the decision. This is the path I find to my "heart". As Wang knows: "The care of the self is a practice of freedom. It is characterized as the exercise of self mastery and the governing of pleasure and desires by an active individual who practices moderation, rationality and wisdom to achieve a state of beauty in his existence." "It is a freedom first exercise over oneself, which

refuses the enslavement of the self by oneself or others to institution" (Wang, 2004, p. 31). Am I really free? Like the figure described by Pinar in the novel: "Joseph K is reminiscent of many of us, in some degree. K is a prototypical being of an urbanized, industrialized, cerebral twentieth century in the West. His life history, with its emphasis upon career, on instrumentally-defined social relations, is a major constituent element of the historical present" (1995, p. 37).

Must I follow the path most people would do? Will a person with a doctoral degree mean adequate for being a researcher and cannot pursue a doctoral degree again? Does it matter to learn in such a way (pursuing a second doctoral degree)? "As a practice of freedom, the care of the self also emphasizes one's independence from the external world in order to focus on the cultivation of the soul. Such a turning away from the external to a retreat into oneself is a personal choice of abstinence and moderation in the exercise of active freedom" (Wang, 2004, p. 31). It is not appropriate to judge or interpret according to certain cultural or social values or rules that may not fit for the particular individual. As argued by Pinar: "culture cannot be reduced to biographic. Social and economic structures are sufficiently frozen as to force work in the individual realm" (1995, p. 41). The standard is "heart". It is not right or wrong. The decision to pursue a second doctoral degree is a retreat, a retreat from external reality into self. Through advanced study, I search the meaning of being myself. As discussed by Wang Hongyu (2004):

> What is freedom? Freedom is based upon rational self-mastery; in non-identity politics, freedom is a form of resistance against social domination; in the new ontology of the self, it is embedded in a limit attitude which valorizes transgression against historical limitations, emphasizing the creativity of producing new existential possibilities. (p. 32)

Freedom invites one to go beyond limits. What is the limit? The limit varies under various circumstances. It might be a domination. It might be cultural, conceptual, or spatial, racial and so on, or a combination of some, even all. Freedom is also a representation of "biographic reality", a reality portraying your current lived situation.

This decision (pursuing a second doctoral study) signifies an attitude: contemplation toward life by myself, and it means a staying where thoughts and actions are interwoven, resonating with my "authentic" self-the inner one. In a certain sense, this decision often feels like a voyage out, from the habitual, the customary, the taken-for-granted, toward the unfamiliar, the more spontaneous, the questionable (Pinar, 1995).

I have the freedom.

The Pursuit to be No. 1
The Three Minute Thesis Competition (3MT)

The social lounge was filled with people. It was the first time that I found the room was quite small. As the host stood out and greeted to all the audience, the competition started. I was sixth among all the participants. From the moment it began, my attention was abruptly drawn to the front area where every participant was supposed to give their speech. The first participant was from India, and she looked different from before. "She paused several times in her speech partly because she was nervous…." I thought.

The host said, "Now let's welcome Wanying. The title of her thesis is 'The Yuanpei Program in Peking University—a case study of curriculum innovation'". I walked to the front and turned around facing all the audience. I heard my heart beat faster and could barely lift my arm. I thought it would be fine only if I could remember what I should say. I stood still while comforting myself. I started.

"I should keep my smile and the posture throughout the process. Gesture needed here. My brain worked excitedly, but in a negative way. I could hear a reminder whispering around my head after I commenced. However, I was only able to half control my body. I was speaking but my face muscles and my arms seemed frozen. The designed pauses and gestures slipped away. I was just there, talking."

Finally I finished. Applause arose from the audience. Twenty minutes after the last participant finished his speech, the judges announced the results. I did not know where I was located, but I was not one among the first two. I tried to suppress my unhappiness, clapping my hands to celebrate the two winners. I was talking with other people as I became sad, even with a little bit madness. How could I get such a result? I felt frustrated and depressed. After the event, I talked with two friends who had attended the competition for several hours.

I could not fall asleep for the rest of the night. When I closed my eyes, my brain even worked faster. I could not accept the failure. Scenes from the competitions and other fragmented memories came to mind. They overlapped, imbricated and swirled. I felt pain and sorrow. Why? I had finished my first doctoral study and the dissertation had been published as a book. My three minutes thesis was just about this research. Was it because I failed to demonstrate the academic value of that research, or was it due to my poor presentation skill? Was I too nervous? This being nervous reminded me of my past experience and my childhood memory. Through this three minutes thesis competition I finally found the lost past which I thought "lost". In fact, the past not only exists, but still permeates my life. Why do I always want to be No. 1 and why do I feel so sad and frustrated when I fail? With the "lost" past in hand, the connection is easily perceived.

This 3MT competition experience serves as a site for autobiographical excavation, through which I can come to recover the social, cultural structures that formed me, how they have worked on me, and how these lost memories still function.

"I am from Chinese Society"

In order to perform well, I worked very hard for the 3MT competition. I spent weeks on writing, modifying and reciting the short passage. Just before the real competition, I spent five hours unceasingly practicing the speech. Like the overcooked food, I found that I had overprepared for the competition. What caused me to be so nervous? Why did I struggle so?

It seems that I am still a "product" of Chinese culture. From the strong desire to win to the sense of frustration caused by the failure in the competition, it can be seen how Chinese culture and Confucius education has imprinted my subjectivity.

