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EXPLORING FOSHAY'S THEOREM FOR CURRICULUM-MAKING IN EDUCATION:
An Elementary School Art Studio Project

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Abstract

This study explores the question of "why we teach as we do" through the self-reflexive lens described by several noted curriculum theorists, but perhaps best exemplified in a simple theorem for a reflexive curriculum-making praxis first proposed by aesthetics educator Arthur W. Foshay in his aphorism, "*Who* is to encounter *what*, *why*, *how*, in what *circumstances*, under what *governance*, at what *cost*?" The efficacy in Foshay's postulation is not self-evident, but must be revealed in an alternating sequence of engagements with the constituent elements of its syntax. The method for this presentation of living inquiry in curriculum-making is trifold, involving the intersection of an art studio project involving 3rd and 4th grade students in a new elementary school; the mixed genre writing of an accompanying paper drawing upon the artist/teacher/researcher's autobiographical narrative and poetry; and, a series of drawings that retrace and elaborate upon the project and paper. This study argues that Foshay has proposed a *qualitative* theorem inviting ongoing interpretation in curriculum-making. An alternating sequence of conceptualizing events constitutes a living inquiry, offering the possibility of greater innovation in learning than the more formulaic unit structures designed by mandate.

Alternating Currere

This article will theorize an alternative curriculum practice. A curriculum usually outlines a course of study for others to follow, most commonly flowing in one direction only, from teacher or source document to students. But the curriculum-making practice I am generating has a widely oscillating breadth, range, and magnitude that implicates multiple courses of study and directional flows in a single circuit of learning. In fact, the amplitude of the curricular practice I will describe expands the parameters of a learning encounter far afield from both school-bound and time-bound contexts, making it capable of delivering its epistemic output "10, 20, and 30 years in the future" (Ulbricht, 2005, p. 16). My description builds upon the narrative of an art studio curricular exercise undertaken in May of 2005 by a small group of 3rd and 4th grade students during the fourth of the biannual Integrated Projects Weeks (IPW) sponsored by The School at Columbia University.

The prevailing conception of curriculum practice views the educator as a toolmaker, architect, designer, and engineer—as one who implements the tools of learning to manipulate carefully selected elements of knowledge in order to construct the most enduring understandings. The specificities addressed by an architectural design have given rise to the metaphors hidden in the notions of "building a curriculum architecture" and "providing a scaffolding for learning." This remains evident in the glossary of one of the books in the recent *Understanding by Design* curriculum planning series, where the authors define curriculum as an effort to meet each and every "standard," or quality constraint, in a "complete program, composed of numerous units,"

reducing all possibility to the documentation of the most "explicit" and "comprehensive" solution (McTighe & Wiggins, 2004, p. 290).

Ralph Tyler's (1949) model for curriculum development has long held currency as the dominant rationale for curriculum-making in education, a schematic of direct cause and effect. Tyler's question "*What educational purpose should the school seek to attain?*" has lead to the prevalence of predetermined goals and objectives. Likewise, his question "*How can learning experiences be selected which are likely to be useful in attaining these objectives?*" has directed the prevalence of pre-scripted lesson plans along with grade- and subject-specific prescription-like lesson plan archives, while his question "*How can learning experiences be organized for effective instruction?*" has fronted state and national standards and frameworks for learning. Furthermore the question "*How can effectiveness of learning experiences be evaluated?*" has guided high-stakes pressures and corporate-like accountability structure demanding principals and teachers to provide evidence of increasing student test scores (pp. v-vi).

However, I have come to understand curriculum-making differently. Unlike Ralph Tyler's (1949) content-oriented and product-generating model for curriculum-making, aesthetics educator and curriculum theorist Arthur W. Foshay (1977) argues that deliberation over the *how* (the methods) and the *what* (the materials) of a quality curriculum are only two of at least seven crucial points of consideration. Seven modulations of amplitude in the practice of curriculum-making may be inferred from points of consideration shaped by Foshay into the following aphorism: *Who* is to encounter *what*, *why*, *how*, in what *circumstances*, under what *governance*, at what *cost*? Superceding the development of documented content for learning, curriculum-making

offers an opportunity for students and teachers to navigate passages through life's unwritten content, affording them access to new resources, processes, structures, and possibilities.

In place of direct learning models, this article describes alternating currents of study; one of these courses of study begins in the 1960s long before I entered the teaching profession and intersected the circuits of learning that actuate these particular 3rd and 4th graders. A course of study situated in contexts in, around, and apart from schools is one that opens a circuit for a "transactional pedagogy." Transactional pedagogy described by Brent Wilson (2005) consists of "teachers' values, students' values, texts, images, interpretations, and conflicting interpretations" (p. 19).

This is in accordance with curriculum theorist Patrick Slattery who suggests a reconceptualization of curriculum that draws upon epistemic pathways far outside the boundaries of the typical classroom when he writes

> the verb form of curriculum, *currere*…refers to running of the race rather than the race course itself…This process view of curriculum as *currere*…emphasizes the individual's own capacity to reconceptualize his or her autobiography, recognize connections with other people, recover and reconstitute the past, imagine and create possibilities for the future, and come to a greater personal and communal awareness…From this postmodern perspective, the curriculum is an interpretation of lived experiences rather than a static course of studies to be completed. (Slattery, 1995, p. 77)

Curriculum theorist William F. Pinar writes of the importance of "self-reflexivity within the processes of education," arguing that the reconceptualization of curriculum begins with the subjective lessons of autobiographical experience (Pinar, 2004, p. 35). Similar to the telling of a life, the constitution of knowledge in a contemporary and

poststructural society is necessarily complicated by a messy plurality of plausible starting points and ending points.

