TOWARDS A PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY OF CURRICULUM, APPROACHING *CURRERE* AND NARRATIVE INQUIRY WITHIN AN AOKIAN PARADIGM OF RECIPROCITY

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

2018

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY
SCHULICH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
NORTH BAY, ONTARIO

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
MRP/THESIS/DISSERTATION CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

Certificate of Examination

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entitled

Towards a Personal Philosophy of Curriculum, Approaching Currere and Narrative Inquiry within an Ackian Paradigm of Reciprocity

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate of Philosophy in Education

March 20, 2018
Date

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Abstract

In this narrative inquiry self-study, I inquire into the importance of developing a personal epistemology based in my own life experience. By engaging in personal critique and self-reflection, I develop my professional practice by rooting my pedagogy within a personal philosophy. My research is an expression of the educational value of building a personal and sustainable philosophy of curriculum based on tacit wisdom gleaned from my professional practice, academic study, and life experience. To move beyond a standardized approach to teaching in mainstream public schools, I apply the methodologies of *currere* and *narrative inquiry* within an Aokian paradigm of reciprocity to integrate life lessons into my professional practice. I consider two modes of knowing—categorical and narrative, within a constructivist approach while drawing from the disciplines of biology, philosophy, pragmatism, psychology, phenomenology, and curriculum theory. By looking back on my life story, inward to my thoughts and feelings, and forward to an imaged future, I connect with my personal experience in an immediate way in the present. I do so to ethically address tensions that resonate between who I am as a person and how I imagine I am expected to be as a teacher.

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Prologue

Since time immemorial life has existed as a story. In years gone by, as a young biology student, I could hardly contain my fascination when learning about DNA—the genetic code. I followed its branches throughout life and I traced its histories through time, through the survival of common ancestors from progenitors and conditions on early earth that existed billions of years ago. Learning, for me, involves becoming familiar with the stories that life tells. As Matt Ridley (1999/2006) notes:

> The idea of the genome as a book is not, strictly speaking, even a metaphor. It is literally true. A book is a piece of digital information, written in linear, one-dimensional and one-directional form defined by a code that transliterates a small alphabet of signs into a large lexicon of meaning through the order of their groupings. So is a genome. (pp. 7–8)

Stories are in our DNA, and finding meaning in them recurs through our cultural experience. It is my view that the human species has the privilege of conceiving and passing along information, living memory, culturally, in story form. Through stories, we pass memories on and the lessons contained within them to our surviving progenies and to one another through daily conversation. Life and memory provide stories of experience that can help guide our species into the future by remembering and reconsidering the lessons of the past. Education is sustained for me in this way. From the beginning**,** the lessons held in stories were taught by a harsh teacher—Nature—and were in terms of survival. As Darwin put it, rather poetically,

> From the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of higher animals, directly follows . . . whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so

> simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved. (1859, pp. 489–490)

Competition for resources drove survival**;** so too**,** did cooperation in the form of symbiotic relationships. Now, in our present moment, it seems to me the question human beings must ask is: How does our species move towards life itself without destroying the resources that provide us with that life? I believe that the story of life going forward in the 21st century will depend on such a question. The educator and scientist Carl Sagan (1977) once said,

> today we do not have ten million years to wait for the next [genetic evolutionary] advance. We live in a time when our world is changing at an unprecedented rate. While the changes are largely of our own making, they cannot be ignored. We must adjust and adapt and control, or we perish.
>
> Only an extragenetic learning system can possibly cope with the swiftly changing circumstances that our species faces. Thus the recent rapid evolution of human intelligence is not only the cause of but also the only conceivable solution to the many serious problems that beset us. (p. 4)

At this moment in human history, I look to the creative quality of human intelligence for guidance. Like Dewey (1916, 1934, 1938), I see education and intelligence as inescapably connected to life, community, and also to the aesthetic quality of our psychic experience. For me, our ability to make meaning from life experiences means that we are capable of leading our actions by remembering and reconstructing meaning from our life story. I believe the most critical questions considered by educators in the 21st century will be concerned with the ethics of personal and professional practice as they relate to the intellectual experience and lifeworld that will be passed on to the generations that follow us in time.

Questions that are concerned with ethics and aesthetics have led me to the field of philosophy. And thus I entered into this Doctor of Philosophy degree program because of its focus on sustainable education. I begin by stating that it is first and foremost *my personal philosophy* that must be addressed in order to go about educating the young because I know that my personal philosophy provides the building blocks for my epistemological and ontological stance that guides my personal actions and professional practice. If I am concerned with the ethical consequences of each**,** I believe I must delve into my personal philosophy of education with an eye to educational sustainability so that I can continue to build upon what I have learned so far, which is, in the words of Thomas King (2003) that we teach who we are.

CHAPTER ONE: PHENOMENON OF MY STUDY

In this first chapter, I describe how I was introduced to both Clandinin and Connelly's and Pinar's work as a graduate student studying under Dr. Shields. I became familiar with autobiographical and narrative methods. I also place my study within the context of theoretical discourses that inform educational research by identifying scholars and theoreticians who have contributed to my understanding of curriculum theory and educational sustainability. I identify and organize elements that I believe are central to exploring my research phenomenon—which is developing a personally sustainable philosophy of curriculum. I outline the research questions that guide my inquiry. I also provide a personal and social justification for my thesis by drawing from various theoretical traditions and my own social, intellectual, and academic life. My stance is that a personal philosophy of curriculum is needed to sustain one's intellectual life and political vitality within a life lived teaching in public schools.

Building a Personal Philosophy of Curriculum

> *Curriculum can become one's life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow. In this broad sense, curriculum can be viewed as a person's life experience.*
>
> *Connelly & Clandinin, 1988*

> *…the method [of currere] is the self-conscious conceptualization of the temporal…it is the viewing of what is conceptualized through time. So it is that we hope to explore – the complex relation between the temporal and conceptual. In doing so we might disclose their relation to the Self and its evolution and education.*
>
> *Pinar, 1994*

My introduction to Pinar's and Clandinin and Connelly's research methods occurred many years ago in my preservice years before I stepped into a classroom. While taking my master of education program, one of the most significant events of my early adulthood occurred—a close friend of mine passed away. His passing made it difficult for me to focus on my graduate work. During that time, Dr. Shields introduced me to personal experience methods and showed me how such a life event could become an essential part of my learning. She introduced me to narrative inquiry self-study and now, years later, the teaching position I currently hold is closely related to examining those pivotal moments of years ago. The meaning I made from that life event still guides my life path, my professional course of action, and ultimately my education. Thus, a part of my education has been sustained by taking the time to make meaning out of that seminal life experience. The meaning I came to know was, and still is meaningful—it continues to guide my version of learning, living, and teaching.

This educational situation leads me to my research phenomenon—*building a personally sustainable philosophy of curriculum for 21st century teaching and learning*. For me, this focus involves viewing learning as a process that is not impenetrably bounded, but as something that is held within oneself and crosses time and situation dialogically.

Having lost friends to addiction and suicide, I know the inner world for me is as real as the outer world, and thus I look to scholars who included thoughts, feeling, emotions, and biographical experiences within the reality investigated by their methodologies. Clandinin and Connelly's (1994, 2000) *four directional method of narrative inquiry* and Pinar's (1994, 2011, 2012) method of *currere* both acknowledge these very human aspects of education and, rather than obscuring them, aim to explore them. Clandinin and Connelly (1994, 2000) focus on personal practical knowledge, and Pinar's (1994, 2011, 2012) method of *currere* puts emphasis

on emancipatory intellectual experience as it relates to one's evolving biographic situation. I intend to frame my narrative inquiry self-study using these two approaches while grounding them within an Aokian (2005c) paradigm of reciprocity. I describe my methodology in detail in Chapter Two, the Methodology chapter.

Several narrative scholars (Atkinson, 1995; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, 2000; Crites, 1971; Foster, 1993; Guiney Yallop & Shields, 2016; Pagano, 1991; Randall, 1995/2014; Shields, Novak, Marshall, & Guiney Yallop, 2011) note that stories and words are remarkably important in creating real-world change as we bring our past forward in time in our writing in self-study work. Narrative inquirers engage in this writing in order to reinterpret and reconstruct personal experience to inform a deeper philosophy of life, one that can advise our present and future pedagogical actions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pagano, 1991; Shields et al., 2011). I use self-study, then, because it provides a means of achieving praxis; as we story and restory our own past experience, we can come to understand and name our own theoretical premises for living, which we can then enact in our lives on a daily basis (Shields, 2005). Our theorizing and our actions line up and are made visible in our personal lives and professional practice.

In order to illustrate the intention of my dissertation, I offer the following allegorical poem (Podolski, 2010). It deals with an unconscious-animalistic mode of acting—living life without reflecting. I offer it, in part, as an ode and a warning related to the dysphoria that I believe can accompany an unimagined life.

Sparrow's Flight

To see the light of day in death and night the sparrow's flight is daunting in its play. Through thick and thin an end begins with the footsteps that craft the snow-covered path that precedes the rabbit's way. In earthy growths chirp spine-tingling chat, for misty

nights and sparrow flights precede the neighbour's sleeping cat. From life to clay not a balsam sway nor prey this neighbouring cat, for blue veins meet the windowpane and stain it black. (p. 63)

Reflecting on this poem in the present that I wrote in my Master's Research Paper (2010), I remember aiming to express my feeling that life is precious—and is worthy of scholarly study. There is a need to open up a window to life, to be conscious of it, especially in terms of educational research. I feel that if we do not, we will experience unforeseen consequences. As I have learned, sometimes experiencing death brings about an awakening by confronting us with something immediate and real. Such a situation led me to question what I value in life. Learning from life, for me, means moving away from the objectification or quantification of people and listening to a person's narrative and life philosophy. An individual's perception of life is important, and therefore so is one's personal philosophy (James, 1910/2010).

Being an educator, I am concerned with philosophy and also with curriculum. The distinguished Canadian curriculum theorist Ted Aoki (2005d) made a distinction between the curriculum-as-plan and the curriculum-as-lived. Aoki tells us the curriculum-as-plan originates outside of the classroom and is provided in the form of documents from institutions such as the Ministry of Education. The curriculum-as-lived involves the irreducibly unique qualities individuals bring to a classroom which result in a subjective dwelling place—a lifeworld. I agree with Aoki—educators should be concerned with the quality of pedagogy that exists between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived. I believe it is within such spaces that a personal philosophy of education can come into its own.

The following questions guide my inquiry:

1. Philosophically, as a teacher, how do I sustain a cultural space that supports students, and my Self, as we continue to learn from the place and culture from which our personal epistemology springs?
2. If our biographies don't count, how can we see what is sustainable?
3. Differences in gender, sexual orientation, race, and personal experience continue to exist in spite of a cultural disposition to reduce all to a curriculum of sameness in our still modern school system. Is there a personal, educational, and philosophic approach I can cultivate to help recognize and sustain the verisimilitude of educative experience in schools using storied and biographical data?

In terms of organization, I believe it will be helpful to begin by briefly distinguishing four distinct elements which comprise the phenomenon I intend to investigate. Each element will be touched on in greater detail throughout my dissertation. These elements are: (a) the *concept of sustainable education,* (b) *cultivating a personal perspective using the methodology of narrative inquiry self-study* (c) the *concept of a personal philosophy,* (d) *21st century teaching and learning*—which I have divided further into subsections.

a) The Concept of Sustainable Education

Sustainable education, as I see it, is passed along and evolves through cultural encounters and critical reflection—through stories told, learned, lived, and relived. I view sustainable education in terms of inheritance, variation, reflexive adaptation (intellectual readjustment—not passive conditioning), survival, and renewal. For example, Plato inherited many of Socrates's interests which, from teacher to student, eventually grew into academies and academic subjects—teachers and learners pass along information across time. I consider Pinar's (2011) assertion relevant to this line of reasoning:

> History makes clear that we ourselves are historical, that what we experience is in part a function of time, and that we are both different and similar to those who have preceded us and from those who will follow. The recognition and reconstruction of such difference enables understanding of our—it becomes, then, educational—experience. (p. 13)

Like Dewey (1938), education for me involves community, continuity, and the reconstruction of experience across time. Curriculum requires a conscious move towards life (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1973, 1970/1996). Such an approach is embodied within a personal framework (Shields, 2005). It involves living a curriculum (Aoki, 2005d; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Pinar, 1994, 2011; Slattery, 1995) that is self-aware, responsive, intellectual, interactive, and critically oriented; thus, a curriculum that is cognizant of its partiality and its need to be self-questioning (Giroux, 1988b), compelling, regenerative, and caring (Greene, 1978); it is awake to its contingency and is therefore local, situated, dialogically ongoing, and ontologically grounded in personal life experiences (Pinar, 2011). In my view, a personal curriculum includes a critical consciousness and a critical pedagogy or it becomes impersonal (Freire, 1973, 1970/1996). I see curriculum as Ted Aoki (2005d) did—as unfolding within a dwelling (also see Crites, 1971, who describes our stories as dwelling spaces). Personally, I believe it is through dialogical encounters or *dialectical intercourse* that new curriculum is *conceived* (brought to life) and aids in sustaining an educational course.

Dewey (1938) and Freire (1973, 1970/1996) have epistemological roots within the 19th century philosophy of Hegel. Hegel's (1807/1967) notion of conscious experience in *Phenomenology of Mind* suggests consciousness is a process that unfolds to manifest truth through time. Dewey (1938) emphasizes a philosophical approach where the reorganization of experience moves us towards educational growth. Freire (1973, 1970/1996) thinks of a pedagogy

where critical reflection moves us towards a critical consciousness which, once achieved, allows an individual to act as an agent of social change. Both scholars, I believe, stem from the Hegelian notion that what we do to develop ourselves also develops society as a whole and that this process is enacted or awakened through a transition in consciousness. Sustainable education, I imagine, unfolds through an educator's application of both critical pedagogy and a philosophy of educational growth. Both approaches are founded within a study of conscious experience. As Hegel (1807/1967) proclaimed, a subject is bound to the world of objects around them. The individual, in their subjectivity, is part of a universal experience. To study subjective—or phenomenal—experience, as well as the, perhaps, more "objective" physical world around us, moves us closer to an absolute understanding. In this way, an individual contributes to a larger movement. I do not see this movement as having a predetermined destination—as Hegel did. I see it simply as an unfinished temporal process of evolution that for each member of the human species may unfold for better or worse depending not on acts of reason alone, but also upon chance.

Before turning the discussion again to curriculum, specifically to theorist Ted Aoki's (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d) work in a text compiled by Pinar (2005) about Aoki's life writing, *Curriculum in a New Key*, I feel I would be remiss not to mention at least two foundational thinkers within the phenomenological school of philosophy—from which I believe Aoki's position on curriculum stems. Husserl (1900–1901/2008) in *Logical Investigations* famously focused on intention and how experience is revealed to sense perception within human consciousness. What I believe Husserl was describing was, that by bracketing the natural attitude, a sustained expression of conscious experiences passes into us in the living moment, which makes available the phenomenological perspective. For me, Husserl opens up the study of

expressing the world we sense—a direct approach to philosophy which presents the conscious experience of articulating cognition's first touch—or as Husserl would describe it—experience conceived by an ego *ray* beaming to reveal the appearance of a particular essence or noumenon one encounters. Thus, Husserl focused on inquiry as it relates to human experience and intention. Through phenomenology, I believe an inquirer is able to return to the study of his or her life experience.

Heidegger (1927/1996), a student of Husserl, distinguished his approach from his teacher's by inquiring into the phenomena of Being—noting that we are thrown into the world, into a time and place not of our choosing, and that our conscious experience is inseparable from our situated position. For Heidegger, our sense of Being is not merely to place emphasis on an observational consciousness, but a look into ourselves. Personhood then, for Heidegger, is a unit of self-reflective consciousness bounded by space and time. Therefore, no matter how self-actualized or individuated we become, we are never separate from our situated place within an environment. Consciousness then, in Heidegger's thinking, is a mood or attunement—feeling our way both inward and outward to form a response to the world. This response is what I refer to as a personal philosophy. Finally, I return to Ted Aoki (2005d) who, drawing from the phenomenological paradigm, speaks of attuning our pedagogical response to the lifeworld manifested within a particular school classroom, where educators feel their way through the conditions of their work, living the tension of a curriculum that is situated within a political and cultural framework.

Within this dissertation, I formulate a personal philosophy of curriculum attuned to the specific places in which I have taught in the past, in which I teach now, and from which I learn across time as I look towards the future. In my thinking, a human lifetime is too short to learn

everything there is to know. My position is that personal discoveries are great achievements. I believe it is within personal discoveries that education is sustained. Education is not something fixed or complete—it is temporal/ever-evolving; a living process of endless overcoming and thus discovery (Dewey, 1910, 1938). Hence, education aims to meet the challenges posed by living, by thinking critically about how that shall be done (Aoki, 2005d; Freire, 1973, 1970/1996). As the psychoanalyst Jung (1933), sagaciously remarks, "knowledge rests not upon truth alone, but upon error also" (p. 118). I believe this view is due to, as Pinar (2011) observes: "Social reality is comprised of falsehood as well as factuality, as well as all points in-between" (p. 15).

It seems to me, a personal philosophy of curriculum then could result from sustained inquiry—a reciprocal relation between the knower and the known (with a focus on what is yet to be known), which in praxis is "felt as movement" (Pinar, 1994, p. 149; also see Giroux, 1988a; Palmer, 1993). According to this standpoint, an individual *conceives* a philosophy of curriculum through reconstructing their specific experience across time, not alone, but communally, dialogically encountering life while intellectually dwelling within a particular place and time.

Sustainability, then, is achieved through the more or less steady cultivation of self-knowledge derived from reflecting critically on personal experience and academic knowledge to develop wisdom that is capable of lifting up—not only an individual—but also the community within which they exist. Sustainable education, I believe, aims to express personal qualities that benefit an era and times thereafter by addressing the historically established concerns that are personal but that also exist within the curriculum field, teaching profession, and thus within the lived social-political context of individuals' lives (Pinar, 1994).

b) Building Using the Methodology of Narrative Inquiry Self-Study

For me, the process of building (cultivating) a personal perspective involves living stories, telling stories and reconstructing meaning from personal stories of life experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It involves applying Pinar's (1994, 2011) regressive-progressive-analytic-synthetic method in order to use language to intellectually reconceptualize and emancipate autobiographical data to uncover self-knowledge. Narrative inquiry self-study, then, is used to initiate an aesthetic process of crystallization (Pinar, 1994; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; see Ethics and Validity Section) through which narrative unity (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986) liberates meaning across time and situation. Theoretically and practically, I rely on Vygotsky's (1986/2002) discovery that,

> although sensory-motor schemas connected with practical actions also may become psychological tools, the latter usually have a *semiotic* nature. Psychological tools are internally oriented, transforming the natural human abilities and skills into higher mental functions. (Vygotsky noted such psychological tools as gestures, language and sign systems, mnemonic techniques, and decision-making systems). (p. xxv)

A methodology for 21st century learning, in my view, would reasonably move from an emphasis that focuses entirely on measurement and on confirming what has occurred in the past—what Pinar (2011) has referred to as "repetition compulsion" (p. 33), towards an emphasis on possibility, intellectual action, reconceptualization, and reconstruction, considering *continuity*—focusing on what can be done in the present, by studying the past, in order to reconstruct experiences to generate alternative possibilities for future action (Bruner, 1986, 1990). Such a shift seems to be necessary practice if we intend to move away from the

devastating outcome science predicts if our species continues along its current path (Sagan, 1977).

A procedural method that focuses on measuring cause and effect may predict results, but if the *cause* is an individual with intellectual capabilities, and if an individual can change the *effect* of her or his actions through intellectual direction (Dewey, 1920), then it is the creative potential within the cause—the human being—and her or his intellectual effort that is the phenomenon my investigation is concerned with. I call the phenomenon cultivating a personally sustainable philosophy of education or, for short, a *personal philosophy of curriculum*. The basic framework I intend to use to construct a personal philosophy of curriculum is found within narrative inquiry self-study—a reciprocal approach where Clandinin and Connelly's four directional method of narrative inquiry is in conjunction with (see Aoki**,** 2005a) Pinar's regressive-progressive-analytic-synthetic method termed *currere*.

In order to move towards sustainable education, narrative, as a research methodology provides a concrete advantage. As Polkinghorne (2014) explains, narrative can be experienced as a "SOURCE-PATH-GOAL (SPG) image schema" (p. 165). Narrative, Polkinghorne tells us, is a mental construct abstracted from repeated embodied experiences; it involves moving "one's self from one location (the SOURCE) through a space (the PATH) to a desired location (the GOAL)" (p. 165). In terms of sustainable education, I believe a greater emphasis must be focused on our intellectual ability to find possibilities in the present by reconstructing information from the past. This movement or life force may allow us to travel towards an imagined future—possibly resulting in what I think of as a *self-fulfilling philosophy*. Ultimately, however, I see this process as subjective, emergent, and unpredictable. I agree with Pinar (2015) that "we cannot know what intellectual labour will bring" (p. 29).

I believe the notion of reconstruction is vital to sustainable education. I see it as essential to the process of building a personal philosophy. Pinar (2011) quotes Dewey (1920) to provide a description of what reconstruction implies. It involves:

> the individual not as an exaggeratedly self-sufficient Ego which by some magic creates the world, but as the agent who is responsible through initiative, inventiveness and intellectually directed labour for re-creating the world, transforming it into an instrument and possession of intelligence. (Dewey 1920, p. 51, as cited in Pinar, 2011, p. 89)

I believe learning communities should commit to mastering the intellectual ability to animate Source-Path-Goal action (Polkinghorne, 2014). A metaawareness of and conscious focus on this movement could support educators in reconstructing their personal philosophies in the service of sustaining the health of the planet and consequently the dignity of our species. In my view, it will take a personal philosophy that is value based and capable of guiding and challenging/changing one's behaviour to build a healthier future—a goal of sustainable education, I believe.

c) The Concept of a Personal Philosophy

A *personal philosophy*, for me, involves constructing an epistemology, language, and ethic, built within the framework of one's personal history. It involves using language to reconstruct alternative meanings, which may then open up alternative ways of living within the circumstances of one's life situation. I believe doing should never neglect an awareness of "'being" enfolded in "becoming'" (Aoki, 2005b, p. 361). This perspective means adopting a philosophy that draws from both scholarly literature and life experience in order to glean a pedagogical approach that is relevant to and capable of being actualized within one's lifeworld (Pinar, 2011; Shields, 2005). From my standpoint, this undertaking involves asking the big

questions: What will my life mean for me, and how will the meaning of my life change in relation to my education? A personal philosophy, as I see it, is a living philosophy and is concerned with not only consciousness but also one's life force as it undergoes transformation across time.

