Canadian Curriculum Studies: Ethics, Aesthetics, and Affect

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Over the past several years, JCACS has provided a unique space for the exploration of themes, issues and ideas, which are not always widely discussed in the field of education but remain at the core of our work as theorists, researchers, and educators. Curriculum studies is a discipline that makes room for the complex study of educational experience, its dynamics and dimensions, and JCACS has embraced and enriched this undertaking. During our editorship, from our early issues around thinking about the relationship between international and Canadian curriculum scholars, to considering interdisciplinarity and renewal as impetus for the discipline of curriculum studies, to the importance of affect and particularity of narratives for teaching and learning, the journal has reflected a commitment to grappling with the socio-political and cultural dimensions of curriculum through lived experience, and attending to the dynamics of affect, embodiment, and aesthetics. This

attention to relations between external and internal worlds is, we would argue, one of curriculum studies most significant contributions to the field of education. Moving forward, we hope the field will continue a conversation about curriculum as that which both helps us to locate ourselves–in identity, in place–and also dislodges us from the familiar, from ourselves. For example, the journal's increasing attention to the significance of indigenous thought and a de-colonizing orientation to research calls the field to face the challenge of being in relation with one another, of embracing aboriginal epistemologies, and ultimately, of learning, teaching, and researching anew.

Over the last five years, during our tenure as the editors of JCACS, we have sought to highlight through dialogue and publication the proliferation of scholarship in Canadian curriculum studies around themes that challenge and enrich what is traditionally understood as 'educational.' Specifically, in the process of reviewing and editing numerous manuscripts by Canadian curriculum scholars, we have observed the degree to which the field of curriculum studies in Canada contributes a highly sophisticated framework for thinking about the dimensions of educational experience that are perhaps the least easy to grapple with: the aesthetic and affective. As Sumara, Davis and Laidlaw (2001) have observed, the field of curriculum studies in Canada has always been unique in its willingness "to incorporate new vocabularies into the study of educational experience" and to claim "an innovative and rigorous interdisciplinarity" (p. 158). As editors we recognized the ongoing need to strive for an intellectual rigour—a responsibility to our

readers to provide a historical and theoretical accounting aimed at advancing new conceptualizations and rearticulations to critically engage Canadian curriculum scholarship in cultural and methodological issues on an international level. We suggest that this experimentation and creativity of thought has continued to characterize Canadian curriculum studies over the last decade, and has produced a field of curriculum theory that is willing, if not eager, to address educational experiences that are simultaneously powerful and elusive.

We would argue that an interest in affect and the affective qualities of educational experience has been central to the field of curriculum studies since its reconceptualization (Pinar, 1992; 1994). Drawing on phenomenology, psychoanalysis, and more recently, neuroscience and the field of consciousness studies, Canadian curriculum scholars have been at the forefront of addressing the unspoken, unbidden, and even unconscious dynamics that animate processes of learning and moral life, drawing our attention to the significance of resistance, conflict, and desire (Boler, 1999; Britzman, 1998, 2006; Krasny, 2007; Pitt, 2003; Simon, 1992; Todd, 2003). Over the last ten years, this area of the field has continued to evolve, producing a new generation of curriculum studies scholars who address the work of teaching and learning as both social and emotional, indeed contesting that very distinction as they explore the affective dynamics that undergird both social and political life.

What has recently been described as the 'affective turn' in the social sciences and humanities may, therefore, seem somewhat late to those of us in curriculum studies who have been attending to the

significance of embodiment and its relation to emotional worlds in our thinking and research for some time now. Still, this turn toward the affective has brought new theories to curriculum studies (such as the work of Deleuze and Guattari; see Ling, 2009; Springgay, 2011) and has inspired new curriculum theories by those scholars who were already primed to welcome frameworks for thinking about emotional life as central to educational experience. Emphasizing spheres of experience that fall outside of the dominant paradigm of representation – including sensation and bodily experience – the 'affective turn' continues to inform Canadian curriculum studies, emphasizing spheres of experience that fall outside of the dominant linguistic paradigm of representation to include sensation and enriching our understanding of experience as felt yet often unknowable and as vivid yet often unrepresentable (Brushwood Rose, 2009). In a context in which 'emotional intelligence' is frequently mobilized as the only acceptable discourse for teachers grappling with the significance of emotions in the profession, classroom and curriculum, curriculum studies scholars are attempting to offer some other ways of thinking and talking about emotions in teaching and learning, and to ask "what if the emotions cannot be known, managed, or made intelligent? How might emotional breakdowns not only be inevitable but also necessary in teaching and learning?" (Pitt and Brushwood Rose, 2007).

The problem of representation posed by affect and the vicissitudes of emotional life has inspired many curriculum theorists to turn to theories of aesthetics and aesthetic experience (see, for example, Di

Paolantonio, 2008; Matthews, 2009; Farley, 2010). Throughout our tenure as editors, we have elected to focus considerable theoretical and practical attention to aesthetics, where we contend, "aesthetics is not solely the dominion of the arts, but rather occurs, as Herbert Read and John Dewey would argue, in the exercise of skill, sensibility and imagination" (Krasny, 2012). Deriving from the Greek aethetes, meaning "to perceive," aesthetics emerges from the visceral and sensate and portends an inevitable responsibility, for if one is aesthetically present to another, one has immediately entered into an ethical relationship—a Bakhtinian addressivity in what Hans Robert Jauss (1989) argued allows us to experience the alien you in otherness. "Aesthetic sensibility…invites interrogation as opposed to mere retention or passive acceptance" (Krasny, 2012) and therefore, much of the scholarship appearing in JCACS throughout our tenure attends to the responsibility of seeing that texts, in the postmodern sense, whether cultural artifacts, institutions, persons, or events function ethically (see, for example, Iseke-Barnes, 2009; Springgay, 2011; Taylor, 2011; Lloyd, 2012). Articulating the interrelationship between aesthetics and ethics has been one of the unifying themes across a highly interdisciplinary scholarship.

As outgoing editors, we see in Christopher DeLuca and Theodore Christou's proposed editorial plan an ethical opportunity to mine further a deeper understanding of the essential role affect and aesthetics plays in disrupting rationalism and structural analysis to address more adequately the complex nature of educational experience and inquiry through their clear orientation toward the philosophical and historical

dimensions of the curriculum field. Our editorial work has led us to an examination of where lie our ethical responsibilities as curriculum scholars as they relate to the field of education and the community at large. Publication is all about voice. Increasing bothered by the inexorable effects of the ascendancy of neoliberalism on K to 12 schooling and teacher education programs where the "bottom-line" threatens to define the work of curriculum and pedagogy, we read curriculum studies scholarship as offering "a diverse chorus of voices past and present [encouraging] us to interrupt the pulse of technical rationality punctuated by the din of provincial and state curricula demanding the 'knowledge and skills to help (students) compete in a global economy' (Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, online)" (Krasny, 2006). The push for economic efficiency has given rise to politico-economic projects of rapid neoliberal globalization through information technology resulting in a curricular landscape at both the K to 12 and post-secondary levels increasingly marked by educational programs that are a function of uncontrolled market forces. In mining the aporetic nature of education, we would encourage Canadian curriculum scholars to undertake a hermeneutic inquiry— thorough and critical deconstruction of the aims and consequences of projects (in some cases our own) that promote the global aspirations behind Knowledge Mobilization with respect to what knowledge is being mobilized, to whom, and for what purpose. The charge before us is not an easy one but we remain convinced that the humanities and the place of curriculum studies matter more than ever in a global economic climate

"fixed on regulating human conduct in the service of profitable outcomes" (Krasny, 2006).

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