A transactional pedagogical practice does not deliver its charge directly. Rather, it seeks the proliferation of alternating polarities and wavelengths, meanings and sources of meaning along the lifelong *currere*. A transactional pedagogical practice generates a combinatory course of study, woven with autobiographical undercurrents, which ultimately supersedes the classroom.

The Autobiographical Undercurrent of Arts-based Research

This article theorizes an alternative curriculum practice in the form of an arts-based research exercise. Arts-based research is an interpretive act of meaning-making; the research is performed in the act of interpreting as opposed to being conducted prior to the act of interpretation and subsequently recorded. Art educator Brent Wilson (1997) conceives of research "as *re-search*, to search again, to take a closer second look" implying the search for evidence "about the way things were in the past, how they are presently, and even about how they might be in the future" (p. 1). Arts-based research stands apart from more typical works of art in the amplitude of an idea as it may be revisited across modalities by the artist—re-seen in words, images, dance, installation, musical notes, and sculpted forms. Over time the arts-based researcher may pick up any previously wrought interpretation and recast it—either in part or as a whole—in much the same way as the use of in-text reference citations and paraphrases in scholarly publications, or the technique of sampling digitally encoded phrases in musical

composition. An arts-based research act is also significant in its assumption that research can be performed.

The performative aspect of arts-based research may be demonstrated in "a range of performance modes: story, dance, painting, poetry, dialogue, script…argument, and more" (Mullen, 2003, p. 172). To perform anything is to carry out an action with intent. To perform research is to carry out a critical intent, whether in posing questions about the perception of a phenomenon, explaining a phenomenon through a rich and analytical description of its qualities, or experimenting with a phenomenon in a hands-on intervention engaging its limits and possibilities. The performance of research leaves behind trail markers, signs of intellectual passage, often in artistic forms replete with elements that express their meanings only in relation to all the other constituted elements of the depiction, "in a dense, continuous field" (Mitchell, 1986, p. 67). Works of visual art and poetry have long been trail markers of my understandings along the courses of study I continue to travel.

Philosopher David Novitz has suggested that individual and/or social identities are like works of art, containing "an imaginatively produced narrative core" and "constructed with a possible audience in mind" (2001, p. 158). If a curriculum enterprise, as an autobiographical extension of identity, is likewise wrought as an imaginatively produced narrative endeavor, it is possible to discover analogies and equivalencies between the lyric poem as an imaginatively produced text, and the art object as an imaginatively produced text. I believe the imagery evoked by such texts may be exploited as a means of interpreting the narrative significance of rendering courses of study in curriculum-making.

Autobiography's origin as narrative mirrors curriculum-making as it "arises from a dialogue with the self and about the self in relation to others and a particular cultural landscape" (Dickerson, 1989, p. 4). Literary critic Mary Jane Dickerson elaborates on the transactional nature of "the collaborative autobiographical act" (p. 6). Dickerson explains autobiography as "a dialogic system of speaking, writing, and reading in which the…writer addresses the self, others, texts, signs, and what goes on in the…culture" (p. 5). Dickerson also describes an "element of performance" that "pervades texts as writers voice themselves into being by speaking and behaving from varied perspectives" (p. 6). More recently, the practice of arts-based research has been defined primarily in terms of performance:

> Performance as interpretation and interpretation as performance—this postmodern stance opens up the possibility of my…writing, for example, as an interpretive act, which interprets meanings of others' performances while performing on the page. (Mullen, 2003, p. 173)

What follows now is a performance of an alternative curriculum practice, a performance on the page, telling of a living inquiry that emphasizes "contradictions, multiple digressions, complexities, and surprises" (Gude, 2004, n.p.).

Who Am I To You? Our Lives As Curriculum Practice

> *Greetings—*
> *season of my childhood*

Using only "taken-for-granted styles of writing" (Bagley & Cancienne, 2001, p. 221), it is difficult to represent the process of curriculum-making I will be theorizing in this paper. *Making* curriculum that is lived is difficult enough to understand: What do we

make of a curriculum that is not subject to assembly—that is generated and encountered along the way? To then *represent* a curriculum that is lived, that is extrapolated from life as it was lived, as it is at present, as it is renewed, to represent a curriculum that addresses objectives that are not entirely certain at first, that remain subject to interpretation, and that are often figured out only after they have been attained, to do such a thing requires a form of representation that is able to "communicate emotion and mood as well as facts" (Becker et al., 1989, p. 95).

This hybrid communication of emotion, mood, and fact that serves the theoretical premises of this article implies that this is a curriculum documentation recorded not to be replicated, but to leave indications that my 3rd and 4th grade students and I have passed through this vicinity, re-searching ideas we hold to be significant. Our paths are not clear cut: they often come together; they usually meander; they often undercut one another; but they each merge in and out of the season of my childhood, each path parabolically aligned to a poem I wrote long ago called *Fall Rising*. In this writing, *Fall Rising* serves as an allegorical undercurrent representing larger abstract concepts throughout the act of research. In this writing, research is conceived as a form of artmaking that extends my epistemic origins in the art studio, a form of re-searching that renews the inaugurations of previous seasons of knowing. In this reconceptualization of curriculum, life praxes yield curricular directions, courses of study rhizomatically extending our ways of knowing the world as we enlarge our fields of play[1].