I believe one's personal philosophy has to go beyond the theorizing of others alone to be connected to one's tacit knowledge and life story (Shields, 2005). I consider it important to note what has been pointed out by Portelli and Pinto (2014): "Philosophy and education share a common goal: the development of individual and collective capacities, keeping in mind the nature of the good and virtuous life" (p. 25).

d) 21st Century Teaching and Learning

Moving beyond the limitations of a modern truth. Twenty-first century learning, for me, involves moving away from relying entirely on what has been described as the *modern notion of truth* (Aoki, 2005a; Kincheloe, 2003; Palmer, 1993; Slattery, 1995). For the aforementioned scholars, a modern or objective truth is defined as something ahistorical and is identified as a result of the *Cartesian dualism*—a notion that aims to dissociate the relationship between subject and object and thus create a dichotomy between mind and matter. The modern notion of truth, or mindset, according to these scholars, considers knowledge to be valid only if it is predictable, procedural, testable, and quantifiable as is exemplified within Ralph Tyler's (1949/2013) rationale in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction,* which conceptualizes curriculum as something that is achieved by meeting an evaluator's predetermined objectives, expectations, and standards. Thus, in general, within the Tyler Rationale, the evaluator holds the answers, not the learner.

For me, knowledge and curriculum have a temporal and emergent nature that is gleaned qualitatively through self-critique, creative agency, and dialogical encounters (Freire, 1973, 1970/1996; Pinar, 1994, 2011, 2012); through examining personal stories of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 1995, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988); as well as through narrative inquiry self-study work (Shields, 2005).

Interestingly, Sagan (1977) in his book *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence* immediately dismisses a mind–body dualism. Sagan's dismissal is due to his scientific understanding that the brain and its workings—"what we sometimes call 'mind'—are a consequence of its anatomy and physiology, and nothing more" (p. 7). Sagan states that there is no scientific evidence to support a mind–body dualism. My stance is similar, although I think it is essential to state a formative philosophic emphasis within my own thinking. I think of mind as being inseparable from a cultural setting. I consider mind to be a discursive part of a conceptual landscape, communal fabric, and a particular time (Dewey, 1938; Foucault, 1966/1970; Heidegger, 1927/1996). I take a stance that is more philosophically holistic than conventionally scientific. Philosophically, I see the mind as our home.

I believe 21st century learning must move away from the notion of truth as something unrelated to one's intellectual experience and the psychosocial environment one is situated within (Pinar, 1994, 2011, 2012). For me, this new millennium will involve establishing personal truths and personal epistemologies (Palmer, 1993) to engage and participate in the multicultural world that globalization thrusts upon us. As Aoki (2005a) states, in the realm of human experience a stance that includes "both this and that, and more" may, at times, be more educationally relevant than an "either/or" approach" (p. 295). As I intend to clarify in the next section, 21st century learning, in my view, will also root well-being within the health of a

physical and intellectual landscape—it will involve participating in intellectual and environmental initiatives to sustain the landscapes from which we are reconstructed.

Biography, reconstructive dialogue, and emerging knowledge in relation to 21st century learning. If 21st century learning involves seeing the Self as a part of nature, it leads me to a very simple principle—that in terms of biography, one's life and self are intimately connected to and inseparable from the landscape that supports our life force. As Dewey (1956/1990) explained, "The earth is the final source of all man's [sic] food. It is his continual shelter and protection, the raw material of all his activities, and the home to whose humanizing and idealizing all his achievement returns" (p. 19).

An individual cannot escape a climatic and geographical setting. By this perspective, I mean the life force that relates a body to an environment does so unforgivingly. Each breath we take and the food we eat—breathing and digestion—are part of a critical-reconstructive-dialogical-encounter that exists between the environment and the body. This encounter forms a reconstructive relationship that is essential to our vitality and responsible for reenergizing and therefore renewing and maintaining our intellectual position.

The reconstructions of inner and outer forces combine to sustain, reconstruct, and recreate life experience. Food is broken down into nutrients that are metabolized to build the body. Elements within the atmosphere are breathed in, dissolve, and travel through our blood, spreading into a trillion or so cells to revitalize our life-force—an essential reminder that we are vulnerable, frail, organic phenomena unfolding as a part of a particular encounter between inner and outer worlds. In a similar way, I believe we cognitively metabolize intellectual material to sustain our educational experience.

Language itself, I believe, is conceived through dialogical encounters reconstructing landscape and life form into forms of life. I see biography as involving more than a written description of a person's life. *Graphia*—the living description we travel on, for me, emerges or is conceived through a dialogical encounter between the environment—a particular place as it relates to an individual's survival, which often involves an individual's job or social role—a *niche,* which again relates to one's intellectual life as it unfolds temporally and psychosocially within the physical, biological, and cultural features of one's particular existence.

This overview may seem obvious; however, the *graphia*, for me, is a language that runs through all species generationally and genetically; in our species also culturally, body to body, through stories and through our intellectual experience. I believe language is evolutionary and is expressed both genetically as well as extragenetically (Sagan, 1977). Freire's (1970/1996) notions of banking education and problem-posing education have inspired my understanding of language. My views also differ slightly from Freire's. Freire describes a need for problem-posing education, which acts as a means for affirming "men and women as beings in the process of *becoming*—as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (p. 65). Freire goes on to explain, "in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, people know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompletion. In this incompletion and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation" (p. 65). It seems odd to accuse a humanistic approach of being anthropocentric. However, I think a humanistic approach is at risk of being anthropocentric if it does not consider language as a universal historical process evolving throughout all life forms, as I have expressed in the Prologue.

I think Freire (1970/1996), rightfully, was using his statement to highlight a point—people are historical creatures with an extraordinary degree of intentionality. I believe he was pointing out that the emergence of a critical consciousness requires—an "*intervention* in reality" (p. 62). In my view, all creatures are transformed historically through an evolutionary process that inevitably tells a story. I see that the humanistic approach emphasizes the degree to which we can actively participate in directing our own actions within that life story. Conceptually, I see language itself as evolving in a way that transforms individuals and landscapes. It is for this very reason I believe building a personal philosophy is so important and should be critically and metacognitively *conceived*—so one can play a part in the living, telling, retelling, and reliving of one's own life story—so one can live out her or his telling, to become the tale, and potentially transform the landscape she or he is part of (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 1995, 2000; Pinar, 1994).

According to Freire (1970/1996), a critical consciousness emerges through self-reflective practice; otherwise, an alternative educational course is prescribed—a dehumanized experience where one becomes a spectator and her or his biography becomes forged by conditions moving culturally from the outside in. This outside-in momentum, which deposits information into an individual's psyche, is what Freire refers to as "banking education." Freire describes banking theory and practice as "immobilizing and fixating forces, [which] fail to acknowledge men and women as historical beings; [whereas] problem-posing theory and practice take the people's history as their starting point" (p. 65).

Freire (1970/1996) sees banking education as being directed by a group of elites who aim to dominate and control. My own view is to some extent different from Freire's. I do not

consider banking to be ultimately controlled by a dominant population of elites—I believe a more specific phenomenon is responsible for banking education.

It is at this point that I introduce the notion of the *meme* because it is the specific phenomenon I have found seminal to understanding Freire's (1970/1996) notion of banking education in a way that is intellectually coherent with my background in biology. A meme, in its broadest sense, is a unit of cultural inheritance—it is a form of imitation (Blackmore, 1999; Dawkins, 1976/1989). A meme is similar to a gene. Whereas a gene propagates from body to body via sperm and egg, a meme moves from brain to brain through imitation. Dawkins (1976/1989) presents N. K. Humphery's description of memes to help clarify just what a meme is:

> Memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically but technically. When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell. And that isn't just a way of talking—the meme for, say, "belief in life after death" is actually realized physically, millions of times over, as a structure in the nervous systems of individual men the world over. (p. 192)

If "banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates" (Freire, 1970/1996, p. 64), I believe memetic forces are responsible for this inhibition. Memetic forces may be responsible for the destruction of vitalizing life processes and for what Freire refers to as the "oppressor consciousness" (p. 41). Dawkins (1976/1989) tells us,

> For more than three thousand million years, DNA has been the only replicator worth talking about in the world. But it does not necessarily hold these monopoly rights for all time. Whenever conditions arise in which a new kind of replicator *can* make copies of

> itself, the new replicators *will* tend to take over, and start a new kind of evolution of their own. Once this evolution begins, it will in no necessary sense be subservient to the old. (pp. 193–194)

I believe that mind forms a reconstructive relationship with culture in such a way that is not extraordinarily different than a body being reconstructed from a landscape through eating and breathing and copulation. I believe much of Western philosophy has perhaps focused on mind at the expense of body and landscape. As a new replicative force evolves a technology of its own, I believe humanity may be at risk of becoming an obsolete evolutionary vestige.

Twenty-first century teaching and learning as inquiry-based practice. I envision a 21st century learner as more than merely a consumer of information, but as what may be, somewhat clumsily, described as a critical discerner—an individual who thinks carefully about the selections he or she makes by implementing an inquiry-based approach to life. We do not have to exist as consumers—a 20th century modern notion (Aoki, 2005a). We can engage in dialogue and philosophically conceive a particular choice, then nurture it to create a different lifeworld—even if this means starting with our selves and acting locally. I look to Pinar's and Clandinin and Connelly's methodologies, considering them both while tuning in to a *paradigm of reciprocity* (Aoki, 2005c) to develop an inquiry-based approach to 21st century teaching and learning.

Justification for My Study

Personal Justification

> *A Man Without Qualities*
>
> *Our age drips with practical energy anyway. It's stopped caring for ideas, it only wants action. This frightful energy springs solely from the fact that people have nothing to do.*

> *Inwardly, I mean . . . It's so easy to have the energy to act and so difficult to find a meaning for action! There are very few people who understand that nowadays. That's why the men of action look like men playing ninepins, knocking down those nine lumps of wood with the gestures of a Napoleon. It wouldn't even surprise me if they ended up by assaulting one another, frantic at the towering incomprehensibility of the fact that all their actions will not suffice. (Musil 1995 [1979], 87, as cited in Pinar, 2012, p. 15)*

Why is focusing on building a personal philosophy of curriculum justifiable as a topic for a PhD dissertation? Why is a personal-living philosophy of education necessary for 21st century teaching and learning? I have come to understand, through self-observation, that it is easy to feel debased and become dissociated from who I am as a person and who my students are when acting within my teaching role. Ethical and wise decisions, for me, involve more than following a bureaucratic policy or an educational authority. They require my tacit understanding of the life situation within which I teach (Shields, 2005), especially since teaching decisions are concerned with the immediacy and complexity of concrete-existing-living-and-breathing people (relationships) (Palmer, 1993; Pinar, 1994, 2011). Pinar (1994) developed his autobiographic method as a "method which might offer the possibility of authentic educational experience in a thoroughly bureaucratized school establishment" (p. 2). Pinar admits the mainstream curriculum field found his method difficult to appreciate, and some Marxist scholars even considered the "autobiographic" method to be narcissistic.

My reading of R. D. Laing's (1959/1965) *The Divided Self* supports my understanding of the importance of Pinar's method for secondary school teachers such as myself. Laing uses adjectives such as: ontological insecurity, mental or unembodied self, false-self system, and an undialectical approach to describe a condition he calls *schizoid* in which—"The self can relate

itself with immediacy to an object which is an object of its own imagination or memory but not a real person" (p. 86). For the teacher, in my view, this "object" may be bureaucratic policy. In this, the individual

> delegates all transactions between himself [sic] and the other to a system within his being which is not 'him', then the world is experienced as unreal, and all that belongs to this system is felt to be false, futile and meaningless. (p. 80)

In the education system, as I see it, it is the people within the system that begin to believe they "belong" to *the system*, and in doing so thus become vulnerable to a dehumanized intellectually anaesthetized condition. Laing notes,

> In the absence of a spontaneous natural, creative, relationship with the world**,** which is free from anxiety, the 'inner self' thus develops an overall sense of inner impoverishment, which is expressed in complaints of the emptiness, deadness, coldness, dryness, impotence, desolation, worthlessness, of the inner life. (p. 90)

If the reader is familiar with Freire, he or she may draw parallels here. Freire (1970/1996) describes the first characteristic of *antidialogical action* as an act of conquest "which reduces persons to the status of things [and notes that it] is necrophilic" (p. 119). Freire tells us that "someone who cannot acknowledge himself to be as mortal as everyone else still has a long way to go before he [or she] can reach the point of encounter" (p. 71). The point of encounter is a dialogical relationship that requires individuals to have faith in humankind, "faith in the power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human" (p. 71). Maxine Greene's (1978) work also comes to mind. She points out that due to the proliferation of bureaucracies, corporate models, and the language of management, individuals find it hard to

initiate the work of guiding themselves—rather it is the preconceived expectations programmed by organizations or official schedules that lead their actions.

Another work that has been helpful in supporting my understanding of Pinar's method, is C. Jung's (1957) work entitled *The Undiscovered Self.* In it, the eminent psychiatrist describes the challenge of breaking free from a condition he refers to as *organized man* [sic], organized man being an individual who lacks a true understanding of her or his inner self. For example, Jung describes the following:

> Scientific education is based in the main on statistical truths and abstract knowledge and therefore imparts an unrealistic, rational picture of the world, in which the individual, as a merely marginal phenomenon, plays no role. The individual, however, as an irrational datum, is the true and authentic carrier of reality, the *concrete* man [sic] as opposed to the unreal ideal or normal man [organized or statistical man] to whom the scientific statements refer. (pp. 20–21)

Finally, my understanding of *currere* was best uncovered by my reading of Pinar's (1994) essay entitled "Kafka: the Trial." In it, Pinar highlights parallels between Kafka's portrayal of Joseph K, a literary character, and a condition that I have felt personally while working as a mainstream teacher. As an educator, I can vouch for the reality of the condition of which Pinar speaks.

Pinar (1994) familiarizes educational researchers with Joseph K. K's unexamined life which is "stunted psychologically and socially. He [K] is dissociated from his subjectivity, and consequently clings to outer character structure, i.e. social role" (p. 33). Pinar observes that this type of arrest is intellectual and psychosocial. As Shields (2005) states:

> If we accept standard(ized) practice in how we teach, live, dress, behave, etc., I guess we leave the thinking to others (though we may complain about that) and our right to contribute as we believe we can out of our daily lives. Kafka's character K comes to mind here—we may know when we are living as if we are arrested but can't find out why by seeking answers from others—we must look inside ourselves for the answers to that question. (Response to a journal, Dec 1, 2015)

If we do not work from within, we do not develop our own wisdom. In order to do so, I believe developing a personal philosophy of curriculum is required. To sustain a personal philosophy of education, I believe we have to work from within. This position means the phenomenon of investigation exists within the research participant, and the research-participant is transformed through her or his intellectual investigation of the phenomenon. Education is something that one undergoes—the phenomenon is the method (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Ultimately, this perspective means that a personal philosophy of education does not exist if an educator is absentmindedly carrying out her or his teaching role convinced the work he or she is doing is ethical.

Social Justification

Several critical scholars (Giroux, 1994; 1996; Greene 1988; hooks, 2003; Kincheloe, 2003; Sartre, 1943) suggest that there has to be a human consciousness recognizing the moral issues involved when teaching within a particular life situation for moral action to occur. Specifically**,** Maxine Greene (1978) in "Wide-Awakeness and the Moral Life" explains the need for educators to be *wideawake* within their teaching role. Greene (1978) turns to the philosopher Alfred Schutz who talked of wide-awakeness as an achievement, and she quotes Schutz who defined wide-awakeness as "a plane of consciousness of highest tension originating in an attitude

of full attention to life and its requirements" (p. 42; also see Schutz, 1967). In Greene's own words:

> If teachers are not critically conscious, if they are not awake to their own values and commitments (and to the conditions working upon them), if they are not personally engaged with their subject matter and with the world around, I do not see how they can initiate the young into critical questioning or the moral life. (p. 48)

Greene (1978) criticizes the 20th century attitude that focuses on "bland conventionality" and "indifference" (p. 42). She asks educators to break free of habituated accidence to assigned social roles by reflecting on why they do what they do—and what they can do. Greene indicates that doing so "may be necessary, for an individual's moral life" (p. 43). And she explains,

> The opposite of morality, it has often been said, is indifference—a lack of care, an absence of concern. Lacking wide-awakeness, I want to argue, individuals are likely to drift, to act on impulses of expediency. They are unlikely to identify situations as moral ones or to set themselves to assessing their demands. (p. 43)

Stanley Milgram (1974/2009) famously demonstrated the possible consequences of obedience to authority in his book "*Obedience to Authority*." It is clear from thoughtfully demonstrated social experiments that aiming to please an authority can have undesirable consequences. In Milgram's social experiments people—rather "ordinary fellows," were instructed to administer electroshocks to a human "learner," with the electric charges becoming progressively more powerful, causing the learner more and more pain. The purpose of the experiment was to see what lengths people would go to in order to comply with authority. Interestingly, in the foreword to Milgram's book, Philip Zimbardo writes:

> Thus, as school children, in virtually all traditional educational settings, the rules of law that we learned and lived were: Stay in your seat until permission is granted by the teacher to do so after having raised your hand to seek that recognition, and do not challenge the word of the teacher or complain. (p. xii)

As an educator, I would like to share that for me it is all the more haunting that the research subjects "SUBJECT" were referred to as *teachers*—the ones giving the shocks, and *learners*—were the ones who received them. Not to mention the exercise involved an "EXPERIMENTER" supposedly reviewing something as seemingly banal as word pairing. Here is an excerpt from the experiment:

> SUBJECT: I can't stand it. I'm not going to kill that man in there. You hear him hollering
>
> EXPERIMENTER: As I told you before, the shocks may be painful, but—
>
> SUBJECT: But he's hollering. He can't stand it. What's going to happen to him?
>
> EXPERIMENTER (*his voice is patient, matter-of-fact):* The experiment requires that you continue, Teacher.
>
> SUBJECT: Aaah, but unh, I'm not going to get that man sick in there . . . know what I mean?
>
> EXPERIMENTER: Whether the learner likes it or not, we must go on, through all the word pairs. (Milgram, 1974/2009, p. 73)

For me, experiments like Milgram's demonstrate the ethical need to sustain a personal philosophy in the face of authoritarianism, a philosophy that has a value-base that is ontologically committed to Pinar's (1994) method of *currere* and Greene's (1978) notion of *wide-awakeness*. Milgram (1974/2009) states: "The essence of obedience consists in the fact that a person comes to view himself as the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and

he therefore no longer regards himself [sic] as responsible for his actions" (Preface, p. xx). I hear Milgram's words echoing through Freire's (1970/1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Milgram's study examined, in my view, the type of authority teachers hold—"Our studies deal only with obedience that is willingly assumed in the absence of threat of any sort, obedience that is maintained through the simple assertion of authority that it has the right to exercise control over the person" (Preface, p. xxi).

For these reasons, I look to critical researchers like Kincheloe (2003), who calls for *teacher scholars* to engage in critical and intellectual inquiry to uncover injustices. Kincheloe tells us that "promoting teachers as researchers is a fundamental way of cleaning up the damage of technical standards. Deskilling of teachers and dumbing down of the curriculum takes place when teachers are seen as receivers not producers of knowledge" (p. 18). Very much like Greene (1978), Kincheloe implores teachers to be in touch with the unique particulars of their life situations and to develop their own tacit knowledge and value base through inquiry. For Kincheloe, knowledge is connected to the mind and life situation of the knower; otherwise, educational research is not critical, but rather it obeys what Kincheloe refers to as the myth of the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm. The myth "assumes that the human perceiver occupies no space in the known world; operating outside of history, the knower knows the world of education and its students, teachers and leaders objectively" (p. 48). For Kincheloe, inquiry-based research requires the knowers to acknowledge they belong to an ever-changing historical world and are thus part of history, and so too is the knower's consciousness, which has an important part to play in constructing and reconstructing the reality of human experience.

Parker Palmer (1993) puts forward a similar argument in his book *To Know as We Are Known*. Palmer emphasizes the need for educators to take seriously their personal

epistemologies and personal truths, especially if they are to participate in *authentic* educational dialogue. Palmer explains, "Looking back, I see how my theory of knowing helped form (or deform) my sense of who I was and how I was related to the world" (p. 3). I agree with Palmer; the personal knowledge I possess affects how I go about my pedagogy—my knowledge possesses me and thus my pedagogy; therefore my pedagogy is never "objective." Like Kincheloe, for Palmer,

> the myth of objectivity, which depends on a radical separation of the knower from the known has been declared bankrupt. We now see that to know something is to have a living relationship with it—influencing and being influenced by the object known. (Preface, p. xv)

In Giroux's (1996) view of 20th century schooling, a language of critique and possibility was missing. Giroux requires teachers to "redefine their roles as engaged and transformative intellectuals" (p. 300). For Giroux, educators must involve themselves in the struggle to reclaim schools as agencies of "critical citizenship and democratic public life" (p. 297). He asks educators to develop "a language of critique and possibility" (p. 297) to avoid being dismissed as deskilled technicians. The endeavour of teaching critically involves teachers in creating an intellectual space where they produce curricula—by engaging in dialogue regarding the nature of knowledge and power.

Thus, teachers as intellectuals (Giroux, 1988b) must become capable of reconsidering traditional ways of knowing, looking at them again so they can be understood in personal terms of difference, justice, equality, and freedom. Twenty-first century teaching, in my view, will involve educators reclaiming the language of schooling as "an ethical and political imperative" (Giroux, 1996, p. 303). However, to do so, I believe they will have to ground their language

within a *personal philosophy* that speaks to who they are and attend to the life situation within which they teach. In my view, if this situation does not occur, teachers simply do not engage in authentic learning or sustainable education; rather teachers perform instruction.

Like Giroux, Greene, Kincheloe, and Palmer, Patrick Slattery (1995) critiques the 20th century's modern approach. Slattery states: "The philosophy of modernity espoused by [post-modern] critics is so committed to Cartesian binary and dualistic thinking, as well as rational and structural explanations of reality, that postmodern eclecticism, inclusiveness, and irony become incomprehensible for them" (p. 16). The 21st century educational approach I aim to focus on coincides with the postmodern concept "of the self-in-relation" (p. 17), where there is a dialogical relationship between subject and object. I agree with Slattery that such an approach will mean committing "to a new concept of curriculum development that will complement the social and cultural milieu of this new era in human history" (p. 18). Slattery explains that this new era of postmodernism "regards the world as an organism rather than as a machine, the earth as a home rather than as a functional possession, and persons as interdependent rather than as isolated and independent" (p. 19). Slattery notes that postmodern philosophy celebrates plurality and otherness and an integrated view of time and history. It explores intuition, autobiography, and the contradictions within modern paradigms by utilizing symbols, especially language, to expose injustices that emerge from materialist notions of truth. In terms of my personal philosophy, I find value in the ideas put forward by Slattery. I believe that in order for education to be sustainable in the 21st century, a postmodern approach will be required.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I believe if we are not able to act on our own intellectual positions due to bureaucratic conventions or a modern-age episteme, an educator's voice as a

public intellectual is unjustly and dangerously silenced. It is my stance that if a person, especially a professional, is unable to critically voice their intellectual position in their field, they are unable to take a moral stance or engage in moral social action in a self-directed, actualized, or embodied way. I believe if an intellectual position is not recognized within public schools and educational scholarship, we, as educators, fail to participate as activists in democratic instructions and risk operating as dehumanized and alienated individuals. A postmodern lens provides a cognitive space for agency within one's professional role and public position. In my view, a study of one's educational life itself, along with a personal philosophy of educational being, is necessary if educational sustainability is to involve an educator's intellectual participation in curriculum development and public education.