I wanted to win the 3MT competition. I deemed winning the competition central to my academic success. Therefore, it was of great importance to me. Though in the end it turned out it might be a performance. It has been quite a while that I have not acknowledged the influence of Chinese culture on me. But I think the influence still remains.

Confucius Education communicates the notion that academic success is the most important goal for a student to achieve. According to Confucius, there are four social strata,

comprised of occupation: scholars (*Shi*), farmers (*nong*), workers (*gong*), and businessmen (*Shang)* (Park & Chesla, 2007). The highest class, scholars, did mental labor, and usually made decisions that influenced the whole society. There are many Chinese sayings such as: doing scholarly work excels over any other type of work; you can see beauty in Book; you can see gold in Book. All of these manifest that academic success tends to be the most valuable aspect. My life has been centered on the pursuit for academic success since childhood.

In Confucius education diligence compromises intelligence. It is believed that if one works hard, one can succeed finally. Suffering is part of personal cultivation in Chinese culture (Tu, 1998). Wang (2004) argues that the capacity to bear pain is essential to coming maturity. I thought the pain that arose in the process should be a guarantee for success. Therefore, no matter how tired I felt during the preparation, I persisted.

Reflecting on this competition, I clearly see the influence from my parents. My parents also explain why I have been so devoted to academic success. As Salvio (1990) observes:

> We have to be aware of the meaning generated by intimate social relationships. In such a relationships, as in aesthetic experience, the look, the touch, the distance we keep from one another and the objects framing our lives are all meaningful, and this meaning is grasped in a moment. (p. 234)

My mother has been and is with me all the time, no matter where she is, no matter where I am. She was a teacher at a middle school that shared the same school yard with my elementary school. This created a situation wherein she was the one who first knew my examination results. She then would tell me. I guessed my score according to her attitude. Each time the good score she knew brought a smile to her face, I felt so relieved. She cared about my education, my examination results, and my place in the class.

According to Huang and Gova (2012), educational achievement is visible and measurable. It encompasses one's test performances, schools entered, and degrees received. It is generally believed that earning higher grades, attending higher ranking schools, and receiving higher degrees are indisputable routes to success in the society. In addition, education is associated with a person's social class (Huang & Gova, 2012). Social class is associated with occupations as well as the moral character related to the occupation, as Confucius decreed.

My mother regarded my education as a family business, an interdependent process for many Chinese families (Huang & Gova, 2012). Though children are responsible for their own educational success, Chinese parents believe that their children's educational achievement is greatly influenced by their parenting practices as well. They believe that they have the obligation and responsibility to contribute to their children's success in education. When parents have a difficult time exerting influence over their children's academic success, they may regard themselves as failures as a parent. They take their children's academic failure as their own responsibility because they feel that they did not do their best to work with their children. Pressures can be high on both parents and children. When Chinese children do not achieve an intended goal, parents feel disappointed, anxious, and embarrassed (Kim, 2006). It brings shame and embarrassment to the family. Children are impacted by parents' emotions and expectations. On the other hand, if the child succeeds academically, it represents the triumph of the entire family. It is considered a family achievement. My mother believes this

and put the belief into practice. She supervised me by sitting beside me when I studied at home. Each time I finished an essay, I handed it to my mother for revision. Chinese parents are concerned that too much praise may have a negative effect on their children's achievement. Therefore, parents usually provide little praise to their children for academic success.

That may explain why my parents placed a high value on education and academic success, which implicitly or explicitly have a great impact on my choice, on what to focus on, and the time distribution since I spent a lot of time studying after school. I was directed to study all day and gradually this demand became internalized, the only guiding principle for me.

However, where I am might be another aspect deserving consideration.

Displacement (social and cultural)

Place as an important concept for understanding curriculum autobiographically emerged decades ago. As Pinar argues, "place and human feelings are intertwined. When events take place, they achieve particularity and concreteness; they become infused with feeling. Fiction—novels, short stories—express daily human experience, situated in concrete places with specific characters" (Pinar, et al., 1995, p. 533). Kincheloe and Pinar (1991, cited in Pinar et al., 1995, p. 533) say, "place is the life-force of fiction, serving as the crossroads of circumstance, the playing field on which drama evolves." Place represents certain notions, certain social and cultural norms.

I was born in a middle sized city in the Northeast of China. Living in the city at that time meant a routinized life that might never change. I come from the vast land in Northeast China that is dark and fertile. It is a city with 100 years of history and an industrial base where 8 huge factories operated. These factories ranged from steel industry to the manufacture of train compartment; each had more than 10,000 workers. Fifty percent of the population worked for these factories or in occupations related with the 8 factories. My mother was one of them, and she worked for an affiliated middle school as a teacher. After parents retired, their children continued their job. I had heard so many stories about replacing their parents' job upon graduation from high school. People lived quietly.

The sky in winter was always gloomy due to serious air pollution caused by the eight factories which consumed tons of coal everyday. The dark smog cylinder rising everywhere still remains unforgettable in my mind. Everyday life was the same. I escaped this dull, uncolored life by reading. Reading was the only activity with which I felt fascinated. Every school day, I dashed to the school library, reading for several hours. In most cases, the elementary and secondary education was so ritualized and obsessive that knowledge of the outside world was barely acknowledged in class. However, reading at the library provided me the possibility to see the outside world, to experience different kinds of life.