Art educator Elliot Eisner argues that success in "deepening meaning, expanding awareness, and enlarging understanding" in qualitative methodological endeavors will

[1] This is an allusion to the title of the influential book by sociologist Laurel Richardson (1997), *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life*.

likely necessitate breaking away from traditional academic forms for the representation and documentation of ideas (1997, pp. 5, 6). In describing a curriculum-making experience through the lens of arts-based educational research, I incorporate the use of poetic and autobiographical texts as an "opportunity to experiment and pioneer intertextual forms of (re)presentation within the academy" (Bagley & Cancienne, 2001, p. 231). Curriculum-making and autobiography are covalent practices—our learning encounters and life trajectories together constitute self-awareness and social being. Our curriculum pathways—in and out of school, in and out of sight/site/cite—parallel the significant texts of meaning that shape our lives (Rolling, 2006).

The earliest manifestations of my ways of knowing the world began in a modest two-story brick home at the address of 1260 Lincoln Place in Brooklyn, New York. My father was a professional artist and kept one room as his art studio. My course of study began as I first taught myself to draw in this art studio, referencing superhero stories from my father's collections of Marvel and DC comic books, the odd and alienated characters created by illustrator Charles Addams, original printings of Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* cartoon anthologies, and the science fiction of television shows like *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Incredible Hulk*; I learned to generate self-initiated narratives of possibility using my father's art supplies as needed. A curriculum was thus inaugurated in a pedagogical site that art educator Brent Wilson (2005) describes as "the vast 'territory' containing many informal spaces outside of and beyond classrooms where kids…both construct their own visual cultural texts and consume the visual cultural texts made by others (p. 18).

In the art education teacher certification program I graduated from at Teachers College, Columbia University, our coursework in the requirement typically known as "Methods and Materials" is called by another name, considered through another lens. In our case, "*Processes and Structures*" was the prevailing nomenclature for the study of the ways and means by which to implement and carry out a curriculum-making endeavor. Through this simple re-naming of "Methods and Materials" to "Processes and Structures," there was instituted in me as a teacher-in-training an impetus to reconceptualize those ways and means, no longer as the construction process of young minds and intellects, but as the demolition equipment of conventions that limit and constrain educational possibilities.

The writings of Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor are helpful when considering the interpretive aftermath of a curriculum-making experience I seek to sketch:

> Interpretation, in the sense relevant to hermeneutics, is an attempt to make clear, to make sense of an object of study. This object must, therefore, be a text, or a text-analogue, which in some way is confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory—in one way or another, unclear. The interpretation aims to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense. (Taylor, 1976, p. 153)

I take this to mean that curriculum pathways—in all their transactions, altered trajectories, missed destinations, and unexpected cargo deliveries—are probably best interpreted and made sense of after the fact. Since interpretable events are the stuff that constitute the aggregate site of identity, these life events are also arguably *most plausibly* assessed after the dust has settled. Lives are unpredictable endeavors; so are curriculums. After all, documented plans do not determine our lives; rather, it is what we see, hear, sense, and emotionally experience that becomes us (Rolling, 2004, p. 73).

In parabolically aligning the poem *Fall Rising* throughout this writing, a text that communicates significant emotions that inhere within my life story, I intend for these parallel texts, the poem and the prose, personal education and public education, to shift meaning between each other, generating unexpected nuances and intertextual understandings. Sociologist Laurel Richardson has much to say about how lyric representation "mimics the complexity and openness of…shifting subjectivities—[the human process] by which we come to know, and not know, ourselves, and know ourselves, again, differently" (1997, p. 181):

> Like the lived experiences they represent, poems are emotionally charged and morally charged. Lyric poems concretize emotions, feelings, and moods—the most private kinds of feelings—in order to re-create experience itself to another person. A lyric poem "shows" another person how it is to feel something. Even if the mind resists, the body responds to poetry. It is *felt*. (Richardson, 1997, p. 180, emphasis in original)

The body also responds to visual art. *1260 Lincoln Place*, a mixed-media work of art representing my home address growing up, was introduced in order to initiate the curriculum project along with photographs from the family albums of my friend Pam Lawton and reproductions of her art work.

This is an experiment; what does it *feel* like to participate in a living curriculum? Foshay's pronominal "who" refers to each projected student; he or she is in the process of inventing an identity. Who are you in the process of becoming? But it also refers to the teacher, also in the process of inventing a professional identity. The teacher says to the student, "Who am I to you?"

Let us see what life[2] yields.

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[2] I first connected the idea of living inquiry and curriculum-making after reading an article co-authored by Stephanie Springgay, a colleague on the art education faculty of The Pennsylvania State University (Springgay, Irwin & Kind, 2005).

What Am I Seeing and Where Does It Fit? Experience Becomes the Curriculum

Rivers
cut loose from the sky
layer misshapen rooftops
in storm and shadow
arcing rhythms and inconsistencies
across my window,
in a single shape-shifting backdrop.
Through a crosshatch of silvery trails
down the outer glass pane
each retraced by my fingernail
in awkward etchings
as they jostle and usurp new lanes,
I watch doorways
across Lincoln Place
filled with faces overtaken
by the weight of the afternoon air.
Like scarce trees bullied in the downpour
stripped at last of the most stubborn leaves,
we share arrested purpose
under theatrical skies
that pelt the tin and grime
above my bedroom ceiling.
My city, my body, my anonymity
erode into daydream

Effective curriculum-making draws upon the same tactile sensations and emotional stimuli that eventually congeal into our more salient memories—our body parts. In the preceding excerpt of poetry, the sensations of the overcast city upon my body, my immense loneliness, and the power of my all-seeing anonymity from my peers within the frame of my bedroom window—all conspire to write *Fall Rising*, a reverie of intensely personal content for learning. In its conveyance of human emotion, mood, and factual life experience, and in every other way I can imagine, the poem tells who I am. In its literary underpinnings, the poem itself is a form of arts-based research into the phenomenon of personal identity.