CHAPTER TWO: CONSTRUCTING A PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter, I provide my rationale for grounding my self-study in an experiential and transformative approach to educational research. I begin by clarifying reasons for selecting self-study methodology. I espouse my philosophical orientation towards self-study work in relation to my research phenomenon and literature that informs my study. I describe narrative methodology, and how I frame my research text, and I share my data collection methods and detail how I intend to go about data analysis and interpretation. I include ethical considerations that pertain to narrative, autobiographic, and self-study research. I also describe how my research design complies with validation and quality criteria. At the end of the chapter, I situate my research approach within my own theorizing and locate my study within my present biographic experience.

Methodology Section

Curriculum developers and curriculum supervisors should heed thoughtful practicing teachers who already seem to know the privileging of the traditional C & I [curriculum instruction and curriculum implementation] landscape may no longer hold, but must give way to a more open landscape that offers possibilities by, in part, giving legitimacy to the wisdom held in lived stories of people who dwell within the landscapes . . . for we are already in the age where episteme will not be able to stand alone. It needs to stand together with Sophia.

Ted Aoki, 2005, p. 214

Rationale for Narrative Inquiry Self-Study

The main reason I situate my research within narrative inquiry self-study, critical pedagogy, and the postmodern is that I am empowered and able to present and critically analyze the tacit knowledge I have received from my life and educational practice (Bereiter, 2002;

Giroux, 1988b; Kincheloe, 2003; Pinar, 1994; Shields, 2005). The ontological commitment involved in researching narratively is to stay attuned to my own experience with an ontological grounding in that experience (Clandinin et al., 2015). Pinar (1994) explains that in order to commit to autobiographic research, "we give ourselves up to where our experience leads us. We attend as closely and faithfully as we currently can to our immediate experience of educational institutions" (p. 123).

Palmer (1993), as well, reminds us the teacher is the living-breathing-variable that fills the gap between abstract ideologies—the teacher is the one who carries out the act of interpreting policy documents within an educational landscape. That is why the experience of the mainstream teacher as holding a conceptual research space is so important—it can be described narratively by the teacher through self-study work and can be transformed by the teacher through their practice as research-participant (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Pinar, 1994, 2011; see also Dewey, 1929). Because the teaching environment changes across time, the research landscape will always be temporal, transforming, and original. That is why I believe narrative inquiry self-study is so relevant. As Bullough and Baughman (1997) have indicated, self-study provides a means of teacher development, which is essential to school reform.

As Pinar (2012) suggests, alternatively school *deform* is a result of "teacher development" that frames teaching conversations in a reductive way that is politically abstracted as well as performative and depersonalized. A philosophy of education that does not begin with a reflective individual, in my view, never reaches actualization purposefully—thus, it is not sustainable in any personally meaningful way. In order for it to be sustainable, I believe one has to "work from within" (Pinar, 1994, p. 2).

Methodological Framework

Clandinin and Connelly's four directional method of narrative inquiry. In order to engage in the reinterpretation or reconstruction of past experience across time, Clandinin and Connelly (1994) describe the four directions of storying experience thus:

> Methods for the study of personal experience are simultaneously focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. By inward we mean the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions, and so on. By outward we mean existential conditions, that is, the environment . . . .By backward and forward we are referring to temporality, past, present, and future. To experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. (p. 417)

Terms commonly used in narrative inquiries are derived from a Deweyan view of experience (1916, 1934, 1938) and its importance to education (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As Clandinin and Connelly (1994) note, "For Dewey . . . when one asks what it means to study education, the answer is to study experience" (p. 415). This is so particularly in regard to situation as it is intimately tied to continuity, and interaction (Clandinin, 2013; Dewey, 1938). In fact, Clandinin and Connelly (1991) describe narrative as being simultaneously individual, social, cultural, and personally historical. In terms of research based in personal experience (1994), they explain that methods for gathering experience such as narratives, journal entries, artworks, and so on represent aspects of field experience and thus are referred to as field texts—which need to be reconstructed as research texts to be useful in the final report (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

As a teacher-researcher I believe I have to make meaning of my personal stories of past experience in relation to my present life and classroom practice. Using the framework of narrative inquiry noted above, as I remember and reconstruct stories from my past that hold meaning for me now as I think carefully about my research topic, I am engaged in a process of reinterpretation and analysis as I gather my storied data as field text and then use these stories as a basis for my research text.

Ultimately, as teacher-researcher/researcher-participant, I reconstruct and process field text as a basis for constructing a personal philosophy of sustainable education, which will comprise my final research text. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "narrative inquiry is a relational inquiry, as we work in the field, we move from field to field text and from field text to research text" (p. 60). I believe a personal philosophy of education can emerge from narrative inquiry self-study work (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986; Shields, 2005) and may be sustained in practice by reflecting and acting on insights gleaned by exploring seminal life moments as they are represented in story form.

***Currere*—autobiographic regressive-progressive-analytic-synthetic method.** I describe the phenomena of building a sustainable philosophy of curriculum by biographically identifying what I believe to be critical events, situations, or nodal moments (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Graham, 1989) within my autobiographical experience that guide my thinking about how I go about enacting education for my students and myself.

In this way, I too hope to contribute to the "continuity of experience" noted by Dewey (1938) and expressed by Shields (2005) and engage in "intellectual movement" (Pinar, 1994, p. 91), which I see as key in enhancing my own learning and the educational experience of students with whom I learn with across time. By storying and restorying my past experience, in order to

form a philosophical orientation akin to what Dewey (1938) describes as being important to education, the "desire to go on learning" (p. 48), I aim to pedagogically nurture growth and transformation in my own life stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

For Pinar (2011), this process occurs through curriculum, which he describes as a "complicated conversation" (p. 1). I believe a dialogical definition of curriculum permits us to carry and pass on our learning from one learner to another in story form (Guiney Yallop & Shields, 2016). Pinar (1994) draws on Jung (1939) and Freud (1917) defining psychoanalysis as "a systematic method for uncovering that which one does not say, does not know, who one was once but is not (exclusively or consciously) now" (p. 205). He defines his method of *currere* as "one way to work to liberate one from the web of political, cultural, and economic influences that are perhaps buried from conscious view but nonetheless comprise the living web that is a person's biographic situation" (p. 108).

Pinar (1994) explains that this educational form of research is conceptual and is related to emancipating one's Self from what Freire (1970/1996) refers to as "banking" (p. 57)—where one is complicit in the arrest of his or her intellectual development and participates in limiting ideas that are unconsciously deposited rather than critically examined. In terms of an autobiographical method, Pinar and Madeleine R. Grumet (1994) expound:

> We have devised a method by means of which the researcher can examine his or her "limit situations," in Freire's sense, his or her own participation in frozen social and psychological structures, and his or her complicity in the arrest of intellectual development. (as cited in Pinar, 1994, p. 90)

Pinar (1994) introduces his method of *currere* so the conceptual structure of one's relationship to oneself and to one's social role begins to emerge as a form of conscious self-knowledge. When

this form of authentic self-knowledge is emancipated**,** so too is the potential for actualizing a uniquely new pedagogy.

To engage in Pinar's (1994) method of *currere*, as a researcher, I adopt "a research strategy that produces knowledge of the character of lived experience of schools, and so contributes to our knowledge of schools and the educative process" (Pinar, 1994, p. 60). The method requires the researcher-as-participant to follow the four steps outlined by Pinar—(a) regression, to introspectively recognize psychological arrest to initiate an opening of the unconscious; (b) progression, which requires "mediation on what may come" (p. 59); (c) analysis, which requires thematic connections and the "examination of what has been recorded in the regressive and progressive phases" as well as the "ego's interest in the integration of 'new' information" (p. 59). Finally, there is (d) synthesis, which is a "process [that] seems to occur 'below' states of consciousness and articulation . . . [yet is recognizable because the] lived sense of synthesis can be unmistakeable" (p. 60). Synthesis involves "acting in the world" (Pinar, 2015, p. 7). Using the regressive-progressive-analytic-synthetic method, I add an additional dimension to my narrative framework to investigate my own past experiences in order to construct a sustainable philosophy of curriculum. Self-knowledge is described by Pinar (2011), as:

> never self-identical, however intimate and singular its contents and structures, and it is never still, as new knowledge, experience, and the pull of the present require ongoing reconstruction. In such reconstruction—simultaneously subjective and social—one activates agency, as one commits to the ongoing study of the past, a "regression" that enables one's entry into the future. In becoming subjective, one becomes historical. One

develops character, one becomes a subject, and the canonical curriculum question—*what knowledge is of most worth?*—recurs. (p. 39)

Framing a three-dimensional dwelling space. Where I visualize Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) four directional approach searching for a sense of narrative unity along a historical axis across time, I see Pinar's (1994) autobiographic method involving intellectually rethinking notions of one's Self as a curricularist, plunging into self-exploration to extricate experience that is perhaps buried within the depths of the psyche.

As I place narrative inquiry and *currere* within a paradigm of reciprocity, I heed Pinar's (2015) lament that some "detach autobiographical study from the curriculum, morphing it into 'narrative inquiry'" (p. 5). I attempt no metamorphosis here. As Aoki (2005c) so wisely looked to both the rose and the sakura for guidance in terms of his identity as a Japanese Canadian, in terms of forming my own identity as a Canadian scholar, I look to both the method of narrative inquiry and *currere* while dwelling within "a paradigm of reciprocity" (Aoki, 2005c, p. 345; see Aoki's "Reflections of a Japanese Canadian Teacher Experiencing Ethnicity"). To do so, I keep both methodologies in mind simultaneously to give meaning to my lifestyle as research-participant, curricularist, and pedagogue—as well as an individual and a secondary school teacher. I invoke Aoki's notion of "double vision" (Aoki, 2005c, p. 347). In doing so I conjure a sense of the fullness of multiple visions, hopefully moving towards maybe a Canadian curriculum paradigm that aims to embrace both *currere—and—*narrative inquiry, each as being separate, yet moving together in conjunction. Here I specifically am using the word "*and*" as a conjunction in the Aokian sense (see Aoki's (2005a) "Humiliating the Cartesian Ego"). Personally I feel there is a coolness between Pinar and Connelly—I hope it will not overshadow the reciprocal potential between the two scholars' profound methodologies.

By embracing this dual approach then, I move across both time and situation historically to form the basis of narrative knowing (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006) *and* through layers of biographic experience accumulated during living, both conscious and unconscious, that form the basis of emergent self-knowledge (Pinar, 1994). In my view, Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) four directional framework relates to an ever-present dynamic (Aoki, 2005c) that is reciprocal with Pinar's (1994) regressive-progressive-analytic-synthetic framework to create a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and a biospheric research landscape (Pinar, 2015).

By establishing this dwelling space (Aoki, 2005d), I provide an analytic frame for my narrative inquiry self-study while describing the directions the framework will allow my self-study to travel. Pinar (1994) emphasizes the biographic, while Clandinin and Connelly (1994) the historical (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1986), and as Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) note, self-study researchers "stand at the intersection of biography and history" and ultimately "the aim of self-study research is moral, to gain understanding necessary to make that interaction increasingly educative" (p. 15). My dual approach aims to meet Mills's (1959) challenge of linking history and biography to find deeper truths.

Methods

Autobiographical writing and journaling. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) associate autobiographical writing closely with journal writing. They describe each as a method of creating field text. Journals tend to capture small fragments of experience, whereas autobiographical writing "is a way to write of the whole context of life" (p. 421). As a research participant, my data are comprised of my personal experiences, personal practices, and personal reflections using both journal and autobiographical writing. Pinar (1994) explains that perhaps autobiography is

the means to divest language or abstraction to capture "the texture and rhythm of a subjectively-existing individual" (p. 43).

Reflections on personal conversation. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) explain that conversation is a generic term that covers many different types of experience, but more specifically they describe how conversation can provide a less constrained method for recording personal experience than research interviews. For my dissertation, I story my reflections on informal oral conversations between important persons and myself that contribute to my life story.

Artwork. Pinar (1994) in his essay "Working from Within" draws attention to Jackson Pollock's method of abstract expressionism in which Jackson Pollock describes how he records his stream of consciousness through artistic expression. Pinar presents Jackson Pollock's work as an example. I too create art as another method of recording personal experience.

Ethical Considerations

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001/2011) provide an approach to ethical decision-making that involves applying four ethical paradigms to analyze pedagogical and ethical issues. Dr. Rintoul (Course content, 2016) introduced me to this way of working through experience while I was taking her course, Ethics Values and Decision-Making. I have applied the approach to my teaching practice in order to make difficult decisions concerning dilemmas that directly affect the lives of my students. In my mainstream teaching role as First Nation, Métis and Inuit Student Success Teacher, I have found the approach especially helpful in guiding me towards a, perhaps, more dialectical understanding of individuals' perspectives and life circumstances.

In terms of a personal philosophy—I believe viewing ethics through different ethical paradigms supports me in establishing a personal value base by considering and not overlooking

the relevancy and multidimensionality of individuals' personal experiences. As Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001/2011) state: "In the 21st Century, as society becomes even more demographically diverse, educators will, more than ever, need to be able to develop, foster, and lead tolerant and democratic schools" (p. 4). I believe, along with Shapiro and Stefkovich, that there is merit in coming to grips with one's own ethical code so one can apply that code to complex ethical dilemmas in one's life and teaching practice. Pinar (2015) after all, defines *study* as "namely ongoing ethical engagement with alterity" (Preface, p. xi).

Ethic of care. Gilligan (1982) describes an ethic of care as tuning in to a voice of care, concern, and connection when attempting to resolve moral conundrums. For Noddings (1992, 2002), an ethic of care places students at the center of an educational process that focuses on nurturing and encouraging growth. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001/2011) note that empathy and compassion for multiple voices are at the heart of an ethic of care. For example, when utilizing an ethic of care, one might ask who will be hurt by a particular decision—thus taking into account the response of others. Ethically responding to others, then, means earnestly contemplating concepts such as loyalty, trust, and belonging, whereas if one were to utilize an ethic of justice, one's decision-making might tend to focus primarily on placing evaluative moral judgement on another's behaviour to determine standard rights and a reasoned resolution.

Ethic of critique. Critical scholars (Foucault, 1966/1970; Freire, 1970/1996) describe the importance of power found by examining meaning in relation to context and social structure. An ethic of critique is therefore context dependent and examines and confronts hegemonic and oppressive forces. It involves social analysis—questioning, rethinking, exposing, and challenging political and institutional ideology, which is never thoughtlessly accepted or presumed to be neutral. An ethic of critique questions established norms and reckons with those

whom they serve. This requires one to acknowledge that school life is political. In response, a certain determination is involved in taking action to liberate silenced voices. This activism means engaging in a collective struggle to empower voices that are marginalized, exploited, or suffering (Giroux, 1988a, 2003; Weis & Fine, 1993; see Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001/2011).

Critical questions related to gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, and homogenization brought about by the status quo challenge conceptual inconsistencies related to how people see themselves and how others perceive them. This situation necessitates an evaluation of language and action—where one may be required to redefine and reframe language, thinking in terms of possibility as one considers inequalities and privilege in relation to what is known, moral, and socially just. In turn, this means potentially reframing one's value-base and thus one's personal course of action.

Ethic of justice. According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001/2011), an ethic of justice considers the individual in relation to reasoned moral principles and state laws. An ethic of justice is concerned with "procedures for making decisions that respect the equal sovereignty of the people" (Strike, 1991, p. 415, as cited in Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001/2011). Liberty, tolerance, respect, accountability, and the fair treatment of all are values connected to virtuous principles, which—through the justice system, become represented in the form of rights and rules individuals are required to abide by for the good of all. The ethic of justice places faith and progress within the legal system, and theoretically, in the hands of human reason. Consequently, an ethic of justice sees social relationships in the form of a social contract between communities and individuals. Ultimately, this social contract is represented in the way of a communal understanding—that forfeiting some personal rights is necessary for the betterment, liberty, and safety of society as a whole.

Ethic of the profession. Related to the everyday professional dilemmas practitioners face, an ethic of the profession provides organizational "guideposts" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001/2011, p. 22) and recognizes professional obligations. Standardized professional codes provide solutions but can also be problematic if they are relied on in excess. Organizational codes or policies are in place to protect students, members of the community, and educational practitioners. An ethic of the profession involves a level of competency and aptitude in terms of knowing of and abiding by formalized professional codes—but it also involves creating a personal ethic to avoid professional codes becoming so generalized and removed from one's real-life experience that they promote an impersonal and insensitive form of practice. A professional ethic compels one to ask, "What would the profession expect me to do? What does the community expect me to do? And what should I do based on the best interests of the students, who may be diverse in their composition and their needs?" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001/2011, p. 27).

A professional ethic optimally takes into consideration various ethical paradigms including the ethic of care, justice, and critique as well as the experiential intricacies of one's personal teaching practice. A professional ethic is concerned with the expectations and standards of a specific school culture and community. It considers one's professional judgement as it relates to understanding and reflecting on the complexity, exceptionalities, and the multidimensionality regarding the success and well-being of differing persons involved in dynamic personal and moral dilemmas within schools.

Establishing Validity and Quality

Authenticity. To establish validity and quality in my work, I draw from several scholars (Bruner, 1990; Mishler, 1990; Polkinghorne, 2007) as well as the guidelines proposed by

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) that are specific to autobiographic forms of self-study research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) distinguish quantitative and interpretive inquiry in terms of epistemology and methodology, informing readers that qualitative research is based on different epistemological and ontological assumptions—applying quantitative conventions to interpretive work may lead to an awkward "procedural charade" (Kahn, 1993).

I therefore turn to conventions of quality put forward by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001). As these scholars note, autobiographic self-studies should throw light on one's self and one's connections to others. In self-study, each researcher is his or her own methodologist—a notion founded in the postmodern emphasis on identity and voice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Pinar's (1994) method of *currere* is meant to engage researchers in a rigorous reflective process to find authentic voice and self-knowledge. Clandinin and Connelly (1991) describe education itself as a form of social life and describe narrative inquiry as being fundamentally—a method of personal and social growth (see Dewey, 1956/1990). I have adopted my narrative inquiry self-study's dual approach to avoid the charge of being "purely personal" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). I believe when one searches for a point of view that is authentically one's own, one's voice aims to be pedagogically more than a mere echo of another's (Freire, 1973); it becomes self-critical in its aim to evoke a true-to-life and meaningful portrait of human experience (Sandelowski, 1993).

This perspective affords the precondition, as I see it, for conversations to exist which have authentic "political as well as epistemological and pedagogical content" (Pinar, 1994, p. 203). Years ago, Lincoln and Guba (1985) established authenticity as a target for quality in qualitative research and, according to Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001), "individual visions of scholars and varying philosophical perspectives are thought to vastly enhance the richness of knowledge development" (p. 525; see also Roy, 1995). Atkinson (1995) explains,

"[stories] confirm our own experience through a deeper understanding of the moral, ethical, and social implications of our situation" (p. 9). For Clandinin and Connelly (1994), by recording experience in story form, narrative researchers provide an opportunity to enter into others' experience vicariously and to find resonance person to person. Within this connection, the human lessons held within a story of experience exist (Clandinin, 2013). Personal stories can be inclusive, helping others to share in experience, to see what rings true (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

Mishler (1990) supports this view, seeing "trustworthiness" of a particular study as the basis for validity, which depends on tacit understanding of a situated practice in relation to a community of researchers rather than on one's adherence to any standardized set of rules. I aim to address ethical issues inherent in self-study narrative inquiry by employing these conventions in order to ensure my research complies with guidelines for quality within self-study and autobiographical forms of investigation.

Quality autobiographical self-studies offer a fresh perspective on established truths by not following a path that is dreamt into existence by another, but one that has been experienced (Pinar, 1994). One becomes responsible for one's personal philosophy, and because it is explicitly personal, it signifies a subjective interpretation, not universal authority or a policy-driven response, but rather an alternate way of understanding that moves away from a generalized truth (Greene, 1994; Kilgore, 2004; Pinar, 1994; Slattery, 1997, 2006). As Bruner (1996) suggests, when ordinary people try to make sense of their situation, neither the "empiricist's tested knowledge nor the rationalist's self-evident truths" strongly describe this subjective ground, and matters of this order may "need a story" (p. 130). Thus, personal stories

have the potential to offer a fresh perspective on neglected areas of human interest (Polkinghorne, 2007). Self-studies should promote insight and reinterpretation by the reader.

Throughout my inquiry, I intend to explicitly state limitations involved in finding meaning within human experience—"text is not taken as a sign of what is or was" (Grumet, n.d., p. 18, as cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1986, p. 7). Human explanations are fallible. They contain uncertainty, which I do not obscure, but explicitly state throughout my investigation. My research design forthrightly acknowledges my humanness and the limitations of reflection and memory (Polkinghorne, 2007). I aim to vividly describe contexts and nodal moments of personal struggle and how they relate to education (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001); however, I do not lay claim to determinant generalizations or definite truths (Polkinghorne, 2007; Schwandt, 2000; Whittemore et al., 2001). Through my storytelling, I invite the reader to raise questions, to reflect on and participate in the meaning of my stories and their reinterpretation in relation to their own educational stance (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991). Polkinghorne (2007) tells us validation in narrative research is related to conceptual context and argument rather than to the strict implementation of a mechanical process.

Crystallization. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) propose the image of the crystal as a criterion for validity in postmodern text. This aesthetic rearticulation of text with imagery in mind seems appropriate, in my view, to autobiography because it points to the primacy of subjectivity in aesthetic experience. The imagery of the crystal is reconceptualized as an aesthetic criterion for reconstruction through writing (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). As Greene (2001) notes, aesthetic encounters enable us to discover "unexpected resemblances . . . between the inner and outer" (p. 74; also see Pinar, 2011, p. 96). Pinar (2011) also sees aesthetic experience as providing an intellectual path between subjectivity and sociality—thus between the

public and the private spheres. Pinar articulates what I imagine as crystallization in self-study research in the following quote:

> Through claiming, integrating, and reconstructing what was previously perceived as purely external or repressed as incompatible with the socialized self, one recovers memory and agency transforming both "psychic states" and "arbitrary external relations" into a "continuous integral unity" (2004, 434), what I am calling subjective coherence, however momentary and always under construction. Such subjectivity enables one to find the future in the past. (Pinar, 2011, p. 135)

I utilize Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) imagery of a crystal as I associate it with Pinar's (2011) notion of *subjective coherence* as a criterion for validity, instead of a more traditional method such as the triangulation of data. For a discussion of triangulation, Richardson and St. Pierre refer their readers to Denzin (1978). For an application of triangulation, they suggest seeing Stratham, Richardson, and Cook (1991). Richardson and St. Pierre describe crystal imagery in the following quote:

> The central imagery for "validity" for postmodernist texts is not the triangle—a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imagery is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose—not triangulation but rather crystallization. (p. 963).