Even nowadays, this scene always haunts me: I was reading quietly a newly published magazine or a book. I could smell the newly arrived magazine or book and ran to read them. Almost no teachers or students were around. It was my own space, my place. It was years ago but the place remains in my mind. This educational experience extended my vision, bringing me into a new "space" where I heard different "voices". I aspired to try something I had never tried before. How could I achieve the goal? Maybe the only way was going to a college, a college in Beijing—the capital city of China.

Without turning back to my life in the city, I would not see the "lost" connection between me and my hometown city. This regressive moment helps me find the denied elements of the past and see how I had struggled to break free from the bondage of northeastern social boundaries. All these reasons prompted me pursue No. 1 unceasingly, the desire to go to college in Beijing, and something unidentifiable….

This competition served as an occasion to question where I come from, culturally and socially. Through such self-study I might recover the bridge to a lost part of "I". By re-entering the past, I saw how I had struggled, how I had worked so hard, and then I might re-perceived the society and culture context where I had come of age, what has structured me. Autobiographical reflection offered a key to unlock complexity of my situation.

Am I a Teacher or a Student?

After the dinner. The dining hall was in a total silence with burst of laughers outside in the courtyard: some talked; some played soccer; some just walked around the courtyard. Residents of the College enjoyed themselves after working all day. I went back into my world again. "Am I all right?" "Am I doing the right thing? Did I talk too much? I could not help asking myself.

Why did I talk in that way during the dinner? Why did I think that what other residents said was not correct or sound? Sometimes the situation happened in the class too. When the professor asked the difference between qualitative and quantitative methods. I immediately replied: "The qualitative research tends to…". Without waiting for other students' comments. I wanted to justify what I said in the classroom, make myself more trustworthy. The more I talked, the more unnatural I became. I told my past experience to another Chinese graduate student. Now she knew I am doing my second PhD; consequently, it seemed quite natural that she asked me many questions, especially about achieving a PhD. Somehow I forgot that I am still a student. "Am I not very experienced?" I outlined to her the whole process, detailed the challenges she might face, emphasizing strategies that can be adopted to overcome these difficulties.

Why did I tell her that I get a doctoral degree already? Why did I think that I needed to demonstrate myself on that occasion? With a doctoral degree, does it means that I am more knowledgeable or competent than she is? Similar situations have occurred several times since I enrolled in this second doctoral program.

> I can see that this has led to that; in that circumstance I chose that, I rejected this alternative; I affiliated with those people, then left them for these, that this field intrigued me intellectually, then that one; I worked on this problem, then that one…I see there is a coherence. Not necessarily a logical one, but a lived one, a felt one. The point of coherence is the biography as it is lived….The predominant question is: what has been and what is now the nature of my educational experience? (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. 52)

How did I identify myself at that moment? Did the environment affect me? Was it related to the "audience"—those with whom I was talking? I realized my identification with being a teacher on these occasions. Sometimes I deemed myself a teacher, and naturally I consider I may deserve more respect since I functioned as a teacher. Why should a teacher gain more respect or sustain a dominant role? Why did I feel unhappy when I did not receive

the desired comment? This reminds me of Chinese learning culture. To my surprise, I can so easily identify the influences of Chinese learning and teaching culture on me. How does Chinese culture view teachers? The traditional Chinese model of teaching is one of an empty-vessel or pint pot (Maley, 1982). Such a model is essentially mimetic or epistemic in that it is characterized by the transmission of knowledge principally through an imitative and repetitive process (Paine, 1992; Tang & Absalon, 1998) Teaching methods are largely expository and the teaching process is teacher-dominated (Biggs, 1996). The teacher is supposed to be dominant during the whole teaching process. Exactly, the teacher interprets, analyzes and elaborates on these points for the students, helps them connect new points of knowledge with old knowledge, and imparts a carefully sequenced and optimally mediated amount of knowledge for the students to memorize, repeat and understand (Hu, 2002). Due to the perceived roles mentioned above, it is understandable that teachers tend not to embrace students challenging their authority over knowledge. It can be regarded as humiliating if teachers fail to answer students' questions. It is a common belief that a teacher must assume a directive role, having the sole prerogative in deciding what to teach and exerting complete control over the class all the time (Tang & Absalom, 1998). This is to make class events fully predictable, guaranteeing the smooth delivery of carefully planned contents. To keep in tune with the transmission model of teaching, students should maintain a high level of receptiveness, wholeheartedly embracing the knowledge from their teacher or found in books. They are expected to respect and cooperate with their teacher (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996) and not to challenge the transmitted knowledge or present their own ideas until they have mastered sufficient knowledge to make informed judgments (Brick, 1991). The teacher is the one, or the only one in class to talk and interpret. Accordingly, they deserve respect. That is why I felt uncomfortable about being treated the way in which people challenged me. It seems that I need not care too much whether it is a teacher or a student I look like. Teachers and students can be reciprocally related. No matter what role I might be deemed, it could be an opportunity to reconsider my situatedness.