The "Who I Am" project was one of my final contributions to the lives of the children I worked with daily as a lead K-4 visual arts teacher for this new elementary school that was originally conceived to espouse a fully integrated curricular format. An IPW was intended to involve small groups of students from different classes and grade levels in a focused and extended collaborative learning exercise that would allow each student to deepen their understanding of a particular topic, theme, or concept already encountered in the curriculum, and in which they have indicated an abiding interest. These developing understandings were then exhibited and/or performed in a culminating school-wide showcase to which all families were invited.

At the end of the school year I proposed the "Who I Am" storytelling project, wherein personal family artifacts, heirlooms and family stories were to serve as the inspiration for art making, historical research, and the development and performance of self-image and family identity. A kindergarten teacher named Mr. Johns assisted me. The ten students who chose to participate in the "Who I Am" project were required to bring home a letter introducing the idea of the importance of children relating family stories, and the concept of transforming meaningful personal objects or family heirlooms into a work of art as an exploration of personal identity.

Foshay's interrogative pronoun "what" refers to the stories that constitute our identities: What am I seeing and where does it fit? What story am I piecing together? What story am I taking apart? All knowledge is captured for a time in the form of stories, shape-shifting stories that are the shorthand notations and one-minute charcoal sketches of the diversity of the human experience. Educational theorist Kieran Egan (1989) examines the communicative possibilities of abstract stories in schooling; in particular, he

looks at those stories that come together as collected from varying and often quite disconnected constituent meanings. Sometimes these stories hold together, sometimes they fall apart, but they each serve as an aggregate of overall sense, no matter how ephemeral that sense may be. In the following citation, Egan challenges educators to more carefully consider the imaginative conveyance of meaningful story that is evident in all assemblies of knowledge:

> [Children] may lack a logical conception of causality, but they clearly have available the sense of causality that holds stories together and moves them along: the conceptual tools that can make sense of *Cinderella* and *Lord of the Rings* can be used to make sense of the Athenians' struggle for freedom against the tyrannous Persian Empire, or the monks struggle to preserve civilized learning against the ravages of the Vikings. Nor need such understanding…be trivial. Young children have the conceptual tools to learn the most profound things about our past; as a struggle for freedom against arbitrary violence, for security against fear, for knowledge against ignorance, and so on. *They do not learn those concepts; they already have them when they arrive at school. They use those concepts to learn about the world and experience*. (Egan, 1989, pp. 13, 14, emphasis in original)

We are aided in our curriculum-making inquiries by considering a learning object, that is, an object chosen for its utility as an abstract keystone in the narrative structure undergoing (dis)assembly. A learning object is an object of focus that initiates inquiry, beginning a learning encounter, perhaps even inaugurating the (re)visitation of a fresh season of learning. In the poem *Fall Rising*, my learning object was the sudden rainstorm viewed from a window of 1260 Lincoln Place.

Why Is This Story Significant? Curriculum Connections Through Juxtaposition

> *Airborne ribbons of rainwater along the urban canyon*
> *whip from Troy down the block to Schenectady,*
> *sailing over low brick homes on my side of Lincoln Place,*

assailing the windows of apartment buildings twice as high across the street,
shooting the chain links of the tall schoolyard fence,
under the white parapets of P.S. 167
silhouetted again by a darkening neighborhood
shading this time from overhead
not in faces from beneath

What is the connection? Look first for the juxtaposition. Significance—that which is worthy of continued attention—is created in tension between juxtapositions. Significance, once perceived, carries on as an enduring connection. At the outset of writing this section, I did not see the significance or connection between the continuing story of my life in the immediately preceding excerpt of *Fall Rising*, and the curriculum-making principle I had hoped to describe in this section. However, life consistently brings things into juxtaposition that do not appear to go together. And yet, there they are, in proximity. Attention to their juxtaposed proximity creates new tensions within the liminality of a shared and simultaneous perception.

The most effective curriculum-making, as it draws upon life as curriculum, also discovers enduring connections in such juxtapositions. In the juxtaposition of one object to another object, in the juxtaposition of an object to an idea, or an idea to an idea, in the juxtaposition of an object to subjective identity, the tensions of a simultaneous and yet divergent perception yields curriculum content. For instance, if I place a loaf of bread next to an empty white plate, what significance can I wrest from the juxtaposition? If I place that same loaf of bread in a bowl of blood, the significance I take away from the juxtaposition will change. The symbols I might use to represent that meaning will also change. How about if I place that loaf of bread on an altar in the church I was raised in?

Once again, the significance changes, the symbols transform. The possibilities of meaning-making connections are endless.

What is the connection? Look first for the juxtaposition. To inaugurate the "Who I Am" project, I gathered the ten participating students into an empty classroom. We sat down on a rug in a storytelling circle with a few learning objects in hand. I introduced *1260 Lincoln Place*, a mixed-media representation of my experience of the home I grew up in. It incorporates a self-portrait, along with my younger brother Christopher, both of us visible in my bedroom window. Each brick on the face of the exterior wall is handcrafted and placed askew; the figures of the two boys are molded out of soil and clay. The careful modeling of their facial features is done with layer upon layer of oil pastels. The shirts worn by the two figures are cut from the rags of shirts the boys actually wore as children. The working Venetian blinds were taken from my bedroom window. The print of the youngster playing baseball was an heirloom passed down to the two brothers; it was once hung on their father's bedroom wall when he himself was a boy and was valuable for no other reason. Too heavy to be passed around the storytelling circle, the children were invited to touch the bricks and faces in the art work, and raise and lower the blinds. This object was juxtaposed with some very old photographs that I passed around. The curriculum would come to life in that connection.