In terms of my own theorizing, in addition to the crystal metaphor, I envision a metaphor of the chrysalis stage of *being* and *growth*—the transformative chamber that allows for the maturity of a new being—say for example, from caterpillar to butterfly. I see the growth experience within a chrysalis as comparable to a cognitive in-dwelling that allows one to reform, to undergo critical reflection and then carry out a new way of being. In my case, the maturity of myself as young person dwelling within stories of experience becomes a process of maturing as I emerge as a young professional and scholar. The chrysalis metaphor of a *maturing-self* signifies, in my thinking, an embodied change that indicates that a Being *is* in a process of becoming what it was in potential. In doing so, maturity involves living in the world differently. By borrowing and extending Richardson and St. Pierre's (2005) notion of crystal imagery and embedding it within the aesthetics of a *metaphor of chrysalization* I believe the embedded metaphors more closely attune to the organic and embodied self-study process. Also, I feel a kinship with the origin and etymology of the word chrysalis. The Latin chrysallid-, chrysallis gold-colored pupa of butterflies comes from Greek, from chrysos gold, of Semitic origin; akin to Hebrew ḥārūṣ gold (*Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary*, 2017a). I see the purpose of this inquiry being a search for a golden body or, in other words, sustainable properties of the Self which exist in relation to a professional niche. As one enters into the phenomenon of self-study work, one undergoes metamorphosis to move towards a mature actualized Self, and thus, to act more wisely within one's professional role.

Finally, regarding validity, I root the notion of crystallization within my biology background. I draw the reader's attention to Chemist Cairns-Smith's (1966) conception of the primitive gene as a crystal. Cairns-Smith dedicated his scientific career to pursuing a fundamental idea: that life did not begin with somewhat flimsy organic molecules like DNA, but

rather through the formation of crystals. According to Cairns-Smith, if you observe inorganic material such as clay under a microscope, you will find that it is made of crystals. Each crystal has a lattice structure of atoms organized in a pattern that is replicated throughout the crystallization process (a process of growth). Each crystal can grow, if it is submerged, dwelling within water saturated with the similar chemical components. As the crystallization process continues, the crystal structure grows, stresses, and may split, creating new traits, “mutations” in a "mother" crystal, while also giving rise to "daughter" crystals, each similar—yet containing their peculiarities. As these newly formed crystals continue to grow and split, they are both different and similar to those crystals that have preceded them. This process of passing along old characteristics along with newly acquired properties across time—is, for me, much like inherited traits being passed on from parents to their kin in living organisms, or to more specifically attune the metaphor to this dissertation—cultural traits (lessons) passed along from teachers to students dwelling within curricula.

Theory/Literature That Informs My Study

Narrative Knowing and Paradigmatic Knowing

Clandinin et al. (2015) tell us: “The knowledge landscape on which we live as researchers in Canada attends most closely to paradigmatic knowledge (Bruner, 1987 [1986]) rather than narrative knowledge” (p. 25). Bruner (1986) describes two modes of thought in his landmark book titled *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. In this book, Bruner describes each mode of thought (*paradigmatic* and *narrative*) as a distinctive way of ordering experience and thus constructing reality. Bruner explained that the two modes—although complementary, cannot be reduced to one mode or the other without ignoring the richness of human cognition. Sartre (1943), in *Being and Nothingness,* makes a similar claim: that at the heart of all human conflict exists a fruitful

and ongoing battle between subjectivity (an individual in terms of their potential) and objectivity (the more deterministic factors that may include such things as sex, race, etc.). In the field of critical pedagogy, Giroux (1988b) touches on the subject again and speaks in terms of "productive knowledge," which is concerned with instrumental means of advancing science and technology, and he distinguishes productive knowledge from "directive knowledge" (p. 49), which is a philosophical mode of inquiry that formulates questions concerned with ends in mind—thus quality of life. And, this wave/particle relationship resonates again in Ted Aoki's (2005d) discussion of teaching. Aoki discusses a pedagogic situation where one exists in a *Zone of Between*—where teaching and pedagogy dwell between the curriculum-as-plan (objective/paradigmatic/productive) and the curriculum-as-lived-experience (subjective/directive/narrative).

My background, having a bachelor's degree in visual arts (considered to be subjective) and a minor in biology (often thought of as objective), has provided me with the opportunity to become familiar with a bit of the terrain that exists within a Zone of Between. And, while considering my situation as a practicing teacher, I find myself agreeing with Polkinghorne. Polkinghorne (2014) roots Bruner's description of paradigmatic and narrative modes of thinking in more contemporary times, and states: "The tradition of approaching thinking as a programmed, logical syntactical process [paradigmatic thinking] has remained strong since Bruner's 1986 book" (p. 155). Polkinghorne explains the current emphasis on a paradigmatic mode "retains the view that humans are not unique in being able to think and that machines have been or will be made which are able to think on a par with, or better than, human beings" (p. 155). In my view, what Bruner (1986) has identified as the paradigmatic stance neglects the human element that is so vital to furthering the lived experience that is education (Dewey, 1938).

Within a narrative position, love, emotion, and subjectivity, as opposed to objectivity and generalizability, are at the forefront and are passed on or sustained through human relationships as well as stories delivered through human experience (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Iannacci, 2007; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2006).

After considering both modes of thought, I see myself engaging in research narratively as a teacher and researcher and also as a creative agent and philosophy builder (Aoki, 2005a; Connelly & Clandinin, 1986, 1990). Sustainable education, in my view, is temporal in the sense that it is resurrected in the life current of each learner across time, prevailing through transformations that exist within individuals as they participate in life as their lives are touched by circumstance. For the purpose of my dissertation, sustainable education is then like an immortal baton, passed along generationally through stories told, learned, and relived in the endless relay of life—during the running of a curricular course. This view leads me to see the learner as *a course of time* existing between places and people. Guiney Yallop and Shields (2016) cite a story told by Estes (1992) that speaks to this view.

> I once dreamt I was telling stories and felt someone patting my foot in encouragement. I looked down and saw that I was standing on the shoulders of an old woman who was steadying my ankles and smiling up at me. I said to her, "No, no, come stand on my shoulders for you are old and I am young." "No, no," she insisted, "this is the way it is supposed to be." I saw that she stood on the shoulders of a woman far older than she, who stood on the shoulders of a woman even older, who stood on the shoulders of a woman in robes, who stood on the shoulders of another soul, who stood on the shoulders. (p. 19)

In a similar fashion, Shields explains how life lessons have been passed on from her mentor, Michael Connelly, to her, and now, with Dr. Shields as my supervisor, the phenomenon of living stories in an ongoing experiential text, and retelling and reliving stories as one reflects on life in order to express oneself to others (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991) is being passed on to me. In this respect, education is sustained narratively through shared stories of experience as well as through concrete living relationships. Narrative is both phenomenon and method (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994).

I think that objective and quantitative scientific methodologies, paradigmatic modes of learning (Bruner, 1986), are very capable and well suited for obtaining knowledge surrounding more or less unchangeable facts. Yet, temporal feelings and other fleeting social occurrences that exist within the specifics of particular cultural contexts are often changing and rarely recreated—and they make up much of daily life. I believe humanistic, critical, constructive, and liberally minded pragmatic philosophies provide the required theoretical grounding to support the construction of a *personally sustainable philosophy of education* in the 21st century by way of narrative inquiry self-study. The aforementioned theories house a space for the subjective nature of the learner (Aoki, 2005d; Bruner, 1996; Garrison, 2010; James, 1910/2010). A qualitative research approach, then, that considers the subjective nature of learning seems to be needed in order to build a philosophical stance that aims to sustain the biographical nature of learning within mainstream educational practice (Bruner, 1990, 1996; Pinar, 1994, 2011, 2012).

To me, a teacher is more than a socializing instrument used to condition students to become part of a community, or not (Giroux, 1988b; Kincheloe, 2003). Educators have a responsibility to model a form of critical agency that questions the relationship between knowledge and power—a pedagogy that goes beyond the construction of knowledge (Giroux,

1988b). Teachers have their own identities, experience, and agency, as well as an ethical responsibility that they cannot ignore—they are not pawns to be dictated by their social role (Aoki, 2005d; Freire, 1973; Kincheloe, 2003; Sartre, 1943). Narrative inquiry helps with this position, as Shields (2005) asserts: "This awakening to self as independent being takes us back and forth, outside ourselves to the stories we were born into, and inside ourselves to that person we are becoming" (p. 181).

Humanistic Discourses and Constructive Schemas

Concerning spirit and socially embodied theory and practice. Polkinghorne (2014) refers to Jerome Bruner as being instrumental in "introducing the study of cognition into psychology. Psychology had limited its investigations to only that which could be publically observed: that is, a stimulus and its behavioural response" (p. 154). In between stimulus and response, I believe agency and intellectual intention provide the possibility for educational growth (Dewey, 1938). For this reason, Bruner and Polkinghorne have become seminal within my theorizing. Whereas Polkinghorne grounds narrative in "the manner in which our bodies interact with our environments" (p. 156), Bruner (1986) emphasizes its place within the mind. Both of these views inform my research theoretically because they move away from a mechanistic modern paradigm and embrace an education and knowledge-making philosophy that is ontologically and epistemologically organic and thus not inflexibly categorical or mechanistic. I feel both Bruner's and Polkinghorne's views crystalize within the almost mystical prose of Jung (1933):

> But if we can reconcile ourselves with the mysterious truth that spirit is the living body seen from within, and the body the outer manifestation of the living spirit—the two being really one—then we can understand why it is that the attempt to transcend the present

> level of consciousness must give its due to the body. We shall also see that belief in the body cannot tolerate an outlook that denies the body in the name of the spirit. (p. 220)

A more secular interpretation of spirituality can also be found in Maslow's *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (1970/1976b) and James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902). I am also mindful of Kant's (1781/1998) achievement in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. To be specific, I see my point of view on metaphysics aligning with Kant's critique. Kant believed metaphysical constructs are rooted within very human perspectives, and that such work should be considered especially suspect if theoretical claims moved towards a dogmatic position—for instance, religious authoritarianism or scientism. He certainly, however, did not see Metaphysics as trivial and believed that the senses in conjunction with reason (when reason is seen as a constructive act) and rationality (as a critical faculty) had a part to play—even within a secular age. I too, take this stance. I believe abstract or aesthetic principles play a part in bringing about real personal and professional benefits if they are rooted in life experience and intellectual judgment. Such an approach can help us move away from Modernism's less desirable traits such as psychic detachment, arrogant pseudoscientific dogmatism, and the seemingly compulsive need to mechanize the human experience.

As I see it, sustainable education involves educating towards a way of being with the world that embodies an awareness of our own critical faculties and transformational power (Dewey, 1934; Freire, 1970/1996; Palmer, 2000, 2004; Pinar, 1994). This way of being recognizes that a history of knowledge is contextualized through a temporally specific cultural lens (Foucault, 1966/1970) and exists within a paradigm (Kuhn, 1962/1970). For me, this view means we are limited to a situated place within the world, a biographic sphere of influence, to

our own episteme and praxis. Yet, I also believe it is important to recognize the inconceivability of our influence as well as our ignorance.

The Self as separate yet connected. The humanistic notion of the Self as separate yet connected describes a way of being that I see as vital to 21st century sustainable teaching and learning. I believe the notion of the self as being "separate yet connected" as described by Shields (2005) is reflected in Maslow's (1962/2011) humanistic concept of *self-actualizing creativeness*. Maslow writes:

> It appeared that an essential aspect of SA [self-actualizing] creativeness was a special kind of perceptiveness . . . . Such people can see the flesh, the raw, the concrete, the ideographic, as well as the generic, the abstract, the rubricized, the categorized and the classified. Consequently, they live far more in the real world of nature than in the verbalized world of concepts, abstractions, expectations, beliefs and stereotypes that most people confuse with the real world. (p. 129)

I interpret Maslow's description as meaning *self-actualized creativeness* does not rely only on, as he says, the "generic, abstract, rubricized" or what I would describe as a standardized view, a preformed view, but rather the self-actualized view is created, constructed, reconstructed, creatively "self-actualized" through one's agency, sincerity, critical reflection, reflexive educational practice, consciousness, and moral inquiring. Thus, what I believe is described in narrative terminology as *restorying* experience, which is used to make sense of experience in order to live differently in the present and future.

These sentiments can be found echoing through the humanistic and existential scholars—although each scholar is conceptually distinct and has a varied and uniquely extensive approach. My review of such scholars includes: (e.g., Frankl, 1959/2006; Jung, 1933; Laing, 1959/1965;

Maslow, 1971/1976a, 1962/2011; May, 1969, 1975, 1981; Rogers, 1961; Sartre, 1943). By citing Rogers (1961), I can offer a taste of the humanistic tradition:

> In general, the evidence shows that the process moves away from fixity, remoteness from feelings and experience, rigidity of self-concept, remoteness from people, impersonality of functioning. It moves toward fluidity, changingness, immediacy of feelings and experience, acceptance of feelings and experience, tentativeness of constructs, discovery of a changing self in one's changing experience, realness of closeness of relationships, a unity and integration of functioning [aliveness]. (p. 65)

The notion of fixedness in relation to an alienated form of being is remarkably reminiscent of Freire's (1970/1996) concept of banking education and Pinar's (1994, 2011) discussions of Kafka's Joseph K—an arrested or fixed condition, a way of being in which life is deposited from the outside in. Aoki's (2005d) description of *teacher-installers* also comes to mind, in which "teachers are 'trained,' and in becoming trained, they become effective in trained ways of 'doing"' (p. 160). In the mainstream educational field, it is most recently fashionable to speak in terms of fixed and growth mindsets. And, here I believe it is necessary to reintroduce the notion of the *meme—a form of cultural replication*, and my own belief in its relevance to 21st century teaching and learning.

Nothing New: A Theory of Memetic Transference

> *For the process of imitation is natural to mankind [sic] from childhood on: Man is differentiated from other animals because he is the most imitative of them, and he learns his first lessons through imitation, and we observe that all men find pleasure in imitations. The proof of this point is what actually happens in life. (Aristotle, 1968, p. 7)*

To introduce my discussion of memetics, I think it is important for me to state that in my opinion, Bruner's (1986) notion of paradigmatic knowledge and narrative knowledge resembles Aristotle's notions of form and substance. It is also the case that—when Freud was accused of presenting Schopenhauer's philosophy as a natural science, he replied, "everything had been said already" (1963/2008, p, xiii). Freud did not object to the association; rather he stated: "Ladies and gentlemen, why should not a bold thinker have things that a sober and painstaking investigation of details subsequently confirms?" (Freud, 1963/2008, p. xiii). The ideas I have read in my review of the literature seem to be transferences of older ideas applied within different fields—adapted memetic formations existing, surviving, within different milieus. To me, concepts seem to adapt and evolve within different conceptual settings—or niches.

There has been considerable debate about what a meme actually is. It is often defined as a cultural unit of inheritance (Blackmore, 1999; Dawkins, 1976/1989). For example, *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (2017b) defines a meme as follows:

> an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture <Memes (discrete units of knowledge, gossip, jokes and so on) are to culture what genes are to life. Just as biological evolution is driven by the survival of the fittest genes in the gene pool, cultural evolution may be driven by the most successful memes. — Richard Dawkins

For me it is quite clear for the purposes of this investigation that the meme is adequately described, for all pragmatic narrative purposes, as synonymous with a *word*—which I believe acts as a *cultural unit of replication* (Dawkins, 1976/1989). Often critics object to the meme idea, suggesting whatever a meme is, it has insufficient copying fidelity compared to a gene (Blackmore, 1999). Thinking in terms of narrative, a meme, as I conceive of it—*is* a word.

Words are passed along horizontally through culture and also vertically, generationally, from body to body and are used to reconstruct meaning across time—as it is with genes. A word is cultural, and a gene is genetic. It seems clear to me that there is not a duality here, merely a shift in emphasis. Words create systems of thought—memeplexes (Blackmore, 1999) that unfold through culture. Both genes and words are vulnerable to the landscape they survive within. Both are capable of transforming the landscape or being transformed by the landscape. Both are of the language of life. Words, like genes, have a high copying fidelity and certainly vary enough in combination to drive an evolutionary process (Dawkins, 1976/1989). The following analogy (Podolski, 2010) I provide may be a gross oversimplification, but one I have personally found useful:

> Genome: digital collection of an animal's ancestors' past experiences.
>
> Memory: collection of lived experiences.
>
> Phenotype: physical expression of those experiences (e.g., wings, webbed feet, etc.).
>
> Behaviour: expression of thoughts created by past experiences.
>
> Natural selection: selective process.
>
> Consciousness: selective process. (Podolski, 2010, p. 5)

Informed by Richard Dawkins (1976/1989) and Susan Blackmore's (1999) notion of the meme, in my Master's Research Paper (2010), I described a process of how cultural units of inheritance cluster to survive within a social niche, eventually forming an identity suitable for survival, or not. By this description I mean one's professional role or occupation requires a certain standard of behaviour that pressures a particular type of psychic formation. Here, in my dissertation, I continue my initial inquiry while noting the importance of working from within in order to transform the social niches we exist within (Pinar, 1994, 2011, 2012; Shields, 2005).

Working from within, I believe, helps educators navigate who they are within their social roles (Pinar, 1994) but also offers the possibility of changing the circumstances of one's situation or social niche through gradual transformations inseminated and nurtured through dialogical encounters.

Theoretically in my Master's Research Paper (2010) I tied Freire's (1970/1996) notion of banking to memetic encounters that occur from the outside in. I believe the importance of a personal philosophy comes into play at this juncture. If memes arrive from the outside in, and there is no personal force or memetic structure, a personal philosophy to meet their arrival, one will simply be transformed from the outside in rather than from inside. Information is deposited or becomes "banked" within a living being in this way (Freire, 1970/1996). If a personal framework has been internally integrated by reconstructing memetic material, the individual may play a part in shaping the landscape he or she exists within—physically and conceptually—rather than having the landscape (including its social-cultural constituents) shape them. The crux of my theorizing is embedded within this proposition. The internal memeplex (Blackmore, 1999) or in other words—*personal philosophy*—is needed to critically encounter cultural forces. A personal philosophy becomes a reservoir and requisite of internal strength—something that is *sustained* within one's self and which the self can depend on.

I believe knowledge is passed along memetically as well as genetically, carried through space, bodies, and time (Podolski, 2010). I believe we hold on to information if it finds a niche within the mind. Human beings are language animals, but every other living organism is too. It is a bit anthropocentric to consider human beings as the only storytelling organism because all of life's creatures also tell a story, be it more overtly a genetic one. As Sagan (1977) professed, what is unique to our species is the extent to which extragenetic information is communicated.

Beyond genetic intelligence, Homo sapiens have conceived a memetic cultural pool through which they can transform their intellect. Pinar calls this process of transformation *currere*—although he does not write about memes.

My Own Theoretical Positioning That Guides My Study

What if you slept

And what if

In your sleep

You dreamed

And what if

In your dream

You went to heaven

And there plucked a strange and beautiful flower

And what if

When you awoke

You had that flower in your hand

Ah, what then?

Taylor Coleridge

Dream Texts

Using story clips*, field text*, taken from a dream experience, I demonstrate that narrative inquiry self-study is a methodology concerned with memetic encounters and memetic transference. As a research participant using the methodology, I believe I dwell within an allegory or metaphor of reality. But more than an allegory or metaphor—I view memes as a concrete part of reality. In this sense, I move away from memes defined as merely an imitation of

reality and towards the concrete notion of memes existing in mind as mind is transformed through the imaginative reorganization of memes. In Aoki's (2005c) words, I have found the definition of what a meme is to me: "But in seeing them, I will be seeing myself—for I know that what I see and how I see is because of who I am" (p. 348).

Using the technique of juxtaposing scholarly quotes between story clips, I share my understanding of how memes relate to the intellectual and psychosocial reconstruction of alternative ways of being and knowing. I attempt to outline personal thematic connections between my lived experience, the story of that experience, and my scholarly investigation by implementing a methodology of narrative inquiry self-study (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, 1994; Pinar 1994, 2011, 2012; Shields, 2005). I do not consider the quotes I insert to be passive, but rather I see them as active participants that inform my investigation (Pinar, 2011). Each time I immerse myself in the text, I emerge in some way transformed (Pinar, 1994, 2012). By telling this tale, I attempt to make available a space for readers so that they too can enter into the phenomenon and reconstruct their reality with me as I position myself within in the present.

The Dream Story

A tale of phantasmagoria.

Story clip 1: The sound of water*. As I move, a wolf follows along the far side of a river. Moonlight shines across leaf litter scattered along the roots and soil of the forest floor. I feel I should be nervous, but I go on. Using a type of brush-knife I cut a path along the river. The river turns, and I meet it. There, ornately bending, are black growths indulging in starlight water. Against the current, stars sail like glow-worms suspended in the night's sky. Mist is suspended over the river, giving it a sense of stillness. I stop and listen to the water . . . . I look up to see my reflection in animal eyes.*

Scholarly quotes:

> In itself, an animal is neither good nor evil; it is a piece of nature. It cannot desire anything that is not in its nature. To put this another way, it obeys its instincts. These instincts often seem mysterious to us, but they have their parallel in human life: The foundation of human nature is instinct. (Jung, von Franz, Henderson, Jacobi, & Jaffé, 1964, p. 266)

> But in man [sic], the "animal being" (which lives in him as his instinctual psyche) may become dangerous if it is not recognized and integrated in life. Man is the only creature with the power to control instinct by his own will, but he is also able to suppress, distort, and wound it—and an animal, to speak metaphorically, is never so wild and dangerous as when it is wounded. (Jung et al., 1964, pp. 265–266)

Story clip 2: The father symbol. *In my dream, I experience a hiatus. My father is with me now, and as I move through the forest, he is in front of me. We move through thick brush breaking trail during the night. I look down at us from above - the forest we move through is an expansive thicket of black spruce. We leave a trail of trampled brush behind us. Our trail runs parallel to the river, which flows with black water. A pack of wolves moves along the far side. The river's water is dark and icy. I follow my father's trail and I feel comforted he is with me. There is nothing around us but forest. I walk again behind him. My father starts fading and slowly he moves like a vapour into the forest and through the trees. I am left to break trail on my own.*

Scholarly quotes:

> In making this break with the childhood world, the original parent archetype will be injured, and the damage must be made good by a healing process of assimilation into the

> life of the group. (The identity of the group and the individual is often symbolized by a totem animal). (Jung et al., 1964, p. 120)
>
> One of the commonest dream symbols . . . is the theme of the lonely journey or pilgrimage, which somehow seems to be a spiritual pilgrimage on which the initiate becomes acquainted with the nature of death. But this is not death as a last judgment or other initiatory trial of strength: it is a journey of release, renunciation, and atonement, presided over and fostered by some spirit of compassion. (Jung et al., 1964, pp. 147–150)

Story clip 3: The inquiry. *As the trail ends, the river opens up. Sun glistens through the sky and sparkles along open water. A picnic table sits on a green glade next to an old tree. A sandy shoreline rests under the mouth of the river. In the shallows, waves wash back and forth, frothing and forming ripples in the sand. I recognize the place as a campsite my father and I used to visit, a personally sacred place. A wise woman, a mentor, is there with me, and I feel as if I want to impress her. We turn to the tree. A woodpecker flies and grips onto a branch. It is black with white spots, but I do not know how to identify it. I try to think of the name, I know the names of so many birds, I think I should know it; all I can tell her is it is a woodpecker. I look at her, and she knows what it is already. She knows what it is as it strikes the wood with its beak. I realize there is no need to call it anything else. I realize I will turn away from a categorical approach and use inquiry to make sense of my experience.*

Scholarly quotes: The Philosophical Tree

> Taken on average, the commonest associations to its [the tree's] meanings are growth, life, unfolding of form in a physical and spiritual sense, development, growth from below upwards and from above downwards, the material aspect (protection, shade, shelter, nourishing fruits, source of life, solidarity, permanence, firm-rootedness, but also being

> "rooted to the spot"), old age, personality, and finally death and rebirth. (Jung, 1967/1983, p. 272)

Restorying the dream text: Unearthing thematic connections.