Understanding My Cultural Background
A Westernized Chinese?---A double alienated journey

Who am I? Taubman (1992) remembers turning to his mother—a teacher herself—for advice about teaching. As a beginning step, she suggested that he stand in front of their hallway mirror, practicing what he would do in front of his classes during the first weeks of school. Identity as a unified me congeals during the mirror stage in seeking oneself in the face of the other. "The 'I' comes to form in the presence and reflection of another, identity is inextricably linked to someone else. There is no private "I". (Taubman, 1992)

I am in-between Chinese and western culture. I am a Chinese in others' eyes, but I consider myself as embodying both cultures. I am moving between the two poles. As Taubman identifies his way to midpoint, he terms a "dialectic…whose endpoints must be attended to but not submitted to" (1992, p. 232).

As a Chinese woman who had come to the United States to study curriculum theory, Wang Hongyu studies herself by studying Confucius, Foucault, and Kristeva. She had left home: her nation, her parents. But she found that her home had become strange: "going back home does not bring me home, but has turned my mother into a stranger. I have become a stranger to myself too" (Wang, 2004, p. 7). Therefore, Wang invokes the conception of "third

space", wherein one travels beyond the current forms of life. It is the third space that opens when the stranger calls one out of oneself, when the stranger inside oneself emerges, enabling one to move away from home toward a destination not yet known. Wang describes a journey both a return home and to a foreign land (Pinar, 2011, p. 107). According to Wang Hongyu (2004), "the more I probed, the more I was amazed by how much we Chinese are still embedded in this tradition, no matter how many times during last one hundred years we have witnessed anti-Confucianism (p. 55). Will it happen to me? How has Confucius culture affected me? In what way? Does anything that I do conflict with the culture I am supposed to belong to?

It was a cozy night. We were talking around a table, a "Chinese table" around which ten Chinese students sat side by side. Suddenly, a Chinese student said, "do you want to hear a joke?" "Please…" We laughed. He began, "once there was a man who told a funny joke." After he finished, a person said, "You can say that again." Then he retold the story…This is the joke. Finished." No one laughed. We gazed at each other. I know the funny place was that "you can say that again" is slang and it means "I agree" or "It sounds fun." But many Chinese, as second language learners may understand the phrase literally. That was why many of them did not understand and for them the joke was not funny at all. I looked at the one who had just told the joke, thinking if I needed to tell the reason. When I was about to tell, I stopped and hesitated. "Should I tell? Will it mean that I am flaunting? A little bit of a show off? There is a professor from Peking University sitting here… No. I should keep silent. It is not a time to show myself." I decided to keep silent. After a while, the speaker told us the reason. Everyone felt relieved. Every conversation resumed, back to the previous state. But my mind seemed to get out of the place. Why did I have these thoughts?

When some questions or situation make you conscious of where are you from, I think these are culturally sensitive moments. With the story, I begin to examine myself consciously; this examination is informed by, mainly, I guess the studying experience in Hong Kong, America and Canada.

Why would I have those thoughts when being with other Chinese residents? I was so hesitant about telling them the truth. How do I view the relation with others? How do I view myself among other Chinese? Is it subduing to collectivism, is the self placed within the collectivist ideology?

Ren (often translated as benevolence), the most important ethical principle in Confucianism, is recognized widely for its emphasis on the care of the others (Yu, 2007). According to some commentators, the Confucian relational self lies under/ in human relationship, constituted by nothing more than the sum of roles he or she assumes in various relationships, and it changes as relationship changes. (Yu, 2007). In Confucian cultures, the self is what Ho (1993) calls the relational self, which is intensely aware of the social presence of other human beings. The appearance of others in the phenomenal world is integral to the emergence of selfhood; that is, self and others are conjointly differentiated from the phenomenal world to form the self-in-relation-with-others. Ho (1993) uses the term relational identity to refer to identity defined by a person's significant social relationships.

According to Sun (1991, p. 1), the Chinese, "perceive an individual largely as a 'body' (*shen* or *shenti*) to be made whole by the exchange of 'hearts' (*xin*) between two such 'bodies'. In this sense, a Chinese individual, far from being a distinct and separate individual, is conceivable largely in the continuum of 'two persons'. It can be understood as no separate

individual for a Chinese individual. "Ideally, the Chinese 'individual', inhibited from unattenuated 'self-actualization' and thus rendered inert, is galvanized into action by its duty towards the Significant Other "(p. 5). The Significant Other can be always seen in the Chinese individual.

Sun argues that "The emotive nature of Chinese 'conscience' renders it more tractable to concerns for 'face' or shame, oftentimes leading to the compromising of rational self-interest or one's principle" (1991, p. 4). In the above situation, it seems that I exchanged my self-image or self-interest (in order not be disliked by other Chinese) with the "truth" that I wanted to tell. "Enveloped by heart, a Chinese individual at times finds himself 'not the master of his own body' (*shen bu you ji*)" (p. 4).

The self in Confucianism is a subdued self. It is conditioned to respond to perceptions, not of its own needs and aspirations, but of social requirements and obligations. Incongruence between the inner private self and the outer public self is likely to be present (Ho, 1993). Confucianism tends to produce people who view behavior in terms of whether it meets or fails to meet some external moral or social criteria—and not in terms of individual needs, sentiments, or volition. That is, people who tend to be moralistic, not psychologically minded, Ho further argues.