The photographs belonged to the family albums of my friend Pam. I first met Dr. Pamela Harris Lawton when we were students of art education in the same doctoral cohort at Teachers College, Columbia University. She is a member of the faculty and coordinates the Art Education Program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Like me, Pam is also a studio artist and arts-based researcher. Pam describes her effort to

> [condense] family stories, records and photographs into visual/verbal art pieces, making them easy to "read" and more widely accessible. I wanted to create visual documents that could be circulated, used to teach family history to the young, and yet be so aesthetically pleasing that instead of being filed safely away in a trunk, drawer or closet, be displayed as works of art in the homes of family members where inquisitive young minds and eyes could seek them out and ask questions. (Pam Lawton, personal communication, February 12, 2006)

As I was conceiving the "Who I Am" project, I recalled viewing one such work of art exhibited by Pam several years previous at Teachers College, based on her rescue of a family heirloom—a compact folding portable desk invented in the early 1940s by her ancestor, an accomplished architectural modelmaker and dollhouse designer named James W. Butcher. The original photographs and copies of newspaper articles that Pam was kind enough to send to me included photos of the heirloom in disrepair upon retrieval from some attic, basement, or closet—and then seen again after the loving act of family research, restoration, and storytelling achieved by Pam in transforming the once-forgotten heirloom into a work of art. Regarding the portable desk and her reclamation of the legacy of her "Papa Will," as Mr. Butcher was affectionately called amongst family members, Pam writes

> Papa Will used wallpaper to decorate the sides of his desks. I peeled off the wallpaper and in place of it collaged prints and photocopies of photos and documents telling the story of Papa Will's life on the outside panels of the desk. And then because he was so involved in making things by hand, I had the idea of sculpting in clay a replica of his hands in the act of sketching ideas for future woodworking projects—in effect putting him into the piece. (Pam Lawton, personal communication, February 12, 2006)

After viewing both my work and Pam's work juxtaposed and handling all of the learning objects with care, the children in the storytelling circles were asked to draw from their own lives to make connections. What heirloom from their home would they each

like to ask permission from their parents to bring to class and transform into a work of art? The children considered the possibilities with enthusiasm! Each child was given a sketchbook and asked to mark out some preliminary ideas for their projects as they came to mind.

Nyasa, one of my third grade students, saw the possibilities and reconsidered the juxtapositions—her great grandmother's childhood long ago on the Caribbean island of Barbados, as compared to her own childhood today in the United States. The opportunity to make art in her elementary school classroom was further juxtaposed with a simple and precious family heirloom—a jar of sand carried from the beaches of Barbados when her great grandmother immigrated to these shores. In these juxtapositions, Nyasa found a connection that made sense to her, a story worth telling, a story of the passage of time and the passing down of meaning from one generation to the next.

> My great grandmother came to this country with her two children and a jar of sand with her from the beach. She brought the sand with her as a reminder of Barbados. The sand is a piece of her country [and] it also represents if we can't be in Barbados, it will be with us…I began with the sand and thought about what I was going to do. I got the idea of making a timeline to show how the sand got passed down the family tree…I got the idea of using clay people to symbolize my family, giving the sand to one another. I put my great grandmother and my grandmother in the first box, my grandmother and mother in the second box and my mother and me in the third box…I got the idea of making it three-dimensional because I thought it would be weird if it was on paper. I also got the idea of how I want to tell the story. (Nyasa, personal communication, Spring 2005)

This was Nyasa's story, her own curriculum creation. Her homeroom class had been studying timelines and family trees during the recent school year; I had not been studying these things and any suggestions I might have offered as drawn from my current experience would have led Nyasa in other directions. Fortunately, I had purposed to let

the students initiate their own directions, make their own meanings, and to be on hand primarily to facilitate their constructions.

To neglect the implication of purpose in Foshay's interrogative adverb "why" is to flirt with meaninglessness. Why do I choose to retell this story? Why is it significant? Why does it resonate with my experience? Look for a connection in the odd and varied juxtapositions that constitute a life. Those connections are the inventions curriculum is made of.

How Shall I Manage a New Telling? Negotiating Curriculum Possibilities

Taken in the arms of Melancholy
I know that I am loved;
remembrances of safe isolation
of sitting still by my bedroom window
observing the other world moving out there
absolutely removed from my window chair

In the preceding portion of *Fall Rising* it seems at first that I am without agency, unwilling or unable to participate in the life of the neighborhood, entirely subject to emotions that overwhelm me. But this would be a misinterpretation, for throughout this section and the entirety of the poem, I am the observer, an active perceiver and a bricoleur of sense. Agency is conceived here not as the "freedom to do whatever the subject wills but rather freedom to constitute oneself in an unexpected manner—to decode and recode one's identity" (Stinson, 2004, p. 57) in the midst of curriculum negotiations. Sometimes meaning is not fully recoded until long after the initial experience, but such are the hazards of negotiating the living curriculum.

Performing my role as a teacher in public education changed as my curriculum-making identity morphed from teaching as documentation and proof, to teaching as storytelling. When I was recruited to teach and design curriculum at The School at Columbia University in 2003, I was consumed with the necessity to prove to myself and to others that I still belonged in a classroom in front of children, assiduously documenting everything I did with the students out of my own sense of inadequacy. I had been working with adults as Director of Academic Administration in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University from 1999–2003 and teaching graduate students as an adjunct professor at New York University during the completion of my doctoral work; those four years seemed far too long removed from my work with children at Hunter College Elementary School from 1993–1999 in various teaching and administrative capacities.