***From story clip 1: The lonely journey*.** When I began connecting the dream story to my present life situation, I began to notice thematic parallels between my dream experience and my doctoral study. When reflecting across time, I found the dream story holds meaning in relation to my past, present, and future (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000). For as Clandinin and Connelly (1994) note, "Keeping . . . [a] sense of the experiential whole is part of the study of narrative" (p. 415).

For example, in the dream text: *As I move, a wolf follows along the far side of a river . . . I feel I should be nervous, but I go on* resonates a personal connection across time. The life I was familiar with encounters a future I imagine—entering into a doctoral program. Through this dialogical encounter, I find myself pondering the consequences of entering into doctoral work. When I decide to change my educational course and attempt a doctorate, I am nervous, I am taking a risk. I consider the possibility that I might have to sell my house to finance tuition. I might have to sacrifice a career contract teaching position in order to have time to complete a doctoral degree. In the dream, the wolf embodied these fears. In the end, I was not willing to have the journey I imagined reduced to a fantasy alone. I realized I would have to encounter my fear and anxiety in a very real way in order to pursue my doctoral aspirations.

As the dream continues, a pack of wolves follow the path. I feel they embodied not only my anxieties and fears but also my instinct to press forward, to hunt, to feed, and develop my knowledge. After associating a sense of meaning with these dream phenomena and considering

my resources and my personal capacity to make entrance into a doctoral program a reality, I went about wakening these constructs within my daily life and pressed onward in their presence.

From story clip 2: The father symbol. I came to see my doctoral work as somewhat misunderstood and, at times, a lonely journey. In terms of my life as it was, the path seemed to rather obviously represent a trail to a future place. For me, leaving behind the security of the past was symbolized by the disappearance of the father symbol.

Entering into the program, I moved into an unfamiliar landscape. I felt the father symbol represented security and mentorship—the familiar; however, I also felt a need to move away from certainty and predictability in order to go about developing an epistemological framework of my own—*Mist was suspended over the river, giving it a sense of stillness. The river turns, and I meet it. There, ornately bending, are black growths indulging in the starlight water that glides over them. Against the current, stars sail like glow-worms suspended in the night's sky. My father fades like a vapour, and I am left to break trail on my own.*

As I look to the stars, I move away from familiarity, the father, towards something new—glow-worms, which for me symbolize metamorphosis, transformation, and growth. They also represent, or in fact were/are conceptual material nurturing *conceptual roots, chrysalides*—roots soaked in starlight water—memetic phenomena foreshadowing my introduction to Aoki's (2005c) consideration of *root metaphors*. The notion of *starlight water* also holds symbolic and practical significance for my inquiry. Looking to the stars I look to the future. In the dream, the stars are a reflection within the river. Within the river, a future *is* reflected within its current, being for me metamovement within the temporal flow of life; an experiential vibe containing the crux of narrative inquiry self-study. I feel a profound sense of connection between the following text provided by Shields (2005) and my dream experience because as a young person I see

myself setting out on a journey that crosses into an uncultivated landscape that is yet to transform my tale.

> Perhaps it goes without saying that we are born into a story already in progress, but the implications for each of us is profound in terms of examining the roots of our beliefs about the world, and the way our thinking and actions are enacted in our lives. Setting out to develop our own vision for living, I think we have behind us the social construction attached to the place and language of our origins. We therefore see through a lens established before we know we are looking, and we carry the epistemological stance of our families and the culture we know into our lives as a basis for living. Essentially, we begin life with an acquired theory or perspective, one we only come to consider critically as we reach a stage in life where we begin to emerge as the selves we are, separate yet connected to others in the world. (p. 180)

From story clip 3: The inquiry. After earning entrance into the doctoral program, the next challenge I experienced was deciding on a theoretical and methodological approach. While this decision was not nearly as traumatic as the decision to embark on a new life path, it was certainly a significant one. According to Henderson (in Jung et al., 1964), "We know from many examples that an ancient tree or plant represents symbolically the growth and development of psychic life (as distinct from instinctual life, commonly symbolized by animals)" (p. 152). I interpret Jung's psyche as a dynamic form of symmetry that is exchanged between the self and the natural world. It was as if my dream was telling me, through inquiry, tap into the psyche—human experience, to cultivate wisdom—to search out such wisdom and integrate it into daily life.

For me, the woodpecker's action, tapping into the tree, represented an act of inquiring into life, a search for nutrients—the act being a "metaphor of reality," a memetic formation. I also realized the wolf, as a memetic form, was not merely something to be afraid of, but could be meaningfully interpreted as a guiding experience leading me along my path, guiding me to new places in my life that would challenge and transform me. Henderson notes that many initiation rites start with a

> lonely journey to a sacred place (in Indian cultures of the North Pacific coast, it may actually be a crater lake) where, in a visionary or trancelike state, he encounters his "guardian spirit" in the form of an animal, a bird, or natural object. He closely identifies himself with this "bush soul" and thereby becomes a man. (Jung et al., 1964, p. 153)

So in my dream existence, I walk with my anxiety and fear, recognizing them phenomenologically in animal form. After inquiring into their meaning, I came to know them as vital to the path I am taking as a doctoral student. They are part of a "pack" of internal experiences instinctively running alongside my educational journey**.** In this vision, I find great reverence for the spiritual beliefs of Indigenous peoples, although I am too ignorant to support my dissertation with them. I am not so ignorant as to insult and disregard oral history, or vision quests as a valid way of knowing and developing original knowledge.

Personally, it is through *currere* and narrative inquiry that I understand educative experience. Pinar (2012) helps clarify the role of allegory in *currere*: "To understand curriculum as complicated conversation, I invoke the concept of 'allegory.' It is, in my [Pinar's] usage, interrelated with 'reconstruction,' as each reactivates the past in order to find the future. To *reconstruct* means to 'establish or assemble again'" (p. 49).

The field of philosophy is no stranger to allegory. As long ago as the 4th century B.C. Plato (1955/1987), in *The Republic*, instructed his students by telling them the allegory of the cave. In the allegory a community of prisoners finds themselves sitting by a fire, living within a shadow filled cave chamber. For the cave dwellers, the shadow world is familiar. The sun and shadow casting objects (Platonic forms) exist outside of the cave and therefore are never seen by the prisoners—*the forms* are outside of the prisoners' experience. When one of the prisoners is released, he leaves the cave—and with considerable difficultly—learns to recognize the sun as the ultimate source of light and that other objects existing outside of the cave are casting the cave shadows. When the liberated fellow returns to the cave to tell the prisoners about the world he has experienced, he finds that many of the prisoners still prefer their illusions. Within a modern secular age, living within a Eurocentric consumer culture, how many of us, I wonder, are prisoners within Plato's cave?

Taking the Dream Text Forward Into My Doctoral Study

For me, my dream text provides an allegory. Ultimately I understand the dream as a tale of initiation. From a young boy who was scared, roaming through a strange world, chased by his own anxiety and fear, a sense of security emerges by following his father. He looks for beauty in a nightmarish wilderness. He travels alone through darkness to find a vista—a place vibrating with a feminine and masculine presence. Hence, a potential birthplace capable of conceiving a truly new beginning. There, he found himself set against an infinite background, at a starting point and in a position to begin.

As I write this dissertation, I use my dream allegory as a means of beginning again to formulate a living philosophy grounded in my own tacit knowledge interspersed with the perspectives of important others and scholars who can help me support and sustain an authentic

educational course. For a philosophy to be alive, I believe it must tacitly sense how such academic texts and life experience work together to cultivate a form of tangible wisdom that is embodied within a person in a process of becoming. I see my dissertation being actualized as an internalized evolving tome or guiding force helping to sustain my educational course (Freire, 1970/1996; Shields, 2005). As I complete this chapter where I have contextualized my self-work intellectually among scholars and academics that inform my study, I move into the next chapter where I enter my biographic past using the first step of Pinar's (1994) method of *currere*—regression.

CHAPTER THREE: STORYING MY PAST: REGRESSION

In this chapter, I focus on the first step of *currere*, which is regression. This step involves remembering the biographic past and identifying limiting situations in my life. I reflect on seminal moments within my educational life and school-related experience. I situate myself within the present, where I start by reflecting on the letter of intent I wrote to gain entrance into my doctoral program. I consider why I believe developing a personal philosophy of education is important. Then, I regress further into my past. I reflect on my own psychological arrest as a teenager in high school and on important events, experiences, and life lessons acquired in both my undergraduate and graduate work. Throughout the process, I focus on my life-in-schools, life-with-teachers, and life-with-books (Pinar, 1994). I end the chapter by considering my early learning experiences and interests in childhood. By examining these and other biographic situations, I look for dominant themes that have developed and evolved temporally and conceptually throughout my earlier years that continue to sustain educational and pedagogic significance in relation to my present life and teaching practice. As I story my experiences, I use Clandinin and Connelly's (1994, 2000) four directional method of inquiry to move inward, outward, backward, and forward to navigate my experience.

Acquiring Tacit Knowledge

Situating the Reader within My Journey into Teaching

When I wrote my letter of intent to gain entrance into my doctoral program, I reflected on the loss of two of my friends. I believe my friends had struggled with their identity, their role in society, and their future. The loss I felt and the fact that I was struggling with my identity as a new teacher motivated me to explore my own understanding of self and its significance to my teaching practices. When I enrolled in Nipissing's Master of Education program, under the

guidance of Dr. Carmen Shields, I used the methodology of narrative inquiry to fulfill the research requirement for my Master's degree. I reevaluated my role as teacher and examined the obligations and responsibilities involved in adopting an institutional identity.

I was influenced by both my art and science background when writing my Master's Research Paper entitled: *Building a Teacher Identity: An Introspective View Based on Charles Darwin's Theory of Natural Selection*. The inquiry examined my adaptation to the role of teacher. I chose to investigate how seminal life experiences along with time and place related to an evolutionary process of self-conceptualization. My research revealed that, for me, to accept the role of teacher I had to reframe how I defined my self-concept.

After I graduated from the Master's degree program, I went on to teach in both of my subject areas, art, and science. I continue to take a reflective approach within my high school teaching practice. I remember my early years in school and continue to reflect on the adverse and miseducative situations that occur in schools today. I made a promise to myself when entering the teaching profession that I would increase my capacity to help others overcome social-economical barriers and build healthy relationships. I feel certain that an individual's identity is not sustainable if it includes attributes that are self-destructive such as addictions or other self-destructive actions. In my opinion, the attributes of local identities promote or impede educational sustainability on a global scale.

Having entered Nipissing's doctoral program, my aim throughout the process has been to cultivate a personally sustainable philosophy of curriculum in order to avoid being callously adapted to an instructional environment. As I work towards this end, I also teach full time in a mainstream public school. I believe this lived situation is foundational to the phenomenological

and developmental point of view I work from as I apply narrative inquiry self-study to my biographic situation.

In my Master's work I focused on building a teacher identity; in doctoral work, the identity upon which I have focused is that of a sustainable educator; an individual I envision as having well-established strategies capable of identifying and removing discriminatory barriers that limit personal growth. I see a sustainable educator as someone who helps to sustain people, communities, and cultures by assisting individuals in transcend limiting situations while offering qualities such as respect and care (adapted from doctoral letter of intent, 2014).

Rooting a Personal Perspective Within My Professional Practice

I would like to clarify that the learning that has had significance for me in my teaching career may or may not hold significance for other teachers in their professional practice. By this statement, I mean that another's best practices may be adequate for them but not necessarily hold true for me. Hence, I take the position that a personal philosophy of education is necessary within one's professional practice in order to sustain the educational value of personal experience within one's professional role. I see such a philosophy taking into account one's personality in terms of its entirety, including past history and present potentiality. One's lifeworld is essential to this position, because the personal facts of an individual's life are unique for each of us. Each practitioner has unique historical and psychic facts that influence their worldview and thus their relationship with their professional practice. And it is this central point that I consider to be fundamental to teaching and learning. It leads me to the conclusion that one should examine who one is across time if a sustainable form of education is to foster a process of growth and maturity. In taking such an approach, I believe that self-study and autobiography matter in terms of how curriculum is taught.

I have no intention of presenting my personal philosophy as a guide for others, but I do believe teachers should use their tacit knowledge to create a personal philosophy of their own. I can say with certainty that it has been personal experience that has been essential to my 9 years of professional practice. Through exploring significant movement in terms of what I believe to be my own maturity, I live the curriculum differently each teaching semester. Where humanistic, existential, and postmodern traditions coincide with a personal approach that focuses on potentiality, my choice is to move away from categorizing my own philosophy according to specific terminology associated with any one group of scholars.

I do, however, believe I follow a common thematic thread found within each field mentioned above, which is the human effort to move away from a rigid approach to living by alternatively embracing the potential within one's life situation. This is to say, I see the work I do with my students reflected within these paradigms; however, a personal philosophy, from my point of view, is ontologically committed to the community and personal situation within which the practitioner exists. Thus, these paradigms may be representative of the experiential work teachers do, but do not necessarily dictate a certian type of philosophy as it relates to the curriculum field. A teacher can be practicing humanistically, existentially, and pragmatically in my experience, without having an in-depth knowledge of the humanistic and pragmatic traditions.

For me then, it is due to the lived course of learning where the individual has the potential to develop in relation to their practice, whether we call this *course of time* becoming a person (Rogers, 1961), self-actualization (Maslow, 1962/2011), individuation (Jung, 1933), or growth (Dewey, 1938). Certainly there is such a phenomenon, and I believe it involves a process of analysis and synthesis between one's personal and social existence. For the purpose of this

dissertation, I specifically focus on the relationship between the personal and the professional and the role a personal philosophy may have in navigating such a space as both relate to my teaching practice. As I understand them, the terms personal and professional relate to a tension that exists between social and individual responsibilities within the curriculum—as has been well articulated by Aoki (2005d) and Pinar (1994). Maturing as a person, I have observed, involves learning to support one's self in relation to society. I view this position as one of the broader functions of curriculum; learning to sustain one's self despite living within the tensions created between personal, social, and environmental requirements of life.

I believe the freedom to realize one's talents and express them in one's life course is needed to sustain education. This situation occurs within the specific conditions of a place and involves the autobiographic experiences of the individuals that share it. In my teaching practice, especially working in my role of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Student Success Teacher, I am becoming acutely aware of the preexistent history, the unlived history, which relates an individual to a community in terms of race, ethnicity, and other personal factors that are the hereditary forerunners to one's existence. I consider the consequences of such factors on curriculum and on one's personal philosophy.

I should acknowledge that it is somewhat artificial to create a distinction between what is preexistent, personal, and professional in terms of what shapes a person's educational experience. What is educationally sustainable belongs to each realm. An educational phenomenon is sustainable if it relates to each experience and allows one to live the best they can in the tension in between.

Tensionality is a concept rooted academically in Ted Aoki's work (2005d). Curricular tension is a phenomenon that I believe is felt and must be examined within professional practice.

My personal perspective is that a subjective mixture of the personal and the professional is needed to sustain an educational course. Moreover, tensionality is a phenomenon that I consider to be closely akin to a process of philosophical awakening—I believe both are important elements of sustainable education.

Developing My Personal Philosophy

In the previous two chapters, I endeavoured to show that a relationship exists between humanistic, pragmatic, existential paradigms, and the curriculum field. In the following chapters, I enter into my personal experience to outline seminal moments that have shaped my philosophy of teaching. I enter these experiences to develop, cultivate, or reconstruct a personal philosophy of curriculum based on my life history. Many of the events occurred before I entered my mainstream teaching practice. To construct a personal philosophy, I start by untangling and moving through a biographic sketch with the aim of cultivating a personal perspective.

I explore a personal struggle cast by the economic decline of a major industry in my home- town. I consider preexistent factors such as ethnicity and heredity in relation to my life course. I encounter subordinating phenomena that I believe are both personal and social in nature. Such phenomena I describe in detail in order to identify points of reference to create a philosophical framework from my life experience. From a series of observations taken from my life, academic readings, and professional practice, I grapple with developing my own terminology in order to name phenomena according to my theorizing. I search for a personalized vocabulary to inform and empower my philosophy of educational practice to help me within my professional work. All of my observations are based on my personal perspective. I relate my observations to my professional practice, to academic scholarship, and the teaching profession.

By doing so, I attempt to ground the personal element of my philosophy within the social element of my existence.

I am of the opinion that a personal philosophy of education is needed to alter one's educational course. I adopt what I perceive to be a fundamental aspect within my mentor's position—that developing tacit knowledge and a personal understanding of academic material should be intellectually rooted, not only in academia but also in personal experience. Shields (2005), while reflecting on her own education, explains her point of view thus:

> The feeling of complete emptiness that I experienced following those three years of academic study of Christian philosophy and hermeneutic exploration was largely based in that disembodied sense of knowing that comes from studying the perspectives of others without making the meta-cognitive leap inward as part of the inquiry process. I remember as I stepped away from the comfort and safety of those years, asking myself what I had lost and naming it, faith. I saw that I had absorbed the lesson too often still perpetuated by us in the modern university: that knowledge is an accumulation of arguments and perspectives of others, and that the job of the student is to acquire as many of these as possible in order to place herself within the position of important others. The forgotten step is the connection to why we might think as we do based on our own tacit knowledge, which we seem to discount in our race to present arguments that appeal to us but that are owned by others. (p. 184)

I reveal educational material to myself by delving through the recurring torrents and vast expanses that belong to the personal elements of my journey into the teaching profession. Although to assume such an approach may seem unorthodox to some, I have learned from my previous experience that personal experience methods can be strikingly illuminating. In an

attempt to help the reader share my perspective, I enter into my own experience. In the field text below, I offer the reader some idea of my own educational transformation as it has appeared to me.

Field Text: First Story of Experience

Rooting My Professional Perspective within Personal Experience

As a young person about to leave university, I wanted to make sure I was ready for a career inside the classroom. For my younger self, this meant having an incredible amount of knowledge, book knowledge, stockpiled to reinforce my teaching approach. In my biology courses at university, I did well on tests because of hours of study. I was very proud of my method and its success. Even now I can't resist the urge to share that I scored high in my university courses because it certainly was, and still is, a personal achievement I am proud of. My intention was to apply this academic approach to my profession through taking a Master's degree in curriculum leadership. Of course a Master's degree is not strictly a book approach, it is also a dialogical one. I met principals running schools and listened eagerly to their insights. I energetically lived through the experiences of great professionals imbued with years of professional practice. I benefited from the wise perspective of professors—some of the most intelligent people I was to meet. There was, however, also the more secretive personal transformation that I knew I needed. And of this I am speaking of my personality and who I was from the place I grew up in, and who I was expected to be within schools. I was looking to find someone very special, and in all honesty, all of this did not exist in a cognitively realized place, but was merely what I needed and didn't expect to find.

Now as I continue to reflect, I take the reader deeper into my past, to my hometown—I realize it is like marrow in my bones. Born within my hometown are many of my hang-ups, the

cultural baggage with which I still struggle, and all of the most painful and powerful elements of my personality—my greatest weaknesses and strengths. Also, from within my past came attributes that were capable of becoming important elements within my future life. From who my parents are, who their parents were, and from my lived history came the experiences and compassion that I was able to share with my future students.

My own stupid choices and the fate of my friends afforded me wisdom and taught me fear and the wisdom that is found within fear. I learned the unforgiving quality of life. I discovered the vulnerability of my mind, my body, and future career. It was also within my hometown that I found my appreciation for freedom. At least I should say, an appreciation for the need to struggle against subordinating factors that are capable of stripping us of our personality and our gifts. I have found such an appreciation to be central to my dignity and my teaching.

Many of my friends and I developed big personalities through the experiences common in small towns, especially ones undergoing economic decline. My personality certainly isn't as intense as it was back then, as I was attempting to break through the surface of the town. To be noticed within the lives of girls, to sustain a level of esteem in the eyes of the boys. How naive it seems in light of all that happened in those years not to consider autobiography as central to curriculum development. It was the beating heart of what happened in my school life.

For instance, I became familiar with the macho curriculum; the Eurocentric elements of my curriculum; the blue-collar worldview; the working class ideologies that all shaped my dialogue and the planned curriculum that was implemented within my school. Fortunately, my mother and father encouraged me to pursue my passions. My father's father, my grandfather, taught that education was important, and my grandfather said he would help finance my father's

education. My father told me the same thing. It made pursuing a postsecondary education real for me.

Acquiring a forward-directed view towards education was important. Within my particular neighbourhood, alcoholism was more than common—it was a rite of passage. Addiction ballooned into all shapes and forms and eventually to many it became so familiar it was seen as normal. I myself held on to two childhood passions—*art and my love for wilderness creatures*. Both of these sustained my education. So too did the encouragement and parenting I received from my mother and father, and that was despite all of my attempts to be a fool and ruin all of the things I had going for me. In my defense, I saw people I thought I knew were good people doing all of the things my parents told me not to do. I thought all of my parents' advice belonged to them and didn't apply to the personal facts of my life. I needed to know the world for myself, and when finally, the personal facts of life were tested against legislative policy, I found my family there to support me along with very few friends.

I ran my ego into conflicting peer groups, and I stood as a person against an established system. I believed in honor as I knew it and blue-collar street values. Within that conflict, I found punishment, weakness, and courage. Above all else, I found how alone one's personal beliefs are if they are isolated from society's conventions and how dearly we can pay for uncompromising beliefs. For the first time, I was stripped naked by policy, and I was given the opportunity to appreciate its power. I saw how good people doing bad things were beaten up by policy, and made ugly by it. And for the first time I came to understand the value of tacit wisdom, and how blatantly disrespecting an established system mutated the lives of many people. And I learned to see policy as valuable. And I knew I would try very hard to not allow what had happened to me

to happen again. I learned the importance of protecting my potential. I became disenchanted for the better.

I was almost removed from a life in schools at 14. Instead, I received a 30-day suspension along with a peace bond. Reflecting from a hopefully more mature place, I can list a few factors that helped to sustain my education, for example, my parents' encouragement and their support for my passion and interest in the peculiarly subjective—my interest in insects, birds, and art—the idea of having financial support to pursue my educational future; my parent's emphasis on the importance of work, being punctual and showing up for work, and working hard to earn money; my parents' sobriety and their concern for my own sobriety and physical health. I liked many of my teachers, who they were and what I believed they stood for; I appreciated their personal interest in their subjects and in who I was.