Sun (1991) argues that Confucianism is the philosophy par excellence of the 'Two': "This worldly oriented, it seeks transcendence in the movement away from one's own body towards another. In such activity, the imperative is living up to one's own part in a reciprocal relation" (p. 4). Such activity was traditionally codified in the five cardinal pairs of reciprocity like 'lord-subject,' 'father-son' etc., which shows the more deep-lying, long-lasting binary thrust in the Chinese view of the human condition. "Marxist China has continued the same thrust in the effacement of individuality in a collective matrix. Ideology might be faltering now, but the need of modern-day Chinese to 'settle their bodies' in the matrix of family is more real than ever (Sun, 1991, p. 4)". He contends that the Chinese concept of the individual, from the Confucian to the Maoist, perceives man as totally malleable by society or the state. The Chinese notion of 'transcendence' is the horizontal movement of feelings from a single body to a greater number of bodies, so that 'individual' impulses are developed into social concordance (Sun, 1991).

The Great Learning describes the ethical development of a person in stages beginning with the rectification of his "*xin*", so that his "*shen*" will be cultivated, and proceeds from there to unify his family, to harmonize his nation, and eventually to pacify All-under-Heaven (cited in Sun, 1991, p. 13). The goal of self-cultivation is to lead one's life in accordance with the way of Heaven. It is not meant to make a person a unique individual, but to make one an ideal person (Sun, 1991). Confucius culture establishes the path for the individual to follow.
The issue of cultural difference has never been so crucial since I had the experience of studying abroad. For four years I studied at the University of Hong Kong for my doctoral study; now I am doing the second PhD at the University of British Columbia. The experience in Hong Kong afforded me the opportunity to examine from where I come and signalled the start of the journey of struggle with the two cultural claims on myself (culture of Mainland China and Hong Kong), which I may not have been very well aware of at the very beginning. I came to realize the cultural difference between the two places: where I had been brought up and where I was living and studying during the period. For some particular issue, they are just opposite. The difference that I realized renders me the opportunity of considering the

conflicting aspects of the two cultures, and the uniqueness of the two cultures. Biocultural identities implies the coexistence of two different cultures but is problematic if conflicts and contradictions between the two cultures are not addressed in generative rather than resolvable ways (Young, 1998). By constantly engaging myself in various questions: I seem to estrange myself to both cultures. These questions are: how do these two cultures manifest themselves in myself?   How should I react or respond while situating this bicultural environment, psychologically and behaviorally? What are the moments that critically shock me? How have my thought processes evolved during the process? Am I embracing the two cultures? In what way? As noted, Wang Hongyu (2004) proposes a concept of a third space that may fit for this situation:

> The contradictory nature of differences between Chinese and Western cultures constantly challenges me to reconcile these differences into a creative site where new subjectivities can emerge. What we need is embracing both cultures through a third space of mutual transformation enables us to approach the issues of self, relationship, and difference in a new way. (p. 16)

Wang contends that a third space embodies both cultures at the same time, honoring the otherness of each and encouraging passages and interactions between them. How the two otherness interact will be interesting. It is manifested through one's thinking and choice. Can they really "talk with each other"? It is through the "oneself" that the two cultures mediate and accommodate. When the two cultures find passage into the "oneself", one may begin to engage in the "rethinking" of the two cultures. One may think the origin, the history or how this particular aspect of the culture has been shaped. Or, one may see that "different cultural layers of the self shift, intersect, and constantly reform" (Wang, 2004, p. 16). Naturally, as one perceives the difference, he or she may behave in accordance with a culture with another culture being considered in mind. The visible reaction may only represent a choice. The one may act upon one culture on one occasion while another on different occasion. This shift signifies the complexity of living with two cultures internalized within. The space where I was and where I am physically manifests influences of two cultures in terms of language usage, way of thinking, knowledge system being employed and so on. I am between these cultures, in ongoing and shifting relation with each.

Understanding the New Research Paradigm
What is *Currere*?--Struggle for a Different Research Paradigm

Another misty day in February. The class was about to start. "Would I participate and speak well?" I murmured. As one of the classmates sat beside me, my wandered thought came back. "How is your writing? I asked. "Yea, I just finished." I looked around in the classroom, and I found most of them had taken their seat already.

It was a class I took in the second term since I studied at UBC. I had been deeply confused and perplexed by the class discussion. It was unexpected. I did not anticipate the situation. I was not a beginner. I finished the first doctorate at the University of Hong Kong and I published the dissertation. However, I found I was indeed a beginner in this class. It seemed that the knowledge I learned before was null though I did know qualitative research, case study, various research methods and so on… But why did I become numbed in the class?

Spontaneously, I had been both surprised and excited, intrigued by something that is fundamentally different. I wanted to be inspired. I was mentally activated, triggered, but failing to orient myself to somewhere. I was amazed by these thoughts, challenged by them. They are not behavioral, observable, but ontologically, exists. This is a new perspective, new thoughts, new way of looking at ourselves and world. It describes ontological shifts within temporal and spatial structure. It is a path along which I begin to walk, to reflect, to converse, and with myself. It seemed that I walked along a path that brings me a feeling of surprise, excitement, anticipation of inspiration.