But after several initial curricular mishaps where things did not go as planned, mishaps that almost led me to quit my position out of a painful concern that my "rustiness" was a detriment to the students, I began to garner some very positive feedback from students, parents, and peer educators. As I became less aware of myself, I became more aware of the stories of my students—and the various curricular paths they were already following in the short lifetimes before entering the sites of "transactional pedagogy" we would share—I became convinced that what the kids had to say and share about their understandings was much more important than my being able to prove they had understood me.

I also became acutely aware of my responsibility to find better ways to tell of this curricular approach, of drawing upon lives as content in the classroom, intersecting lives,

equally valued lives. In these negotiated tellings, certain theoretical ideas are generated by the child who, as a partner in the negotiation of *currere*, "reconceptualize[s] his or her autobiography, recognize[s] connections with other people, recover[s] and reconstitute[s] the past, imagine[s] and create[s] possibilities for the future, and come[s] to a greater personal and communal awareness" (Slattery, 1995, p. 77). Consequently, I asked my students to do quite a bit of writing in the art studio.

During the "Who I Am" project, Shiva, one of my 4th grade students, was allowed to bend the rules a bit and literally chose his passport as the heirloom around which to build a work of art. Although the object itself had not been passed down from generation to generation, the *principle* of owning a personal passport was in fact a most authentic and powerful inheritance. Shiva explains:

> This passport is important because it shows my personal information and allows me to travel. With my passport I can go to different states and countries. With my passport I can also see new things, visit new places and meet new people. In these places I can find out how they live, why they like the way the live and what is important to them. When I see new things and monuments I ask myself questions such as why it was made, who made it and how old it is. I got my passport when I was 6 months old and it will expire in 2008. My first trip was a trip to India. I visit India every year to see my family. I have a large family. I wouldn't know many of them without my passport. Without this passport I would not have realized how lucky I am because some people do not have lucky lives. Some people don't have good schools, some children are working and there are all these other problems like world poverty and dirty hospitals. I consider myself lucky. (Shiva, personal communication, Spring 2005)

Tal, one of my 3rd grade students, was in the unique position of being a student in my regular day classroom twice a week, and a student signed up both to take my afterschool classes, and the extra week-long "Who I Am" IPW offering at the end of the semester. In the following previously published correspondence with Tal's mother Blair, who happens to be a research psychiatrist at a New York hospital, she introduces her son:

> I have a wonderful son named Tal (age 9) who has many talents. However, fine motor control and visual perception were not two of them. As a child, he never drew—ever. It was unclear whether this was due to lack of interest, lack of skill, or some combination of the two. His passion was baseball, and you didn't need to draw to play shortstop. As a result, when he told me one day that his only complaint with his new school was that he did not have enough art time I was startled. Even more startling was when he signed up for "Master Portrait Drawing" as an afterschool class. He chose this class even though it required attendance twice a week for 2 hour sessions each, and it prevented him from playing afterschool basketball with his best friend. I kept my mouth shut as he filled out the afterschool form, but I wondered if he would even last one week. In fact, he lasted all semester, he chose an extra week of art at the end of the school year, and he lamented the fact that his teacher was moving away and would not be at school the following year. For the first time in his life, Tal liked drawing and looked forward to art class. (Rolling, 2006, pp. 224, 225)

Why would a self-described sports fanatic who brought his baseball glove to school each day and expressed little to no interest in art before the 3rd grade take this curricular path, so seemingly at odds with his previous autobiographical tellings? Tal's mother followed her son's development closely that semester and noticed several things that were out of the ordinary.

> The first thing I noticed as Tal worked week after week on his family portraits was that he began to notice visual details in the external world. Historically, this was a child who struggled to discern E from F or to find something in the refrigerator right in front of him…The second thing I noticed was his increasing ability to see both the forest and the trees. Historically, Tal had a tendency toward tunnel-vision: when he noticed a detail, he saw nothing else. He could get caught on one word in a sentence and miss the overall meaning. However, in art class, Tal was learning how to draw his brother's face, which required that he draw his brother's two eyes, nose, mouth and teeth all in the right proportion to each other. Then, he drew his mother's eyes in his mother's face, his father's ears on his father's head, etc. To make his family portraits look like his family, Tal had to move back and forth between the forest (i.e., the overall effect) and the trees (i.e., the specific facial features). I began to notice his increasing ability to do this not only with his drawing but with his thinking as well. Whether drawing taught him to do this or whether he was ready to do this and drawing was a way to practice combining the part with the whole, I don't know. However, the growth in his conceptual flexibility was quite dramatic. (Rolling, 2006, pp. 225, 226)

Tal's heirloom for the "Who I Am" project was a book from which his name was taken, from the title of the book *TAL, His Marvelous Adventures with Noom-Zor-Noom* (1929), by author Paul Fenimore Cooper, the great-grandson of the renowned early American novelist James Fenimore Cooper. Tal did not want to permanently affix this book into a work of art so he instead chose to make a small bookshelf made out of some thick corrugated cardboard we had tucked away in one of the art studio storage closets. Tal writes about his name, his family and his "being here" in the following in-class writing:

> When my mom was a kid her third grade teacher read her the book "Tal," she thought it was such a great and mysterious book. The only other person my mom knew who read the book outside of her class was her sister Lisa who had the same teacher when she was in third grade. Years later my mom met my dad. He also knew the book "Tal" because his uncle [James Fenimore Cooper] wrote the book. One of the earliest presents from my dad to my mom was the book "Tal"! My dad went to an out-of-print book shop, and found the book "Tal" and he gave it to my mom. They decided upon Tal as my name because they both loved the book. But in the book the boy named Tal actually had blond hair and blue eyes. I have dark hair and brown eyes. (Tal, personal communication, Spring 2005)

The book was not the only object in Tal's pedagogical site installation; he also included several other exemplars of his identity in this telling. Incorporated into his bookshelf, Tal also included a baseball; a second heirloom, his baseball glove, which first belonged to his father and was passed on to Tal; a clay jaguar, Tal's favorite animal, made specifically for placement within the installation; a rolled paper "chessboard" hand-ruled and hand-inked by Tal, a replication of the soft vinyl chessboards favored by the Chess program he participated in; a copy of the front cover end paper so richly inked by the book's illustrator, Ruth Reeves, which was glued onto the lower shelf of the installation; other poetry and narratives written for the occasion; and a family photograph

of Tal, his little brother and parents, glued to a small picture frame constructed by Tal, and set atop the completed bookshelf.

Have I managed a telling of curriculum and autobiography in unexpected fashion? "How" do Shiva and Tal each manage a new autobiographical telling? Some would argue that Shiva and Tal are merely children, unwilling or unable to participate in the traffic of sophisticated ideas. But this would be a misinterpretation. As these youngsters negotiated their own tellings, they also managed their identities and their life curricula in ways that were entirely unexpected. Such is life.

What Are The Surrounding Stances? Intimacy as a Circumstance of Learning

Circle my mind in this empty square

The single stand-alone line above is anomalous in the development of the poem. It is intended to capture my awareness that even in my detailed observation of all the lives and forces that surround me, that I remain detached. These circumstantial lives and forces do not shape me, although I do desire to be touched, to experience the intimacy, however brief, of fingers against the clay. A consideration of the "circumstances" of learning might be interpreted most readily as a reference to the physical makeup of the learning environment: the room layout, furniture arrangements, and material provisions supporting the learning encounter. But I would argue that this curriculum-making consideration refers just as equally to the surrounding *social* stances that will touch the students as they participate in the risk-taking and transformative activities of learning.

The chrysalis of the developing learner is vulnerable and must at times be sheltered; a cocoon girdles the contours of the emerging body with a necessary and

supportive intimacy. As I write this, I wonder why the conception of intimacy remains absent from the discourse of curriculum development. Facilitating learning involves far more than professionalism; facilitating learning brings about the merger of lives and curriculum pathways, in ways that nurture and feed one another, like the rivulets of rainwater diving in and out of each other on their way down my bedroom window. In other words, intimacy surges upon the crests of acts of collaboration in the classroom.

One of the photographs I took of the week-long "Who I am" project depicts Nyasa in the act of supporting the walls in the base of another student's project while the glue was setting. The student she was helping, also a 3rd grader, was a little less mature than she, a little more impatient. In fact, I was watching their dance throughout the week because, in social situations in school outside of our classroom collaborations, the boy Nyasa was helping often played the role of disrupting the goings-on of whatever group of girls Nyasa was leading. So why engage with him now? There are few things more intimate in educational contexts than taking the risk of introducing to collaborative partners an idea drawn from one's own curriculum paths—an idea the significance of which might be left uninterpreted. In this case, Nyasa suggested to her classmate a core concept for presenting his heirloom, the wedding ring given to his great grandmother by his great grandfather in Haiti—that he might consider putting it on a pedestal built just for the one ring. This idea was considered, embraced, and incorporated.

As an African American male, I am used to keeping my distance in social situations, a sort of socially negotiated detachment based on the learned stigma of racial politics in the United States, so very difficult to unlearn. I still notice every instance whenever others send cues to express their latent or overt fear or discomfort or uneasiness

at my mere presence. I, like many other black males with long strides, have also learned to modify my pace when walking behind white women on the street, or at the very least offering up some audible signal that I, a black male, am trailing them but in no sense pursuing them. And as a black male educator surrounded by women and young girls very likely to have been, at one point or another in their life curricula, subject to subtle and often openly malicious forms of abuse, gender discrimination, or sexual harassment, I have learned to present myself as benignly as possible by keeping my distance.

In the poem that introduced this section, I remain detached; yet in my classroom, I have sought to facilitate the intimacy that collaboration initiates. I give permission for young learners to seek out a classmate at appropriate times during a class who might draw energy from their input, ideas, and interaction. And in my life and professional practice, although it has taken me years to learn, there are circumstances when it has become entirely necessary to attach a little and give a child a gentle hug.

To What Principles and Marginals Do I Ally the Curriculum? Giving Sway

Through the fog of my breath on cold glass
I rub with the palm of my hand
and open a tunnel;
I see the street become a stream
car wheels slashing through its rising flow
currents running the blacktop gutters
sweeping paper, cans, and fallen leaves
down around beneath parked cars
to clog at the corner storm sewers

Governance is a directional consideration, with an etymological origin derived from the concept of steering. To what principle or marginal forces of governance does the curriculum give sway? As *Fall Rising* draws toward its conclusion, my youthful perception takes on a directional focus, becoming a gateway that leads away from the

confines of the empty square; as I enter the tunnel opened by the heel of my palm, as I follow the debris flowing in swells along the gutter, I am mapping lines of trajectory toward meanings that still endure. At the same time, I am turning my attention toward the commitment of that meaning to an educable memory that still gives birth to poems.