Unfortunately, I was too stupid, or young, to learn from my mistakes the first time, so second chances were very important for me. It was only until things became very real that I was able to recognize my own arrested development and the arrested development of those around me. There were older people hanging around those of us who were much younger. I risk sounding judgmental here, but part of overcoming my own arrest was realizing that certain mistakes others were making kept them in the same position. As I chose to associate with them, doing so was detrimental to my life. No driver's license, walking to the beer store; smoking and drinking—limiting life to such a routine; stealing; the low rentals—no yard or yellow grass.

Now there is a certain sentimentality that belongs to my perspective as well, which says there are good reasons for particular positions to occur in life. But what helped lift me out of my personal situation, an arrested one, was applying my personal judgment to my life circumstance and even to others around me. This intellectual effort resulted in a process of disillusionment that

occurred for me at 14. I did risk at that age an alternative course, one that I can vividly imagine now, which allows me to appreciate the life I am living. My imagination isn't needed however, the reality I was living was alarming enough. Things like imprisonment, murder, suicide, overdoses were occurring around me. And after all, like many working class kids, my arrest was not metaphorical.

My life now is one that I could hardly imagine then. And I firmly believe it is a lack of awareness and imagination that placed me under arrest—and I had more opportunities than most. Looking back, what was possibly needed more than imagination was disillusionment. I consider both important properties of tacit wisdom. To idolize crime, drugs, drinking, fighting, sex, and unprotected sex was to have the conviction that I was more powerful than life and that I would survive despite inviting such dangers. To do so was reckless, stupid, and unwise—therefore unsustainable—and unfortunately, characteristics that were not uncommon in the youth around me.

Years later I came to reexamine such experiences as I entered into a Master's degree program. I met my mentor and current supervisor. I read one of her articles in which she spoke of polio's paralyzing effects. She explains it like this:

> My flight from remaining a polio 'victim' seems to me to have resulted in the wish to work against any force that entraps or ensnares. Indeed, my life's work appears to be enmeshed in a desire to liberate myself and others from situations that limit possibilities. Has all this been a move to replicate my own sense of power over my physiological destiny? (Shields, 2005, p. 182)

Separated by years of age, by place of origin, what I found myself awakening to was a shared experience. I suppose I thought of it as a *similar difference* within our personal histories.

Her fight against polio, for me, somehow paralleled my experience with living in a town struggling with the effects of a declining steel industry. When I speak of the experience, I am referring not merely to the financial, but also to the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects that are all different parts of the same struggle. They were the elements that paralyzed and claimed the lives of many people I knew. She introduced me to the work of William Pinar, through which I rediscovered my own experience intellectually through his notion of arrested development.

Pinar speaks of arrest in relation to the curriculum. I personalize his vocabulary and often think in terms of conviction. I have come to see my teenage years and life altogether as somewhat of a trial. I believe we are convicted by our own beliefs, which are ultimately what arrest us. Our uncompromising convictions can take us to a place of *intellectual poverty* or intellectual imprisonment. It was my conviction that violence, multiple partners, rebellion, coolness, would lead to esteem and acceptance. Of course, these things would only lead me to a very small and utterly empty world.

At least that's how I have come to see it. But through the very ugliness of my experiences, my professional destiny was formulating. Regarding my personality, the conflicts and tensions between my personal and social existence allowed for my eventual maturity and a real sense of empathy for others. The lived curriculum can be a very dangerous place, perhaps especially so for youth in general. For tacit wisdom to be effective, my personal view is that we have to realize that we are as capable of convicting ourselves to a particular *life sentence* as we are responsible for robbing ourselves of our own freedom.

Research Text: Personalizing Terminology

Intelligentsia Crematoria—A Description of Standardization

Standardization seems to me to work as a sort of hellfire that forms illusions and casts shadows, concealing personal truths from view. I am reminded of how Plato's cave dwellers denied the personal perspective of an individual who left the cave and returned to describe a world outside the cave chamber and shadows cast by its firelight. Standardization, as I have come to see it, is the conviction that a situation is inescapable, which makes a personal perspective increasingly difficult to access. It may be characterized as the forceful possession of intelligence through a condition that moves an individual cognitively towards conformity. Standardization can lead to a life committed to delusion. In my view, standardization purposely disregards facts that are unique to individuals' lives and so promotes a deceptive way of thinking, including self-deception. The result is an educational problem. Throughout my biographic development, from young person to adult to teacher, I have subjectively felt the imprisoning effects of being arrested (Pinar, 1994, 2011), technicized (Aoki, 2005d), and paralyzed (Shields, 2005). I use the term standardization in a broad sense, and I believe the phenomenon results from denying personal facts in order to move towards a generalized position.

On Standardization as a Prison Sentence

By adopting a standardized position across time, I believe the accumulated result becomes increasingly groundless and oblivious to the realms of tacit knowledge and critical reflection. A standardized individual repeats a *sentence—they continue to convict themselves by telling themselves the same story over and over again.* The result of this *self-sentencing* is that one's stories are stories that remain the same, the phenomenal process of again and again which

forms the causal links in a chain that imprisons—it standardizes and commits an individual to reliving consecutive life sentences.

Curriculum Recourse and Self-Recovery

As has been said by critical pedagogues (Foster, 1993; Freire, 1973, 1970/1996; Giroux, 1988b; Greene, 1978; Kincheloe, 2003), an educator can break free of a standardized position by awakening to personal facts and by reconstructing meaning out of his or her personal situation by thinking about it critically. By doing so, an intellectual space is created for self-seeking within the curriculum. That is, if an individual is able to recognize and take responsibility for the stories that limit them. To move towards a new story means moving away from insistent illusions, confused ideas, unjustified excuses, and most especially the escapist attitude that moves an individual away from their own truths. For self-actualized critical educators, the conservative—*I can't*—attitude has become unconvincing.

Although this position is always relative to political and sociohistorical opportunities, to reach a personally sustainable philosophy of curriculum, I believe one must take the hammer of inquiry and shatter a glass prison—shattering dogmatic conviction, shattering delusion, shattering self-deception. To move away from the standardized curriculum—to transcend seemingly deterministic factors, a new story must be conceived. By recognizing the personal facts that limit us, our glass prison is revealed. What was once insurmountable may be exposed as fragile and ephemeral.

An Invisible Room

Postmodern curriculum theory, critical pedagogy, and existentialism recognize an approach that addresses considerations of voice as it awakens to itself, as well as affirming the educational value of expressing alternative perspectives in an effort not to be silenced within

bureaucratic formalism or any one particular method of knowing (Greene, 1978; Kilgore, 2004; Slattery, 2006). In my past, my convictions and immaturity, as exemplified in the story of my high school altercation, led me to believe that I held a privileged position in relation to the curriculum; my undisciplined attitude resulted in a form of wisdom that escaped my personal philosophy.

My unwillingness to awaken to my hubris and insolence was a result of what I believe Jean Paul Sartre (1943) describes as *bad faith*: a type of lie one tells oneself to avoid the pain of realizing they are wrong. The consequence of bad faith is a limited view based on one's own beliefs. When Sartre read Freud's case studies, for example, he concluded that the root of the patients' psychoses were conscious—examples of bad faith. What I take from Sartre is that a lack of awareness cannot be an excuse for being complicit or ignorant. To sustain learning within my personal philosophy, I use Sartre's concept of bad faith as a reminder to be honest with myself and to sustain this way of being for my students.

Field Text: Story Number One Revisited

Trap and Trial: Deceptive Charms of a Teenage Headspace

All of the mundane things that seemed so dull to me during my teenage years slowly became the cornerstones and foundation capable of lifting me up out of places that were so costly and so alluring. As I matured, the mundane aspects of life began to sparkle in a new and enjoyable light—my morning coffee, so much better. A lazy fishing trip, that much more rewarding. And a book read quietly, so much more fulfilling. Within quietude I found room to grow.

In contrast are my early years, filled with a noisy euphoric messiness, the crew and myself, the air electric—bringing midnight hours to life. Within that chaos, there seemed to be

no time for reflection. The streets were filled with all varieties of nonsense. Ending with us up to watch the sunrise, bottles in hand. We would look out at the city, eyes wild, intoxicated, and twinkling. We would talk about how this is it—this is what it is all about. Saying cheers to all of the girls and the parties that lead to all kinds of trouble. To the bars, the broken windows, and the bar fights, to the best of times. To all of the bruises valued beyond belief, beyond reason. To all of the poor choices that lead to the stories that were idolized and mystified. To the dark corners of a steel city in decline.

Curriculum of the Corridor

Using Pinar's *currere* I analyze my storied experience by moving within William James's (1910/2010) description of pragmatism. Where *currere* is essential to unlocking a learning space, I see James's description of pragmatism allowing me to travel in and out of my storied experiences. James (1910/2010) describes pragmatism thus:

> [Pragmatism] lies in the midst of our theories, like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith and strength; in a third a chemist investigating a body's properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into or out of their respective rooms. (p. 31)

As I move from room to room, through the low rentals, through the nightlife, through the risky world of my teenage past, I look into rooms that I see—now at my age—as places I would rather not be, but as seminal places worth reflecting on. Through my investigation, I realize that the corridor is valuable not only in its ability to take us somewhere new, but also in its ability to

take us away from somewhere we have already been. To walk away is not a cowardly act; at times it is a great act of courage. The curriculum of the corridor can be a way out.

On the Phenomenology of No and Surviving Teenagehood

If only I knew in high school the navigational potency of the word no—such a powerful force in terms of self-recovery and revival—an indispensable property of transcendence and a possible means to redemption. If we could, as young people, understand that we will be older and who that person is will matter to us in time. If only we could see a future and a path that would take us somewhere satisfying. *You only live once*—those famous last words that are too closely followed by—*it won't happen to me* and then by—*I can't believe it happened.*

Teenage years can lead to a wasteland that for many becomes a settlement for hopes and dreams and all other things that belong to the future—to what wastes away with the young—to the tattoo that will never be on an old body. To the blind eyes of the youth that in their rush believe they see everything. To all of the overvalued treasures that shone so brilliantly and brought such extraordinary pride and a sense of worth to silly, embarrassing, and unimportant things. I realize those unimportant things were, during those years, so much more. And only through time they became much less. Of course, it is only through time that these things register. And the same things for the young are not the same for the old. I doubt they will ever be properly valued by either because I think it is only in youth and old age that we place value in things—the things themselves are never independent of time. Time seems to be a great transformer.

Research Text: Reflecting On an Acritical Attitude

Principles of Growth and Continuity

I can see that an acritical attitude towards my learning was a barrier obstructing my maturity. By maturity, I am referring to Dewey's (1938) concept of growth and his principle of

continuity, where one is required to consider the effects of an experience on future experiences. Dewey asks us: "Does this form of growth create conditions for further growth, or does it set up conditions that shut off the person who has grown in this particular direction from the occasions, stimuli, and opportunities for continuing growth in new directions?" (p. 36).

Dewey's concept of growth, then, is related to what I describe as the *phenomenology of no*. I see such a phenomenon as a change in attitude—a reconstruction of habit, which allows a new story to be brought into being. The phenomenology of no, which moves us in one direction and away from another, must be an important force within sustainable education. By making such a move, personal facts are created by knowing how to go about a new way of Being through doing things differently. In order to apply life lessons to my teaching practice, I ground myself theoretically in Palmer's (1993) notion of the three necessary ingredients for any learning space: "openness, boundaries, and an air of hospitality" (p. 71). Palmer tells us:

> To create space is to remove the impediments to learning that we find around and within us, to set aside the barriers behind which we hide so that truth cannot seek us out. We not only "find" these obstacles around and within us; we often create them ourselves to evade the challenge of truth and transformation. So creating a learning space means resisting our own tendency to clutter up our consciousness and our classrooms. (p. 71)

Tensions Lived Between Life Stages

To grow up, to open my eyes, I had to integrate the best parts of my life into who I was becoming, developing a crystal body (see Ethics and Validity section) that allowed me to express myself in a new and genuine way. Growing up required a rediscovery of my childhood interests. It involved asking, "Why should I put myself in a position that compromises my integrity?" and knowing "I don't have to"—that powerful notion that directs what is being added on to and what

is to be set aside—I add this principle to my philosophical position. I refer to the principle as the *phenomenology of K-no-W*. This cheeky expression places No within knowing.

Field Text: Rediscovering My Passion for Wilderness Creatures

A Curriculum of Discovery

Moving further into my past I arrive at my childhood cottage. As a child, I used to walk along the beach. Through the act of opening up clamshells, I affirmed the cottage was a dream world. I would wait for Lake Superior to breathe in—as she did she revealed an astonishing variety of secrets, opening up a library of biological forms. Once revealed, I would then take a radical leap into my own wonderings. Each creature seemed to have a purpose as it dwelled meaningfully within a particular place. For me the creatures were like gemstones.

Along her shoreline, Superior revealed her age through cobblestone and sand glass. Otherworldly treasures, like driftwood, could be loaded into my paddle boat and transported to my grandmother's garden—to later be periodically turned over to uncover centipedes and pill bugs and other squirmy critters which had taken up residence underneath.

My father had a small boat we would use to travel to a sandbar, which provided a nesting site for terns. As unwelcomed guests during breeding season, the birds would dive bomb us like kamikaze fighters. I remember fishing along the sandbar—a delightful experience in itself—and having a large northern pike on my fishing line. In the commotion, my father dropped his gaff overboard. The water was clear and shallow; the gaff could be seen sitting on the sandy bottom. My dad jumped in, the water only up to his knees, and I remember the large fish swimming in the water around him—it was very exciting to me. After the fish and the gaff were in the boat, we visited a blue heron rookery nearby. Cormorants had killed the vegetation on one side of the island by defecating on it. Such travels were brilliantly alive, offering endless sources of wonder.

Research Text: Experiencing a Place of Genius

Recognizing My Privilege

> The record books say [my grandfather] (sometimes mistakenly reported as Podolsky) was born in Winnipeg but he was raised in Manitoba's far north. He grew up in the Great Depression in a dirt-poor town called Ethelbert, where his father farmed and ran the local hotel. He later would land a job in the mines further north in The Pas, Manitoba. (http://www.greatesthockeylegends.com/2015/08/nels-podolski.html)

The cottage was a place purchased by my grandparents. I am grateful my grandparents provided such a dwelling in my life. The cottage was a place of genius. It existed as a green paradise full of mystery. A place full of adventure and was a site that invited exploration. It provided a milieu that exercised my curiosity and *my childhood passion for woodland creatures*. Indeed, it was a great contribution to my own development. Inheriting a right to share the cottage with my family was a fortunate aspect of my lived curriculum and a privilege. At the cottage, my family members would place a towel on a giant granite drop stone in order to sit and sunbath—the stone's glacial placement was to provide a position we all benefited from.

Conclusion

As I end this chapter, I feel I have not only identified meaningful situations in my life, I have also begun to orient my philosophical position in the present. I see that I struggled with external factors such as the enormity of impoverishing economic conditions, which intensify personal hardships. I wish to contribute in a real way to helping others transcend difficult situations.

To help others, I recognize that I have to begin with myself. I had to recognize my own arrest and the intellectually limiting assumptions that prevented my development. I was not in a

position to help anyone until I had reflected on my own experience critically. I had to recognize which gifts and elements within my life would move me forward, towards my own growth and maturity. I had to admit that many situations were beyond my control, and I was not in a position to resolve them. In many cases I found I was better off to avoid specific places and people; I admit I abandoned them. I see that the situations in which I can play a part are reconstructive and sometimes that reconstruction involves letting go and at other times it means holding on to certain experiences in order to live towards a particular future.

In terms of teaching and my educational experience, my response to such life lessons has meant institutionalizing my identity. At first, my response meant moving my passion for science and art towards pursuing an undergraduate degree in art and science. Then I responded to my past by training and practicing as an art and science teacher. Now I consider how certain elements of my past life are moving me towards a Student Success teaching role. And I see that time and experience have placed me in a better position to help those I was unable to help in my youth. In a way, it is as if I have returned home to a different time. In the next chapter, I begin the progressive phase of *currere* and I start thinking critically about how I intend to intellectually navigate my experiences within my current teaching role.

CHAPTER FOUR: DEVELOPING PROFESSIONALLY: BRINGING THE PAST FORWARD: PROGRESSION

The second step of *currere* is the progressive phase. I start this chapter by returning to my present position and begin by reflecting on my current role as a secondary school teacher. Specifically, I reflect on how my private life and current teaching practice form an interdependent relationship conceptually and temporally. By bringing my past life lessons forward into the present, I now consider how I intend to thoughtfully and carefully navigate future experiences within my role as a Student Success teacher—which focuses on supporting students with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit heritage. I also consider my undergraduate experience and lessons learned there. When needed, I return to the regressive phase of *currere* to untangle cognitive experiences that I find myself struggling within the present as I work within my Student Success role. I find I have to move further into the past in order to think about the future clearly. I do, however, progress further into my intellectual work by considering how I shall go about my future actions in my present position.

Sustaining an Educational State of Being

A Personal Philosophy Grasped Through Professional Practice

I am not building my personal philosophy of professional practice solely on the result of reading academic articles based on teaching and learning. My personal philosophy is primarily based on instructing secondary school courses and learning from lived experiences within them. Of course the articles and academic sources cited in this chapter are invaluable, but foremost I use my years of professional practice as a secondary school teacher to formulate the professional element of my personal philosophy. Therefore, I place an emphasis on the curriculum as lived. Thus, my philosophical formulations presented in this chapter are gleaned from my daily

professional practice and are cultivated according to the wealth of situations and events I observe as a person as I go about my role as a secondary school teacher.

For students, I believe a similar statement holds true as they steer through their school life much as I did myself in the past. I put my knowledge of curriculum theory through the test of personal experience each school day— a test that cannot be empirically repeated in any strict objective sense. As I have become aware, a school classroom reflects the Greek philosopher Heraclitus's observation—it never stands in the same river twice. Each semester it is the temporal rhythm of life that ultimately tests my academic knowledge. Its validity, for me, is known through my professional practice. Through my life course including my years of teaching students from many different backgrounds, I come to understand whether academic material is educationally sustainable within my teaching practice or not. Certain aspects of curriculum theory may be sustained with certain students at certain times, but certainly not at every moment or even from semester to semester. I believe curriculum is sustainable only if it is tested within one's autobiography in the living present and must find value there.

The experiences described in Chapter Three express my attempts to reconstruct personal experience across time and mark the beginning of my personal philosophy through which later experiences are to be considered. Notions such as tacit wisdom, the curricular tension between the personal and the professional, personal facts, and standardization are to act as terms of reference in relation to the biographic sketches I render in this chapter. I do not try to capture a simple formula or believe in reducing personal experiences to authoritarian principles of practice—but rather, I think in terms of reference—lessons specific to events and situations derived from my teaching and life experience. I use them to gain clarity in terms of my own

thinking and professional practice. I try to reciprocally develop such terms by considering academic material in relation to my mainstream teaching practice and personal life experience.

Basic Postulates of a Biographic Sketch

By regressing to earlier stages of my development and examining past experiences with a present-day lens, I create the building blocks for my philosophy, which I believe will ultimately help me navigate my Student Success teaching role. I do so in order to begin the phase of pursuing the personal curriculum within my professional practice. In my professional practice, I try not to lose sight of the educational significance of past autobiographic events. In the present, I find myself thinking of myself as a young man who has grown up in a northern community. A steel town kid is a label I wouldn't find disagreeable. My dad is a steelworker, my mom worked as a dental secretary. My dad coached my hockey team. I was born in Canada, while both of my parents were born in the United States. I had friends from the Reserve growing up. I lost one of them.

After experiencing my own run-in with legislative policy and the school code of conduct, after seeing people I was fond of struggle in their own lives, after I saw many people terribly misunderstood, I wanted to become a teacher. And as a teacher, I certainly will never be perfect, far from it. I have fallen short many times. At 14, however, the events in my life during that time made me start thinking about a career in teaching. During my suspension, I was so bored because most of my friends were still in school. I was in grade 9, at home alone. And I had nothing to do. So, I picked up a bird book that was sitting on my television station. And I watched the birds that would land in the ash tree in my front yard and gather together on the ground around it. I observed them through a tiny window in my kitchen. I would name them and check them off in the bird book. I really did start to become serious about my schooling and interest in biology that

year. I didn't want my world to remain so confined. It was while looking through the window—to the birds, the visitors, to the outside world that I noticed that I yearned to be part of it. I saw myself entering into the world through my education, by sustaining or establishing my position in the world through study and by moving away from actions and behaviours that would continue to limit me.

Under the Ash Tree: A Sign of Spring

Figure 1. Spring.

Thinking back, I am proud of my response to my high school reprimand. I did continue to make stupid choices growing up, but I began to take more pride in my education and I learned to appreciate the gifts it afforded me. And the forces that pulled me down were countered by my education, which seemed to lift me up. I graduated high school with honours. I was still very rough around the edges. I entered university and found many gifts there too. Gifts that made me want to grow towards life. In the next two sections, I consider the interdependence between my

postsecondary education and my Student Success role, which grew out of my experiences in high school.

Field Text: A Biographic Sketch: Autobiography and Personal Prehistory

One of the greatest gifts from my postsecondary school experience was learning about causality and the stunning improbability of my existence. I learned how a remote history has shaped my present condition. Education is related to the past and the life experience of our ancestors. As their historical experiences come to consciousness again through curricular acquisitions, the past is brought into the present. The value of autobiography within curriculum and its importance to sustainable education has become apparent to me through my professional work. For example, in my newly acquired role of First Nation, Métis and Inuit Student Success Teacher, I reexperience my European ancestry. My position has led me to experience a greater interest in examining preexistent experience as it relates to autobiography. To apprehend a deeper understanding of my biography in relation to the curriculum and my current role, I enter into my own prehistory. By prehistory, I am referring to the cultural and historical past that relates my lived experience to experiences that occurred before my existence.

This direction has led me to view curriculum differently, as it has exposed the relationship between the personal and the planned curriculum through the felt curriculum. This shift involves a move inward and further back in time. As I intend to show, the connection between a person and society in relation to the planned curriculum can appear through personal feelings. How the curriculum feels in relation to personal facts is further evidence, in my opinion, of the importance of autobiography in one's professional practice.

Initially I had no intention of including a prehistory within my biographic sketch, which is possibly due to my European orientation towards curriculum—a confession that is

embarrassingly revealing. Only recently have I found it necessary to examine the question—how far back does my biography extend, through ancestral forms to the beginning of life? The field of biology has demonstrated how human beings are connected to all life forms. Certainly what one considers in life relates to cultural ideas derived through tradition and ancestry. Through my work, I think I also know that the precursors in history to one's particular cultural difficulties create strong undercurrents within the lived curriculum. Built up gradually across time are preexistent elements that influence our personal narratives. The effects of prehistory have become a phenomenon of paramount importance to me in my teaching practice. It seems to me now that curriculum involves an encounter or collision with the world of the past. In my present position, I know this fact that has been painfully apparent to Indigenous people for far too long.

Crossing the threshold of time and becoming lived experiences in the present, I find that a considerable proportion of these preexisting facts have become personal factors in my present, often occurring unconsciously at first, but eventually becoming perceptions and tensions I have to carefully consider when teaching the curriculum. Unfortunately, I know that a white male such as me can easily experience the ethnic properties of his past as vague. This cognitive ambiguity and ignorance offers me no excuse. I have found that conceptualizing experience that has not been acquired during a lifetime can become a strong force shaping my worldview. A personal philosophy cannot afford to ignore the past. For example, one's colour of skin stretches back through time, is revealed at birth, and continues to reveal itself across a lifespan.