The talked about storytelling (autobiography) again. Why are personal stories concerned with curriculum? What is *currere*? Why does it address the contribution of academic study to the understanding of our life history? What is research? It is supposed be like the one I did before for my first doctoral study. Can story-telling be a research method? And then what is the difference between research and the novel? These questions have puzzled me since the first month I enrolled in the program. I was eager to know:

> Research methodology has evolved to enable students to study their biographies and practices. If we can extend this idea to the murky world of identity, and provide spaces for student teachers to rethink how their constructions of the teacher make for lived experience, then I think students…will be better able to politically theorize about the terrible problem of knowing thyself…Students may come to understand knowing thyself as a construction and eventually, as a socially empowering occasion. (Grumet, 1975, p. 43)

The research paradigm is concerned with the way the world is viewed and understand. As argued by Aoki (2001):

> What seems to be needed in curriculum inquiry, is general recognition of the epistemological limit-situation in which curriculum research is encased. Accordingly, we need to seek out new orientation that allows us to free ourselves of the tunnel vision effect of mono-dimensionality. (cited in Pinar & Irwin, 2005, p. 94)

I followed the tradition of empirical research by which I derive my understanding through cases, interviews, observations and so on. The research was directed toward others, toward outside. However, the practical is a complex discipline, concerned with choice and action. The theory-*currere* seems to be different.

As argued by Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery and Taubman (1995), Grumet (1976) cited *currere* as a method and theory of curriculum which escapes the epistemological traps of mainstream social science and educational research. Rather than working to quantify behaviors to describe their surface interaction or to establish causality, *currere* seeks to describe what the individual subject him or herself makes of these behaviors (Pinar et al. 1995, p. 414). As one of the theoretical foundations for *currere*, phenomenology tends to reject both rationalism and in which the bottom line of reality is logic and empiricism as elaborated in twentieth century mainstream social science, the bottom line of reality is its mathematical representation in statistics because they fail to account for the world as experienced (p. 405). As further pointed out by Pinar. et al. (1995), *currere* shares phenomenology's interest in describing immediate, pre-conceptual experience, making use of the phenomenological

processes of distancing and bracketing required in doing so. Grumet (1976) provides an explanation:

> Unlike mainstream educational research which focuses upon the end products of the processes of consciousness as described by Husserl, those end products we call concepts, abstractions, conclusions, and generalizations we, in accumulative fashion, call knowledge. *Currere* seeks to slide underneath these end products and structures to the pre-conceptual experience that is their foundation. *Currere* is designed to act as the phenomenological epoche, slackening the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus bring them to our notice. (p. 41)

Currere is to help find the hidden "truth" and bring the truth into our attention by going beyond the end products such as concepts, abstraction and so on. *Currere* emphasizes the individual experience of the curriculum:

> In contrast to the conventional empirical-analytic paradigm of educational research, *currere* returns to the experience of the individual, searching for those qualities which disqualify them for consideration in the mainstream behavioral sciences: its idiosyncratic history, its pre-conceptual and lived foundations, its contextual dependency, and its capacity for freedom and intelligence in choice and action. (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 414)

Through *currere*, the researcher attempts a phenomenological description of both subject and object, requiring knowledge of self as knower of the world, tracing the complex path from pre-conceptual experience to formal intellection (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 415). *Currere* points to a lived path along which we better understand how we have evolved throughout the process. *Currere* as autobiographical self-report communicates the individual's lived experience as it is socially located, politically positioned, and discursively formed, while working to succumb to none of these structurings.

Summary
My autobiography is organized around three themes: search for understanding my self-growth, cultural background, and research paradigm. Through presenting these moments, memories, and stories, I have achieved the deeper understanding about myself and my subjectivity. The first theme is about the search for self-growth, which involves three stories and corresponding analysis and synthesis; the second theme is about the search for cultural understanding with one story and analysis presented; the third theme is about the search for understanding research paradigm with one story and analysis discussed.

Discussion—Some Thoughts on My Autobiography
I am in between: a teacher and student, being home and alienated, being Chinese and a foreigner, both mother and daughter (I am a daughter but sometimes think like my mother). It seems that I always move between two extremes, two roles, or two cultures, or two modes of understanding research. These extremes might all be issues related to my "authentic self," if from different angles. These different pairs (aspects) work to help me understand myself better. Being a teacher makes sense when comparing to being a student; being Chinese makes

sense when comparing to being a foreigner. Teachers do not exist isolated from students. Consequently, any concept or name implies a relationship and suggests another concept as its counterpart. In other words, when we look at something, we unconsciously link it to its counterpart. For example, when we describe something as red or good, we are implicitly comparing them to their opposite counterparts. In <u>Chinese philosophy</u>, *yin and yang* (also, *yin-yang* or *yin   yang*) describes how opposite or contrary forces are actually complementary, <u>interconnected</u>, and interdependent in the natural world. The *yin and yang* give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another. Similarly, teachers do not make any sense if not relating themselves to students. They are interconnected, yet in seemingly "contradictory" positions. In Chinese culture, *Yin and Yang* are two important concepts. Everything has both *yin and yang* aspects, (for instance shadow cannot exist without light). *Yin and Yang* can be deemed as complementary forces that interact to form a dynamic system. This dynamic system is not just assembled parts, but might be a new place where new forces can be formed. This could be the reason why I have been in between for so many things, such as between student and teacher, and being home yet alienated. When something establishes itself, it naturally denies something else and implies the opposite embedded naturally. The *Yin and Yang* sides or conflicting sides characterize the whole process. In my case, constant change places me in between the "new" and the "old": the current and the past contradict each other. The evolving process is dynamic and not static, with contradictions and harmonies representing a unity in multiplicity.