Governance considerations regard *all* agencies that effect, aid, and divert studio-based inquiries, and include governance by those social-behavioral and affective forces at work engaging or disengaging the processes of a learner's self-invention. Governance of our curriculum-making exercise in a school espousing a fully integrated curriculum format required a principal allegiance to the tenets of integrated curriculum as drafted by our faculty:

> Integration is a **collaborative process** through which an instructional team designs challenging, consistent, and coherent educational experiences that emphasizes **young peoples' needs and interests.** Experiences focus on the **acquisition and application of appropriate skills** as well as on the **development of an expanding knowledge base.** Essential problems, issues, and questions that form the basis of inquiry **transcend academic disciplines** through their positioning in conceptual contexts that lend themselves to broader and deeper understandings of self, humanity, and the world. Reflecting a kind of **intellectual pluralism** wherein differences in perspective converge rather than clash, the process of integration is meant to promote **learning for understanding** so students and teachers may **discover meaning and significance** in the connections and habits they establish. (Curriculum Committee, The School at Columbia University, internal communication, Spring 2004)

Also holding sway was our principal allegiance to the autobiographical trajectories of the lives of students and teachers in the room. In this particular case, governance considerations only allowed marginal sway to the mediacy of state and national standards upon our curriculum-making enterprise. The School mandated our awareness of those standards in principle, but required us to go beyond them to create our own unique set of in-house integrated standards as collaborative school professionals.

To what other marginals did we ally the curriculum as we made it? The affective, emotional component of the learning exercise is typically marginalized in the conduct of curriculum-making, given little thought, if any. In the case of 4th grade student Dustin, his joy was palpable as he saw his great-grandmother for the very first time. Emotional content is a powerful motivator in the generation of both art and learning. Dustin's personal family artifact was a green beret that first belonged to his great-grandmother, was passed down to his father, and then given to Dustin. According to Dustin, his great-grandmother Adda Bozeman spoke at military academies during the Vietnam War era and was an advocate in favor of the effectiveness of human intelligence over too great a reliance upon satellite surveillance in the practice of espionage. The green beret was apparently a gift to Dr. Bozeman in connection with one of these speeches. This was all that Dustin knew. He had never even seen a photograph of his great-grandmother.

I proceeded to help Dustin do a quick online search for his great-grandmother's name and we found out that she had been a Professor of International Relations at Sarah Lawrence College. Moreover, we discovered that the Sarah Lawrence College Archives had photographs of Dr. Bozeman in her role as an educator. I made an urgent request for digital copies of these photos on behalf of Dustin so that he could incorporate them into his project. Given the tight timeline, it was to our amazement that our request was granted. For Dustin, receiving these photographs of a family member he had never met or seen was like uncovering buried treasure! His parents had never seen these particular photos either, so Dustin was able to forward the photos home, to his father especially, as a gift. Should the bonds of parental and relational love be recognized as a governing influence in the act of curriculum-making? Why not? The love between parent and child

is the precursor of the greatest achievements in early learning. If ideas can be brought "out into the world of objects, where men [and women] can look at it" (Geertz, 1983, p. 99), so can our deepest emotional connections. So can our loves and our fears. In our curriculum-making endeavor in the art studio that week, the emotional content of familial bonds was allowed to have sway on our learning.

Foshay's governance considerations regard *all* agencies that effect, aid, and undergird studio-based inquiries, including those that are affective and emotional. A curriculum is a living document as it engages with the intersecting processes of a learner's self-invention, and a learner's socialization by the powers that hold sway over everyday living. "Under what governance" rethinks the idea of curriculum, not as authorized document, but rather as a means toward processing and integrating the unauthorized life in public schooling.

At What Cost Do Mainstream Educational Discourses Continue to Marginalize the Curriculum-making Practices of the Art Education Classroom?

I open my window just a crack
I lower my nose to the sill and snatch a quick breath
I breathe the residue of brick eroded into the air,
the spice of saturated wood and cheap aluminum frame,
the city's exhausts brought down to earth
in archaeologies awake on my tongue.
The arrival of Autumn begins with cold rain
and the hug of the weather I so enjoy
such that goose bumps arise
and muscles, young again, shiver
and I smile like a child in the chilly hands
of my old best friend returned to me
to visit just one more year.

I close this writing absolutely secure in issuing a challenge to the larger education community to pay closer attention to the resources to be found in the nexus of

contemporary art education pedagogy, curriculum theory, and arts-based research praxis. There might once have been some anxiety in issuing such a challenge, but the proximity of Autumn at the completion of this writing here in September 2006 assuages my fears, as Autumn always has.

Foshay's cost consideration refers not only to the extra expenses of an open-ended curriculum content—funding the changing supply needs, honoraria for guest speakers and presentations, and group visits to alternative sites of learning; it also refers to the human resource costs of recruiting, hiring, and retaining the best personnel for a job demanding extraordinary rigor and flexibility; a commitment to extra compensation for extra workday hours and scheduled grade level team meetings than are typically required in modern schooling; release time and reimbursement opportunities for faculty and staff professional development, training and retraining, and advanced degree pursuit.

But beyond these practical provisions, I believe that considering the question of "at what cost" returns us to the consideration of each participant "who" at the inauguration of all educational considerations. The research presented in this paper has been an attempt to reveal the presence of life as it is lived, as it is felt, and as it is socially re-presented in the conception of curriculum. If all curriculum were to be conceived with the qualities of lived experience and living inquiry in mind, I suspect that what we learn in class today can remain just as relevant and accessible 10, 20, and 30 years in the future.

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