Research Text: On Autobiography and the Cosmic Perspective

Are we one species—a young species on one planet? These questions provide a powerful categorical perspective that does not lessen the tension between facts that preexist lived

experience. This perspective is incumbent on causality. Laboriously, I became familiar with it during my undergraduate years as a biology student.

As I was to learn, fluctuations in cosmic microwave background radiation were observable and detected by the Cosmic Background Explorer satellite (COBE), which displays irregularities or fluctuations described by Stephan Hawking (1996) as fingerprints of creation. They are said to be irregularities in the otherwise smooth primeval universe. These fluctuations are explained by science as the progenitors of stars, galaxies, and all that is observable.

As existential philosophers, astronomers, and also evolutionary biologists have stated, our sun is a rather average star and our small planet appears, from the cosmic perspective—a pale blue dot—a small place containing all of human history (Sagan, 1980/2010). Human history itself has existed for a tiny run of time compared to the history of other organisms on the planet. This humbling perspective destroys all aspects of mediocrity for me and has provided my personal philosophy with a term of reference I call *extra-ordinary perception*. The notion refers to the fact that what is often considered humdrum always has the potential to be astonishing, even magisterial. This type of perception recognizes the privilege of living. After all, life is often unremarkable, providing us with a double sentiment—it is beyond words, and in the end, it is breathtaking.

I think of extra-ordinary phenomena as phenomena that really matter and at the same time, are commonplace and often underappreciated—the existentialists have had much to say about them—the extraordinary within an ordinary position. Evolutionary biologists have used elegant prose to educate the public about the significance of such phenomena. As a young biology student I was first introduced to this position through the writings of Richard Dawkins (1998/2000). The following text has been significant in terms of my own *currere*.

> We are going to die, and that makes us the lucky ones. Most people are never going to die because they are never going to be born. The potential people who could have been here in my place but who will in fact never see the light of day outnumber the sand grains of Arabia. (Dawkins, 1998/2000, p. 1)

This scientific, rationalistic perspective is foundational to the first point of reference that underpins my personal philosophy of curriculum, which is sustaining a level of gratitude for the astronomically improbable fact that I am alive and that it is an extraordinarily improbable occurrence. It is the epic ordinariness of life that can often cause us to ask why we should bother getting up in the morning; one answer may be because doing so is a marvel—a statement strongly supported by scientific evidence.

> In the teeth of these stupefying odds it is you and I, in our ordinariness [that are here] . . . . Most conceptuses end in early abortion before their mother even knew they were there, and we are all lucky not to have done so. (p. 1)

I move through these quotes using the method of *currere* that I described in Chapter Two, my Methodology chapter, and I delve into the text to reconstruct my philosophical position. Entire chapters and books and authors' canons do not speak to me in the way Dawkins's words did during my undergraduate years. This is not to say I believe Richard Dawkins's words are incredibly unique—Carl Sagan in his work makes a similar point, along with many existentialist philosophers I read later on. For, example, French existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1977/1972), while reflecting on her womanhood, writes:

> The penetration of that particular ovum by that particular spermatozoon, with its implications of the meeting of my parents and before that of their birth and the births of all their forebears, had not one chance in hundreds of millions of coming about. And it

> was chance, a chance quite unpredictable in the present state of science that caused me to be born a woman. From that point on, it seems to me that a thousand different futures might have stemmed from every single movement of my past: I might have fallen ill and broken off my studies; I might not have met Sartre; anything at all might have happened. (p. 9)

And Hannah Arendt (1958/1998), in *The Human Condition*, also situates her philosophical position within the incalculable quintessence of natality. Arendt insists we were born not to die but rather to live anew through the initiative that animates our words and deeds. According to Arendt, in beginning something we take on the responsibility and privilege of generating a new course through our actions. Her work acknowledges our Selves as the impetus of a chain of being capable of transcending the futility of a mortal life. It was within Dawkins' (1998/2000) book, though, that I first conceptualised the "miracle" of my birth and I became very grateful for my education—and my existence. In terms of a personal philosophy, I strongly believe that narrative knowing along with categorical knowing are both needed if the curriculum is to sustain its educational value.

Field Text: My Sister and Her Boyfriend

Thinking about my skin colour, the colour of my eyes, my genetics, I see that skin colour and traits like race are part of our lives and have an inescapable part to play in our education. I think about how such factors affected my sister and my relationship during our university years. My sister is an extraordinary athlete. She was blessed with natural gifts that carried her from Canada into the United States on an athletic scholarship.

> 2006: Ranked first on the team in every offensive category ... goals (8), assists (9), points (25) ... four of her goals were game-winners against Murray State, Toledo, Cleveland

> State, and MSU ... named to the MVC Women's Soccer All-Centennial team ... also named first-team All-MVC ... 2006 MVC Scholar-Athlete first-team ... broke every offensive statistic in the books at Indiana State, setting new career standards in points (61), goals (22), and assists (17). (The Official Athletics Website of Indiana State, 2017)

On Facticity and Assumption

In Indiana, she met, possibly, her first love. Indiana offered diversity and an educational paradigm very different than that of our hometown. By travelling to somewhere new, she was able to differentiate the two places and submit them to critique. She came home to note a lack of diversity. A new view was made available to me when she came home that year—operating within unity we risk developing a false sense of harmony which, as my sister proved, may be challenged when we are transported from somewhere to somewhere different. She was able to distinguish certain prejudices hidden within our hometown's uniformity. And she was also forced to suffer through them.

Within the colour of my sister's boyfriend's skin I placed all of my fears and the stereotypes I had learned from media portrayals. I knew very few people of colour growing up in my northern town. And even if I did meet a few, why would my knowledge of who they were affect my idea of who he was going to be? I confabulated a false notion without any experiential evidence to support my conviction. I weaved together an elaborate fantasia and, when I met him, I realized I was a fool. Again, I was found guilty of convicting myself to a set of ideas dissociated from personal experience and again, in Aoki's (2005) words, I was required to listen to curriculum in a new key.

Research Text: The Significance of Inquiry and Critical Reflection

In Light of Inquiry

On the bases of my reflection, I provide myself with the following advice: The deepest essence of curriculum is found within lived experience. The intelligence involved in feeling out a lived situation before formulating a prescription preserves our humanity and delivers us from vice. So I see I was responsible for giving birth to my demons. Their supernatural quality only constituted through the ungrounded position of a novice observer. I had neglected the potential life experience had to make my chimeras recognizable. Personal inquiry shines a light. And in gaining this new light, I am fully aware now that my sister's boyfriend and my hometown are anything but uniform. I hope my eyes are beginning to adjust to the world outside of Plato's cave.

Concerning the Tension Between Preexistence and Lived Experience

What is inherited in terms of eye colour, a family's economic situation, a city's economic condition? Race and personal factors are felt within the curriculum. So is the tension between Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives in Canada. Factors that preexist lived experience form a source of curricular tension that, ready or not, a practitioner will have to apply their tacit wisdom to.

It is clear to me that before I was born, personal factors were in motion that were to influence my life experience. Do I have my mother's eyes—my grandfather's hands? Such elements from the past move into the present. But if the hands are mine, and not my grandfather's, isn't my perspective incarnated anew, and in this way shouldn't I be free? How others look at me is related to the tension one experiences as part of the relationship between prehistory and lived experience. Sartre (1943) called certain hereditary elements one's *facticity*

and didn't make much of them. In my experience, it is difficult not to. My white skin means something different to me than it does to Indigenous students. What does it mean for the curriculum? I see that a form of educational ancestry moves into the curriculum, arriving from the past.

Recently, for example, I found myself asking, what does my last name mean? What significance might it have for the curriculum? Personal factors relate to standards of professional practice and to understanding one's professional role differently. There is not a way to know another's experience in the same way they do. Maybe the best we can do is to treat our own experience in a way that is understandable to ourselves and remain open to situations and events that others want to share as part of their lived experience.

Field Text: Entering Into an Ideology of Policy

A Polish Canadian Poem

> The extirpation of the Polish intelligentsia was part of a systematic program to destroy Polish culture. Education, the heart of a nation's culture, was singled out for elimination. "The Poles," [Nazi Governor General Hans] Frank said, "do not need universities or secondary schools; the Polish lands are to be changed into an intellectual desert." (Lukas, 2012/1986, p. 10)
>
> "The Fuhrer told me . . . we must watch out for the seeds that begin to sprout again" (Lukas, 1986/2012, p. 8)

The territorial expansion of Nazi Germany. An acquisition of living space for German colonists. Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf and its ideology of race. All women, all men, all children. A war against the Polish people. My name, my father's name, my grandfather's and so on and again, push aside and push down for the ideology of Lebensraum and its settlers.

No mercy, no pity, no Polish descent. A territorial policy with its explicit permissions. Systematic cleansing. September 1939. No intelligence, no clergy, no leadership, no power. No schools. No universities. No Polish boy. No PhD. Intelligentsia crematoria—an age of Untermenschen. Disappear from this world Polish people.

To fulfill a policy, kill them without mercy. The language and history—the descendants, the ideology of a race. Put them through human experimentation and organized starvation. Program slave labour. Use spiritual leaders as material for experimentation and torture. From the start, Mein Kampf—a policy, an ideology of race. The Polish peoples, the Poles, the dumb Pollacks of Warsaw fighting with shovels and pitchforks.

At the age of 14, terrified of experiencing my first kiss, so all of the ordinary things seem so blessed—at the age of 14, slave labour camps, starvation, and disease. My heart, my chest, my cotton shirt—to be labeled with a purple "P"—an ideological mark to claim an acquisition. To realize a plan—territorial expansion, to systematically cleanse a living space. To kill without mercy.

Ban transportation—all Poles will flicker and disappear. First, behind segregated barracks. Occupy their mind. A state of terror—a terror state, a prison. Sexual barracks, the fear of racial defilement. Define their organs according to ideology. The physical defilement of the body. My mouth, my first real kiss at 14—a subhuman sexuality. My racial category defying a policy enforced by death—an unforgivable predisposition?

To realize territorial expansion—girls, women, mass rape, and execution—all Poles will disappear. My sister. From the start, the war against Poland—a plan of territorial expansion—a terror state—Lebensraum—Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf—young women kidnapped and raised in

brothels. The elimination of spirit, the Germanization of politics, economics, and culture—a policy-driven achievement for the knowing carriers of the best blood.

Close schools and rename the streets for the German Reich—libraries, museums, scientific institutes and laboratories, flicker and disappear. Liquidate all content, the national monuments and historic treasures. All personal treasures disappear. Close down the universities and high schools and engage in the systematic murder of Polish teachers and scholars. This happened (Lukas, 1986/2012). Now, a Polish Canadian teacher writing his dissertation reflects on the past, on his hands, his body, his organs, and his name. Policy searches for imperfection, ideology finds imperfection—both are derived from humanity and of course humanity is imperfect and so we experience the reality of ideas.

Research Text: A Need for Tacit Wisdom

Professional Assimilation and The Power It Holds

It is illusory to believe that we can be transformed into reliable figures possessed and endowed with great authority by merely abiding by policy. Once this fact is realized, tending to an awareness of the autobiographic becomes that much more important, and adopting a policy acritically becomes something that is that much more necessary to resist.

If we are simply actors fulfilling a role, I believe our power can become destructive as it pushes the personal aspect of professional identity to its capacity at the risk of collapsing the personal element of the curriculum altogether. As humans we do not, in reality, possess an "all-encompassing" wisdom from policy—far from it. Aoki (2005d) calls this assimilation to one's role the risk of "sameness." Without being subjected to one's own criticism, the practitioner can begin to believe in a form of external insight—which lacks a genuine personality and connection to the lives they teach. The policy works through them. Such standardized professionals are

endowed with infinite capacity to preach, rationalize, and potentially harm. Dependent on policy and expectation, a "professional" form of tyranny can be carried to its extreme and is free to demoralize the biographic and personal elements of the curriculum. The people within a classroom are no longer persons but are represented categorically or statistically. An attitude of humility is lacking. Personally, I think humility is perhaps the chief virtue needed to sustain tacit wisdom and a personal philosophy of curriculum. In terms of a personalized terminology, I think in terms of humanizing the facts. Otherwise a lack of decency can be the result as one's professional position becomes too cold for the heart to hold on to.

> Polish children were to go to work at age twelve, sometimes as early as ten, and if they attended school at all they were subjected to a process of Germanization. German teachers taught them only enough of the German language so the children could understand what orders to obey. (Lukas, 1986/2012, p. 10)

Field Text: The Third Reich, Nazi Germany, My Grandfather, and Me

The Battle of the Bulge

In the Battle of the Bulge, my American grandfather fought against Nazi Germany. After his passing, American soldiers fired the 21 gun salute. He lived for a century. He earned a bronze star. I believe he fought against the idea of a dreamt-up standardized individual. I believe it is important, now that his living memory is gone, that I do not forget what he fought for. As the living memory of the people that fought in the world wars moves farther into the past, it is all that much more important that I carry the memory of my grandfather with me into the future. The horrors of the 20th century are not impossible in the 21st century—we must continue to recognize human beings for who they are outside of a bureaucratic structure that appears to impose an abstracting will.

In Don Cygan's and Leo Barron's (2013) book No Silent Night: The Christmas Battle for Bastogne*, my grandfather was interviewed and quoted. He fought in the dead cold of winter, on Christmas morning, in a battle in which the Germans almost captured the Belgian town of Bastogne. My grandfather drove an M18 Hellcat Tank Destroyer in C Company of the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, which Cygan describes as being instrumental in fighting off the German attack. During the battle, Cygan notes, paratroopers could hardly fight off the German tanks—the arrival of the tank destroyers, hidden in the groves of trees, fired on German tanks, destroying them.*

To me, my grandfather was not only a soldier, he was the individual that walked with me through the forest when I was younger. There with him, I would catch bugs and turn over rocks. He would put out feed for the birds and deer. He was kind of cantankerous at times, he had a temper, but he was also kind, and I had no doubt that he loved me. He lived to be 100 years old. In all that time I can only imagine what he had seen. When I would go to say goodbye, he'd say "you teach those kids."

> *Let the world never see such a Christmas night again! To die, far from one's children, one's wife and mother, under the fire of guns, there is no greater cruelty. To take away a son from his mother, a husband from his wife, a father from his children, is it worthy of a human being? Life can only be for love and respect. At the sight of ruins, of blood and death, universal fraternity will rise.*
>
> —Quote discovered by schoolmaster Monsieur Schmitz and several Americans written on a chalkboard at the local school in Champs, Belgium, after the Christmas Day battle. The author was likely a German officer from the 77th Volksgrenadier Regiment. (Cygan, 2013, Epigraph)

Research Text: Whose Story to Tell?

Characteristics of Freedom and Limitation

> Kirkland Lake would always be home for [my Canadian grandfather] but he left soon thereafter. The Montreal Royals called by 1942, and then the Galt Canadians, who were sponsored by a soda-bottling outfit. Podolski had tasted too much poverty as a kid, and treated hockey like a job. He would go where the money would take him.
>
> That meant enlisting in the Navy towards the end of World War II. He was stationed in Halifax where he was able to play in the competitive Halifax Senior Hockey League. (http://www.greatesthockeylegends.com/2015/08/[...]-podolski.html)

It would almost seem romantic if my American grandfather fought for the freedom of my Polish heritage, but there is grotesque fratricide that goes along with war. A narrative of my Polish Canadian identity is riddled with holes, yet maintains a certain intimacy. My grandfather was not in Poland during the war. My American grandfather fought in the Belgian town of Bastogne, not in a Polish town like Warsaw. However, themes like bloodline, race, and genocide still touch my history. The living memories of my grandfathers were available to me. Escaping an ideology of race, and the notion that privileged bloodlines belong to a select few—such phenomena placed both of my grandfathers into a war and therefore placed my existence at risk. And this was the same war that forced Freud to seek asylum in London, the same nationalist ideation that focused Sartre's (1943) critique in perhaps one of the greatest works on human freedom: *Being and Nothingness*. It was the war that furthered the divide between Husserl, of Jewish ancestry, and Heidegger—who openly supported the Nazi party. Heidegger was placed on trial for his nationalist position and defended by the Jewish Hannah Arendt. And so a battle rages on between categories and personal narratives.

Is the narrative of my Polish Canadian history diluted by the fact that I speak English? My grandfather was raised by his Ukrainian grandmother and spoke Ukrainian. I was raised in Canada; my grandfather considered Kirkland Lake his home. It seems to me that so many personal factors transform the narratives that move our lives. So much of my past has dissolved into being a white male European Canadian. Life is bigger than the names attributed to us. My American grandfather, the soldier—my Canadian grandfather, the hockey player? The stories of Poland belong to the people that experienced them. The truth of the matter is I am not sure in what perspective I am Polish. There was an attempt to extinguish a people that occupy a place I am somehow connected to.

I live in Canada. I have dated a Polish girl who spoke Polish; her parents moved to Canada from Poland. If anything, they liked my last name. It somehow made our bond more intimate. My story is the one I have lived. I have had the privilege of my heritage enriching my life. We all deserve this experience.

Considering My Way Forward Using This Knowledge

By recognizing that elements of the past move into the present, I see that the future is in the present (Pinar, 1994). In my Student Success role, I believe it is my responsibility as an educator to move the complicated conversation towards complexity, towards understanding the personal biographic experiences that exist in what Aoki (2005d) refers to as the Zone of Between. To look categorically can also offer the perspective of family, community, nationhood and belonging within human relationships and may even mean we learn to see individual stories in terms of a shared landscape. I also recognize it is most important to be aware that certain stories do not belong to me and there is a boundary beyond where I am invited to travel. I see that boundary between may be difficult to see at times, and I may cross it, intruding without

meaning to. In order to have a more accurate understanding of the curriculum that is lived, however, I believe it can be deeply connecting and empowering to listen to personal stories of experience and to reconstruct a philosophical point of view from there.

I believe it is the living moment that provides the intellectual cradle and the possibility for a personal philosophy to gain friction and momentum. Even the most painful parts of the past, our trials and hardships, provide the natal quality of a shared present. How I make sense of such factors and express their interdependent nature motivates me personally and professionally to work from a place that is caring and feeling and, I hope, respectful.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, I see how important it is to refuse to limit life or curriculum to predetermined categorical definitions. Categories should be questioned. I believe the diversity within an individual's biography is profound and must be recognized and not dismissed or oversimplified. Otherwise a personal epistemology may remain unrepresented or restricted and reduced to an unchallenged and dehumanized description. I see it as important to be aware that categories have incredibly real and painful effects. Many personal and categorical factors have influenced my perspective and relationships. I understand—perhaps not enough—that many categorical factors are experienced differently by each of us, and such factors are often not chosen and can result in painful wounds that are not self-inflicted but are socially inflicted. Categories may be prescribed and amplified from the outside in. I also realize that the categorical perspective may not reflect reality but fears and naive assumptions. That is why in order to sustain a personal philosophy of curriculum I believe it is important for people to describe experiences from within. By critically reflecting on the nuances of our lives, we contribute to the complicated conversation that is curriculum. By offering our story, I believe we offer a valuable

and necessary perspective and contribute to the educational experience of others. By exposing ourselves as willing participants, the complexity and multiplicity of our biographic situation resonates within the social realm and becomes uniquely represented there. Otherwise contrived, confining, isolating, neglecting, invalid prescriptions risk standardizing our biographic experience, deforming it into something it is not. As I enter the next chapter, I focus on the analytic and synthetic steps of *currere*.

CHAPTER FIVE: CRYSTALLIZATION: NAMING WHAT I HAVE LEARNED: ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

In the analysis stage of *currere*, I describe my biographic experience by responding to the past, present, and future. I am mindful of my current teaching position, academic studies, my emotional condition, and intellectual interests. I consider the multidimensional interrelations of my past, present, and future in the textual analysis that follows. I cautiously navigate a causeway between intellectual, temporal, personal, and social realms. I gain perspective from multiple points of view. I also analyze aspects of my experience as a student of Biology, Art, Philosophy, Narrative, and nature. I assess the contents within my analysis in terms of their educational value. Multiple aspects of my identity along with theoretical concepts are expressed, experienced, and described to include a crystallization of multiple perspectives from multiple vantage points. I metabolize these elements and recombine them in relation to one another to harness my personal perspective on my life story and educational experience.

Analysis

My Biographic Evolution: Voyage Out of the Pupa

I start my analysis by thinking academically as a biology student. I consider how brains became capable of holding a significant stock of environmental information, more so than the genes over time, as a new replicative reservoir became enriched with information of generations past (Sagan, 1977). Evolution is not limited to the genes, but within brains we see memes, cultural replicators, begin to play a critical role in the proliferation of life (Blackmore, 1999). If one does not have an internalized system or a memetic formulation (a personal framework or philosophy), I believe one is vulnerable to the ebb and flow of meme-plexes—or experiential phenomena that condition us—that have originated and organized themselves outside of the

individual. In the language of education, Freire (1996) says it well, although the concept of a meme is not used in his writing. According to Freire:

> since people "receive" the world as passive entities, education should make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world. The educated individual [the individual lacking a personal philosophy or critical consciousness] is the adapted person, because she or he is better "fit" for the world. (p. 57)

For me, Freire's (1996) use of the word "education" is a poor choice. I would refer to such experience as simply adapted, conditioned, or arrested, not as educational. Even so, it is my view that Freire helps to make it clear that the intellectual passivity of the individual is in direct relation to their vulnerability to memetic infection. One becomes adapted to the world rather than adapting the world through their intellectual participation in it. In terms of intellectual analysis and synthesis, a nonreflective orientation to life may, thinking in terms of my chrysalis metaphor (see Validity section), cause one to become stunted within a pupa stage of development—one is intellectually passive and arrested in an inactive and immature form. For example, if I had continued to get caught up in violent altercations or abuse substances beyond my early years—my arrest would have crystalized into something static, deteriorating my educational potential. In my case, by stopping such compulsive behaviours, I began to mature into something new. To mature, I had to respond to my arrest intellectually and biographically.

Intellectually, I moved towards my own growth and maturity by envisioning a new way of being. Socially, I biographically moved towards my imagined future by embracing my love of nature and art, which led me to do well in these subjects in school. After having struggled to transcend my own psychologically limiting convictions, I believe I am able to offer, as an educator, genuine intellectual material for others to consider and travel forward on.