It also reminds me of the Chinese traditional brush painting. As one of the most important styles, Freehand style- Shui-mo (水墨) is loosely termed as "watercolor" or "brush" painting. The Chinese character "*shui*" means water and "*mo*" means ink. This style is also referred to as "*xie yi*" (寫意) or freehand style. The ink-and-wash landscape is characterized as vivid brushwork and varying degrees of intensity of ink that can express the artist's conception of nature, his own emotions, and individuality. This style seeks to capture the essence of the subject rather than the details of its appearance. Landscape painters, for example, frequently go outdoors and observe nature, then come back to a studio to paint what they have experienced. Many landscape paintings use empty spaces to represent light or clouds.

The most sustained and integral theory on Chinese painting is embodied in the idea that form is only a means to express spirit and vitality (Zhang, 2002). Essentially, painters as early as the fifth century, "realized the importance of capturing the spirit of nature, rather than just copying it. In painting a man or woman, the artist should bring forth his or her likeness: in painting animals, trees, or flowers, he should attempt to capture their characteristics or 'moving implications" (Zhang, 2002, p. 5). In order to paint successfully, the painter must observe and understand his subject. "The artists sought a likeness in the unlikeness, more specifically they wanted to go beyond superficial identical resemblance and create an image that was unique to the artist and captured how the artist's character, mood, and emotion affected the way in which a subject was seen" (Reynolds, 2009, p. 3). One may think of it as the image that a person has when they look at a scene or subject, their interpretation and how they personally internalize and reveal the character of the subject. The purpose of these painters, particularly when painting subjects from nature, was to try to integrate themselves with the subjects and achieve a sort of harmony with nature. This idea of going beyond the images allowed painters to express their inner emotions, spiritual thinking, and show a unique self (Reynolds, 2009).

Chinese painting is to pursue and exhibit the "spirit" of the scene. These paintings convey the ideal, pursuit, and understanding of the painters. Similarly, while writing my autobiography, I also seek to convey the "spirit" of scenes as I lived them. It may neglect or miss some details but I aspire to capture the "essence" or "real quality" of the past experience. Leaving the blank (*liubai*) in these paintings is used to better reflect the beauty, and to allow more imagination. Writing an autobiography is to convey something that is spirited, in order to transcend factual details and highlight important understanding. These different shades of ink interact to present the beauty or spirit of the real life, resembling the different stories told in my autobiography as they interact and overlap in some way.

Notes

[1] wywang105@163.com

References

Aoki, T. (1981) Toward understanding curriculum: Talk through reciprocity of perspectives. In W. F. Pinar & R. L. Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key*: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki (pp. 219–228). New Jersey: Mahwah.

Ayers, W. (1990) Small heroes: In and out of school with 10-year-old city kids. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 20(3), 269-278.

Biggs, J. B. (1996) Western misperceptions of the Confucian-heritage learning culture. In D. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.), *The Chinese Learner*: Cultural, Psychological and Contextual Influences (pp. 45-67). Hong Kong: CERC and ACER

Brick, J. (1991) *China*: A Handbook in Intercultural Communication. Sydney: Macquarie University Press.

Clarke, A. (2012) Burgeo and back: Catching oneself in the act of being attentive to pedagogy. In Cohen, A., Porath, M., Clarke, A., Bai, H., Leggo, C., & Meyer, K. (Eds.). *Speaking of Teaching: Inclinations, Inspirations, and Innerworkings* (pp. 55-62). New York: Sense Publisher.

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988) *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York: NY: Teachers College Press.

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. X. (1996) Culture of learning: language classrooms in China. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the Language Classroom* (pp. 169-206). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cortazzi, M. (2014) *Narrative Analysis*. New York: Routledge.

Dooley, M. (2001) *The politics of exodus: Kierkegaard's ethics of responsibility*. New York: Routledge.

Felman, S. (1993) *What does a woman want? Reading and sexual difference.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Foucault, M. (1983) Afterword: The subject and power. In H.L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow, M. Foucault: *Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp. 208-226). Chicago: the University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (1985) *The use of pleasure*. Trans. From French by Robert Hurley: New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault. M. (1986) *The care of the self*. Trans. From French by Robert Hurley: New York: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1990) *Politics, philosophy, culture*: Interviews and other writings of Michel Foucault 1977-1984. New York: Routledge. (Original work published 1988).

Green, B & Reid, J. (2008) Method(s) in our madnesss: Poststructuralism, pedagogy and teacher education. In Anne Phelan and Jennifer Sumsion (Eds), *Critical reading in teacher educatoin* (pp. 17-31). Rotterdam: Sense.

Greene, M. (2001) *Variations on a Blue Guitar*: The Lincoln Center Institute Lectures on Aesthetic Education. New York: Teacher College Press.

Grumet, M. (1975) Existential and phenomenological foundations of *Currere*: Self-report in curriculum inquiry. In *American Educational Research Association*. ERIC.

Grumet, M. (1981) Conception, contradiction and curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 3(1), 287–298.

Grumet, M. (1988) *Bitter milk*: Women and teaching. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Grumet, M. (1990) Retrospective: Autobiography and the analysis of Educational Experience. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 20(3), 321-325

Ho, D. (1993) Selfhood and identity in Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism: contrast with the west. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviours*, 25(2), 115-139.

Hu, G. W. (2002) Potential Cultural Resistance to Pedagogical Imports: the Case of Communicative Language Teaching in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 15*(2), 93-105.

Huang, G & Gova, M. (2012) Confucianism and Chinese Family: Values and Practice in Education. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science,* 2(3),   11-14.

Jay, M. (2005) *Songs of experience*. Berkeley: University of California Press Jonsson, S. (2000) *Subject without nation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Kim, S. (2006) *The experience of Korean parents' educational zeal.* Paper presented at the annual conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Minneapolis, MN.

Kincheloe, J. & Pinar, W. (Eds.). (1991) *Curriculum as social psychoanalysis*: *The significance of place*. Albany: NY: State University of New York Press.

Knight, W. (2005) *Citizen: Jane Addams and the struggle for democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leggo, C. (2008) The ecology of personal and professional experience: A poet's view, In M. Cahnmann-Taylor & R. Siegesmund (Eds), *Arts-based inquiry in diverse learning communities: foundations for practice.* New York: Routledge.

Leggo, C. (2010) Writing a life: Representation in language and image. *Transnational Curriculum Inquiry*, 7(2), pp. 47-61.

Lin, C (2006) *The Art of Chinese Painting*. Beijing: China Intercontinental Press.

Maley, A. (1982) Foreign language learning and the search for a new paradigm. *Language Learning and Communication*, 1, 123-135.

Martin, B. & Mohanty. C. (1986) Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It? In Teresa de Lauretis (ed), *Feminist studies/critical studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

McKnight, D. (2010) Critical Pedagogy and despair: A move toward Kierkegaard' Passionate Inwardness. In E. Malewski (Ed.). *Curriculum Studies Handbook: the next moment* (P.500-507). New York: Routledge.

McBride, P. (2006) *The Void of Ethics: Robert Musil and the Experience of Modernity.* Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Miller, J. L. (1990) *Creating spaces and finding voices*: teachers collaborating for empowerment. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Miller, J. L. (2005) *Sounds of silence breaking: Women, autobiography, curriculum* (Vol. 1). New York: Peter Lang.

Miller, J. L. (2010) Autobiographical theory. In C. Kridel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of curriculum studies* (Vol. 1, pp. 61–65). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Miller, R. (2005) *Writing at the end of the World*. Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press.

Moghtader, B. (2015) *Foucault and Educational Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Morris, W. (1967) *North toward home*. Oxford, MS: Yoknapatawpha Press.

Nussbaum, M. (1997) *Cultivating Humanity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Paine, L. (1992) Teaching and modernization in contemporary China. In R. Hayhoe (Ed.), *Modernization: The Chinese Experience*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Park, M. & Chesla, C. (2007) Revisiting Confucianism as a conceptual framework for Asian family study. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 13 (3), 293-311.

Pinar, W. F. (1975) The Analysis of Educational Experience. In W. F. Pinar (Ed.), *Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists* (pp. 384-395). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.

Pinar, W. F., & Grumet, M. R. (1976) *Toward a poor curriculum*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

Pinar, W. F. (1994) *Autobiography, politics, and sexuality: Essays in curriculum theory 1972-1992*. New York: Peter Lang

Pinar, W. F., Reynolds, W. M., Slattery, P., & Taubman, P. M. (1995) *Understanding curriculum*: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses. New York: Peter Lang.

Pinar, W. F. (2009) *Worldliness of Cosmopolitan Education: a passionate life in public Service.* New York: Routledge.

Pinar, W. F. (2011) *The Character of Curriculum Studies*. New York: Palgrave   Macmillan.

Pinar, W. F. (2012) *What is Curriculum Theory?* New York, NY: Routledge.

Pinar, W. F. (2015) *Educational Experience as lived: Knowledge, History, Alterity*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Reynolds, E. (2009) *Chinese Painting*: Philosophy, Theory, and the Pursuit of Cultivation Through the Dao. Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection. Paper 805. http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/805

Riley-Taylor, E. (2002) *Ecology, spirituality & education: Curriculum for relational knowing*. New York: Peter Lang.

Salvio, P. (1990) Transgressive Daughters: Student autobiography and the Project of Self-Creation. *Cambridge Journal of Education*. 20(3), 283-289.

Sun, L. K. (1991) Contemporary Chinese culture: structure and emotionality. *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 26, (1-42).

Tang, D. G., & Absalom, D. (1998) Teaching across cultures: consideration for western EFL teachers in China. *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics* 3, 117-132.

Taubman, P. (1992) Achieving the right distance. *Educational Theory*, 40(1), 121-133.

Tu, W. M. (1998) Confucius and Confucianism. In W.H. Slote & G.A. DeVos (Eds.), Confucianism and the family (pp. 3-36). New York: State University of New York Press.

Wang, H. (2004) *The Call from the Stranger on a Journey Home*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Weedon, C. (1987) *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Blackwell.

Weedon, C. (2004) *Identity and Culture*. New York: Open University Press.

Young, R. (1998) Becoming American: Coping strategies of Asian Pacific American Children. In V. O. Pang & L. L. Cheng (Eds.), *Struggling to be heard: The unmet needs of Asian Pacific American Children* (pp. 61-73). Albany: State University of New York.

Yu, (2007) *The Ethics of Confucius and Aristotle: mirror of virtue*. New York/London: Routledge.

Zhang, A. (2002) *A History of Chinese Painting*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.