Returning my analysis to academic scholarship, I believe it is worthwhile to note that philosophy, critical pedagogy, and the field of narrative are not entirely unacquainted with the notion of the *meme*. In fact, the origin and root of the word meme, in its ancestral form, can be found within each field. Dawkins (1976/1989) explains his rationality for coining the term, and in doing so he reveals the etymologically of the word:

> We need a name for the new [cultural] replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation. 'Mimeme' comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like 'gene'. I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to meme.* If it is any consolation, it could alternatively be thought of as being related to 'memory', or to the French word mḗme. (p. 192)

I turn my attention to the origin of the meme concept, *mimesis*, and trace it back to narrative. Bruner (1990), a narrative scholar, was familiar with the term mimesis and took it seriously. For example, his consideration of the notion is accessible in his book *Acts of Meaning*. In the following quote Bruner tells us:

> Aristotle used the idea [of mimesis] in the *Poetics* in order to describe the manner in which drama imitated "life," seeming to imply, thereby, that narrative, somehow, consisted of reporting things as they had happened, the order of narrative thus being determined by the order of events in a life. But a close reading of the *Poetics* suggests that he had something else in mind. *Mimesis* was the capturing of "life in action," an elaboration and amelioration of what happened. (p. 46)

I believe what Bruner (1990) is getting at is that life and narrative form a reconstructive relationship through *mimesis*. I consider the quote's meaning in terms of my personal experience

to explain my point of view. For example, before I started my doctorate, I was not working in my current Student Success role. Through narrative self-study work, I creatively envisioned and wrote about being in a position where I focused on helping students break down barriers that limit their potential. My vision was as specific as focusing on the emancipatory struggle related to barriers created by the cultural background of my friend who passed away, who was a First Nations individual. My emotional and bodily response, in conversation with my cognitive and intellectual efforts, evolved narratively and biographically through my social participation into my professional role as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Student Success Teacher.

The entire process I envisioned is documented through my academic work from 2008–2018. To me, this is evidence of the trans-temporal and trans-conceptual work narrative inquiry self-study is capable of achieving. I believe the work is evolutionary in nature, as cultural elements are intellectually reconstructed and expressed in life. And so within my academic work and my lived experience, I find a connection between the philosopher, poet, artist, pedagogue, and biologist in terms of my identity and work. I refer back to the *Poetics*, in which the philosopher Aristotle (1968) himself writes, "forms of imitation will manifest differences . . . and will be different through its choosing, in this way, a different kind of object to imitate" (p. 5). I find such notes resonate a strong synthetic reverberation within me—I see I have selected which experiences to grow from, to temporally or biographically evolve out of. I believe our own evolution is achieved through our intellectual and social response to life, through academic study and through autobiographical writing, which Pinar (1994) so brilliantly articulated in *Autobiography, Politics and Sexuality.* Socioeconomic and other factors that are beyond our control limit our participation in this process. I believe, however, selective action, which may occur within the human intellect becomes what sustains a driving evolutionary force within a

personal philosophy of curriculum. Selective action, which has been entrenched in the oldest story of life, genetically and culturally results, I believe, in *mimesis*, or biologically thinking—a force of natural selection—which, if it is created through self-reflection, can evolve into a personal philosophy capable of guiding our life actions and professional development.

Reflections on What I'm Not Trying to Do

In this final analysis, I am not going to compare the genocide in Poland to the Residential School System in Canada. I believe that would be wrong. Why would I include both in my self-study research when I am trying to understand my own history culturally? That is where my inquiry led me. It is a personal journey. I am not trying to compare—I am trying to feel. I am trying to resonate with a feeling that will motivate me to fight against the confining forces that, in my own small way, I have been struggling against my entire life. I fight for education and its power to heal and help us grow towards something bright. It is a reconstruction of my emotional energy that I am after.

Yes, I see Hitler's brutally extreme categorical curriculum resonating an association with the atrocities that occurred here in Canada in the Residential School System. However tenuously, I do try to relate to the experiences personally. My grandparents fought against Hitler's ideology. There is, I believe, a growing awareness of the loss of language, of culture, of emotional, physical, and spiritual abuse that has occurred in my country to people of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit heritage. And yes, what occurred in residential schools makes me angry. Could it have contributed to the loss of my friend? I think so. When people behave brutally, it ends up touching us, many of us—of course my loss is small compared to others', but it does not feel that way to me.

As I reflect both personally and professionally, I see that there is an acritical way of thinking, a categorical curriculum that has the potential to be extremely harmful. Such a categorical approach might define stupidity. To place people in categories to take away from them, no one has the right. As an educator, I hope I am strong enough to fight against this limiting mode of cognition. If we do find ourselves placed within a category, I believe we deserve to have it be a fertile place that adds to our lives. And category should never have the power to remove our individual stories from the public record because our individual stories stay within us no matter what.

I have learned that although others may try, no one can take the truth and power of my story away from me. I dwell in it and draw from it. I relate to others by reaching in and I offer it. I look at my struggle, especially during my high school years, and observe those years from the present. I hope to sustain my education by being a fighter, sublimating my delinquent juvenile energy and the intense energy that resonates within me when I reflect on losing my friends. Through this sublimation, I feel my metamorphosis or *mimesis* developing towards political and educational maturity. I hope to leave the pupa stage of my development behind as I move forward in time, feeling I am doing something right and responsible with my historical and genetic disposition.

I feel humble in knowing that all my efforts have the potential to be reversed or temporary, yet I aim to move ahead all the same. In this way I hope I do not insult those of other cultures—my aim is to honour all of those who have contributed to my education. I aim to carry on the work of Pinar, Aoki, Shields, and others. I intend to sustain the teachings of my past. I engage in the struggle to carry forward life lessons to survive better, continuing the stream of existence moving forward in me from common ancestors that reach back to the beginning of life.

The *Graphia*; what will be written and what will I stand on? And what way will my small role add to the description of life? In the next section, I describe how my analytic work has led to social action—to synthesis.

Synthesis

In terms of synthesis, I provide an example of how the world has materially changed for me in relation to my social and political participation and in response to my philosophical orientation. As I look back on my research text, I believe I have demonstrated that the work in this study is not merely intellectual but also political and social and historical. My hope is that by applying lessons learned through my narrative inquiry self-study research, I have impacted both the literature on public education and also centred my own practice theoretically in a way that sustains my teaching life.

On the Phenomenology of The Healing Path

Last fall I spent some time talking to people at the First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education Association of Ontario (FNMIEAO) 2016 2nd Annual Elders Gathering. The attendees included: Traditionalists, members of Medicine Societies, Elders, Senators, Commissioners, and Herbalists among many others. I found attending the conference incredibly valuable. Through my engagement in *currere* and complicated conversations, I took this opportunity to look for new curricular possibilities within my role in public education.

In a previous project, I was working on a mural idea with a local Township Councillor. It was originally to depict artwork related to active living, cycling, or sport-related activities. After attending the conference I was determined to include an element of Reconciliation into the project. And through the collaboration of several community partners and levels of government—*Nikeyaa noojimowin miikanaans*, *Along the Healing Path* was brought into being.

At the 2nd Annual Elders Gathering, I learned about the Two Row Wampum Belt, which represents an agreement. It expresses that most elegant of notions—being separate yet together, while being holistically embedded within a shared conversation and landscape. One row represents the Haudenosaunee culture traveling in a vessel—a canoe; the other row represents a European ship with its culture traveling within it. As the vessels travel side by side down the river of life, their paths never cross. Both vessels travel in peace, separate yet together; they mutually respect the content within each other's vessels—laws, values, traditions, customs, and languages, which are unique to each vessel. Indigenous people used this mode of thinking long before Europeans arrived. I believe the promise of sharing a land in peace while recognizing and respecting each other's differences is the unrealized potential "Canada" has to offer. It is the wisdom offered by its First Peoples.

This experience helped me see that the notion of being *separate yet together* is a dominant theme reoccurring throughout my study; for me, it is also central for sustaining a personal philosophy of curriculum. As I participated in the mural project, I kept the principle—separate yet together—in mind. Indigenous and non-Indigenous students created the mural. It drew from the Two Row Wampum imagery and thinking, among other Indigenous teachings. The mural brings the viewers' attention to the horrific experiences that occurred in government-funded residential schools when Indigenous children were taken forcefully from their homes. At the mural unveiling, the opening prayer and recognition of lands was held by a Métis Senator. The mayor of the township made the welcoming remarks. The Chief of the First Nation spoke. A local healing lodge donated traditional food. The Federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs spoke after the Chief. Members of Parliament, Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees of the Whole spoke, so did many members of the educational

community, my Principal, the Township Councillor I worked with, as well as students and myself. Most importantly, I heard speakers and attendees note the passion of young people describing their project, speaking about their future and how they intended to participate in shaping the type of world they want to live in. I think it was an important day. It was for me. I felt I honoured my lost friend by participating and dedicating my time to the project.

Final Research Text

As a young scholar entering the curriculum field, I realize I have much work to do in terms of familiarizing myself with the nuances of curriculum theory, the work of Clandinin and Connelly, Ted Aoki, Bill Pinar, Carmen Shields, and others. I desire much from my own writing, research, and study. I suppose I ask those scholars who have traveled before me to be patient with me, to lift me up. Understanding their work has not been an easy task. Believe me, I see significance in it. My study and inquiry have inspired me to understand more of the complicated conversations that make up educational experience.

Although this thesis does not offer a "grand discovery," merely personal ones, a personal philosophy of curriculum, I believe, makes all the difference in sustaining one's education throughout their personal and professional development. It has helped me sustain the philosophical awareness that my teaching need not be artificially reduced to instruction, and that there is a growing field in education, a fertile ground, that supports the development of one's intellectual participation in relation to the work being done in public schools.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have noted ways in which my personal philosophy has materialized itself experientially in my life. As certain aspects of my identity have integrated and sustained their meaning in relation to my past, present, personal, and professional life, I feel philosophically

cohesive. It is as if my written work and practice have crystalized into an organ or body of self-knowledge that acts as a fountainhead, vitalizing my professional work. By looking inward, I aim to make moral and ethical decisions based on an understanding of my life. I aim to live consciously based on my understanding of my past. To complete the crystallization process, in Chapter Six I name how I have used the academic methodologies of narrative inquiry and *currere* to help me address the issue of building my personal philosophy of curriculum. And I intend to describe how I believe each methodology resonates uniquely within an Aokian paradigm of reciprocity.

CHAPTER SIX: CRYSTALLIZATION PART 2: NAMING WHAT I HAVE LEARNED: NARRATIVE INQUIRY AND AOKI'S PARADIGM OF RECIPROCITY

Drawing the Research Threads That Frame My Study Together

As I end this study, I return briefly to reflect on the power of my framework for opening a door that has enabled me to build my personal philosophy of curriculum. I consider Clandinin and Connelly's contribution. I reflect on Pinar's method of *currere*. I consider both methodologies while dwelling in Aoki's lifeworld, attuning my understanding of each methodology to orient my philosophical position in relation to my life experience and teaching practice—to encounter *Curriculum in a New Key*.

Clandinin and Connelly's four directional approach to Narrative Inquiry

Dr. Shields, my mentor and a narrative author, begins her cowritten article, "Providing visions of a different life: self-study narrative inquiry as an instrument for seeing ourselves in previously unimagined places," (Sheilds et al., 2011) by writing:

> In my doctoral years, working with Dr. Michael Connelly in Toronto, I engaged in a narrative inquiry process where I wrote about events and situations that connect my past and present and revealed many layers of my own experience to myself. (p. 63)

After studying under Dr. Shields and working in the field of education as a high school teacher, I have come to understand how powerful a narrative epistemology can be. Opening my ontology to include all of life's experience, looking at curriculum regarding life's experience as being educational experience has, I believe, prepared me to engage in the more extraordinary aspects of the teaching profession. I see narrative inquiry as a very useful tool for building relationships and for engaging in conversations that move towards shared emotional experiences. Clandinin and Connelly's four directional methodology acts as a *light-filled compass* I use to

orient myself within the curriculum-as-lived. I use the compass to locate *graphia—ground to travel on* and to locate a place where an educational relationship may be built and inhabited between my students and me.

Narrative inquiry becomes extraordinary in my teaching practice in the most problematic situations. In my Student Success role, I often find myself in a place that is unfamiliar. I use the four-directional methodology as I engage with students in difficult conversations. I listen with care and respond personally. Such an experience provides my students and me an opportunity to travel through the storied past, engage what is new—the present—what I have never encountered before, and in that lived experience to travel inward, and then forward to an imagined future of being, to enter where there is hope. I try not to travel so far inward that I lose sight of a possible future. This journey is often so difficult and so real. Supporting individuals from a place of love—looking forward—recognizing that certain types of pain come from love as well as loss and that love and hope have the potential to move the curriculum forward to a previously unimagined place.

Narrative inquiry provides me with a method for engaging spiritually, emotionally, and imaginatively and, most of all, humanly, with the students and people I live with. It is an educational method in the human sense. From my personal experience, I realize that teaching is not a profession that can rest or be based on abstract principles—being based on measurement, probability, and statistics—because it is through life itself that an educator has to feel his or her way with students to engage them in meaningful learning. I realized that each student's situation contains many variables that exist outside of a measurable and probable realm, making a cause-and-effect perspective inappropriate for engaging in the study of human relationships. For me, it is within the inward and emotional side of human experience that education begins—and I

believe it will have to be the human side of myself from which I respond. By inheriting a narrative epistemology, I open up a type of ontology for my students and myself, which then becomes a reality shared between us. Although the reality is subjective, it is still very real, so real in fact that it is capable of saving our relationship, which may be fragile at times due to the evaluative nature of a mainstream teaching role. Narrative, I believe, is capable of sustaining the educational potential that bears fruit through student–teacher interactions.

At this point, I think it is appropriate to note that Clandinin and Connelly (1991) insist that, "given the nature of narrative, one of the primary tasks for anyone undertaking a narrative study is to design a strategy for continually assessing the multiple levels (temporally continuous and socially interactive) at which the inquiry proceeds" (p. 265). I believe a significant strategy worthy of mention, the philosophical strategy I have implemented and the personal phenomena I am discussing, is the internalization of method as a philosophy and psychological mode of thinking. I believe such a process is undertaken so that assessing personal experience is, in a sense, inherent, and one can utilize narrative inquiry and similar methods as phenomena through praxis on a philosophical level. And thus, I as an educator assess pedagogical action as it unfolds, philosophically catching and putting together pieces of experience as they fall in practice when engaging in educational dialogue, which for me is significant dialogue. As Dewey (1938) notes, "There is nothing in the inherent nature of habit that prevents intelligent method from becoming itself habitual; and there is nothing in the nature of emotion to prevent the development of intense emotional allegiance to the method" (p. 81). As Clandinin and Connelly (1991) tell us, "Both the past and a possible future are visible in the actions of the present" (p. 264).

Currere

In the preface to Maslow's (1971/1976a) *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, Henry Geiger, who wrote the preface, includes a letter Maslow sent to a friend sometime between 1966 and 1968. Maslow writes, "I live so much in my private world of Platonic essences, having all sorts of conversations with Plato & Socrates and trying to convince Spinoza and Bergson of things, & getting mad at Locke and Hobbes, that I only appear to others to be living in the world (Preface, p. xxi). Geiger ends the preface by writing, "No one can say these dialogues were 'unreal.' They bore too many fruits" (Preface xxi). And so it is with *currere*, I believe. I see that the method engages me as a curricularist conversationally in my academic work and also as an educator and theorist, but it takes me a step *farther* by connecting my academic reading tactfully to my personal life experience (to my biographic situation) in a way that is embodied, that is explicitly intellectually and intentionally grounded in my personal life experience and teaching practice.

For example, to provide a personal allegory: When it comes to fishing, my father is more than a guide to catching fish. He knows the currents and layers and places, how they behave, far better than my young self—it took me many years to realize this. He knows more of the subtext of life and can explain it in a voice and language that draw my awareness to the currents and places where the best catch is most likely. Yet I am the one that drops in the line. I find the movement and presentation that works for me. It is not only his teaching, it is my own participation and practice that guide my actions helping me to develop the skills I need. Through a lived connection, learning is passed along and critically reflected upon.

Through my study of my teachers, I discover my own limitations and what works for me. It is a philosophical awareness and readjustment based on *currere*—that has helps to distinguish

the important similarities and differences between mentor and mentee—teacher and student, which I believe ultimately allows me as an individual to sustain a personal philosophy of curriculum. So it is the lived and academic relationship that I study—conceptually and temporally—through time, through spoken and written conversation.

Aokian Paradigm of Reciprocity: An Indwelling Between Two Methodologies

When I place narrative inquiry within an Aokian paradigm, I find the Aokian influence to be phenomenological. I find myself turning Clandinin and Connelly's methodology to the living present, to navigate my teaching practice there. My practice and scholarship have also been deeply influenced by Aoki's (2005c) discussion of *root metaphors,* which I use to guide my theoretical work. For example, initially I conceptualized sustainable education as "passing along an immortal baton" but certainly now, at the end of my study, I recognize the metaphor as far too static.

As one of the many educational gifts Dr. Shields has passed on to me, I (re)conceptualize the baton metaphor and image the educational gift as a light-filled compass. The four-directional methodology, conceptualized as a root metaphor is not static; I use the four-directional method as a navigational guide as I travel temporally and conceptually within my conversations with students. I use the methodology to orient myself philosophically in the unique context of my biographic situation. I find my bearings in relation to curricula and use the four-directional approach to navigate my personal experience and to guide my pedagogy. By returning to my life lessons, I find the methodology useful in helping me explore new learning experiences.

For me, approaching *currere* within an Aokian paradigm means attuning myself to the present—having a greater respect for listening carefully to the curriculum in the living moment, which I believe is necessary preparation before taking the first step of *currere*. To engage in

curriculum study I listen—I attune myself to my lived situation, which makes sense, especially if I, like Pinar (2011), consider curriculum to be a complicated conversation. The curriculum then, if (re)conceptualized in this way, requires both an auditory and linguistic response.

For me, the two methodologies of narrative inquiry and *currere* come together in Aoki's Zone of Between. I see that in our modern educational landscape, sadly there are trees that grow and fall with no one *consciously present* to hear them. But perhaps more important for educators, some trees will never fall because they have never grown in the first place. Aoki's work has attuned my pedagogy to metaphorical roots, which help sustain my personal philosophy in terms of educational growth. Using both Pinar's and Clandinin and Connelly's methods has allowed my philosophical position to branch out conceptually and temporally by nurturing my inquiry through autobiographical and narrative self-study. In terms of my personal philosophy, I practice being conscious as an educator in the phenomenological moment, which bears educational fruit; I enter a *complicated conversation*, with my *four directional compass* in hand.

Conclusion

I am still young and new to curriculum theory and the teaching profession. I immerse myself within the layers of experience—in the writing of scholars of the present and past—in relation to my own experience in the present. I feel out the currents to find my momentum. I have some experience, I critically reflect on it and the writing of scholars and theoreticians I have read. I look to them for guidance, but refuse to neglect "the forgotten step" (Shields, 2005), which is connecting my academic study to life lessons that have emerged from reflecting critically on my biography. In this way, *currere* and narrative inquiry have taken on a special importance. For me, it has not been so much about which scholar is right and which is wrong—it

is more of the act of study itself that has motivated me to take the radical dive into my wonderings.

Instead of admiring the peddlers and neighbourhood hotshots, with their cool cars and material things, as I did in my teenage years, I look to the minds of educational philosophers and pedagogues. By reading their words, I climb to greater heights and search out new directions—perhaps I seek landscapes that would have otherwise remained hidden. I conceive of *graphia* through *currere* and narrative inquiry. I map out my course—I venture and observe the challenges and nuances of my journey to arrive in new places—I look back critically on my travels, and I learn more about the curriculum and my future direction in this way.

Epilogue: Naming My Personal Philosophy of Sustainable Curriculum

I believe that any personally sustainable philosophy starts with an appreciation of life. Against astronomical odds (see On Autobiography and the Cosmic Perspective section) we find ourselves experiencing life. For me, the idea of a personal philosophy is like *a conceptual version* of the human genome—the essence of something living. I envision it as literally and figuratively the evolutionary phenomenon created through intellectual reflection which develops a life temporally and conceptually through self-awareness by defining a small set of principles that translate into action to reconstruct a physical, psychological and social approach to life.

Within any philosophical paradigm, I image, we look to progenitors—teachers, mentors, scholars, parents—those who have traveled before us, for they are often responsible for creating the episteme our lifework exists upon. Depending on how I interpret the landscape, the path I follow will depend on the path I intend to follow (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991; Pinar, 1994)—thus, a philosophical orientation becomes a vital element within one's *life course*.

I utilize both Clandinin and Connelly's four-directional methodology and *currere* to develop and sustain my philosophical position. I support my students and myself through complicated conversations (Pinar, 2011). Over time, a personal epistemology springs from such conversations by moving inward, backward, forward, and towards my existentially lived position. That is how I look to see what is sustainable within the curriculum, by identifying the personal facts that relate to differences in gender, age, sexual orientation, race—thus to the diversity within my personal experiences. By recognizing our *separateness*, being aware of our *complexities*, I believe I am in a better position to respond to challenges in the teaching profession and life in general. In conversation, I listen in order to appreciate the momentary and ephemeral opportunity to learn of the verisimilitude of personal experiences-as-lived through

stories-as-shared. Only in the natal quality of such moments do I believe curriculum is sustainable.

Twenty-first century teaching, or teaching in any century, relies, in my philosophical opinion, on a few core principles. Since the beginning of life, what is sustainable is capable of surviving. Survival relies on the nonrandom adjustment of chance characteristics within an experiential context. In the case of human beings, the context is psychosocial, political, as well as environmental. The survival of our species, I believe—as Sagan (1977) forewarns—requires the self-conscious conceptualization of the temporal—which is much like the type of educational experience/conscious awareness Pinar's (1994) *currere* aims towards. Recognizing the relative timescale and magnitude of evolution as a private intellectual endeavour, I believe, is a prerequirement for understanding that a personally sustainable philosophy of curriculum is our own private internalization and intellectual awareness of the natural process of evolution by natural (in our case intellectual) selection. For me, such an awareness allows a personal philosophy to exist, as an individual becomes aware of their ability to internalize and reconstruct their life course through their conceptual efforts, socially. I see that such work occurs within the limits of a social-political-economic and environmental context—and that such an approach to curriculum relates not only to one's genetic disposition but also on what one cognitively envisions.

If there is a multiverse, I believe it is likely my imaginative efforts that will move me towards one universe rather than another. And it is the conversation and convictions I have within myself that play an important part in moving me towards one future rather than another. I feel this principle will hold true for my students as well. So much of what has sustained

educational growth in my life has depended on what I have been willing to move away from or towards. Such choices are grounded, in part, within my inner world—my intellectual life.

I believe there is a need to develop an inner philosophy. And name it as being *wombinal* as well as seminal in nature. *Wombinal,* in the English language, is unfortunately an unfamiliar term. Seminar and seminary are recognizable terms associated with discussing information and the development of knowledge—whereas *wombinar* and *wombinary* are unrecognizable and seem unjustly peculiar and strange to discuss. I believe it is sensible to discuss them. It is the development of information vitally flourishing from within that has been most powerful in guiding my experience intellectually, personally, socially, and professionally. To develop a philosophy of curriculum that claims to be part of the humanistic tradition, I recognize that I must name my personal philosophy as a cognitive process of reflecting on seminal experiences to *conceive* a particular description—and name the forgotten step—which is recognizing the internal resonance—the *wombination*—of personal experience as a very real and an indispensable part of my philosophical processing and self-knowledge creation. I believe when intellectual experience is thought of in this way, it becomes a *life-source*—from which a personal philosophy springs.

Beyond the very real notions of what is masculine and feminine, Indigenous and Non-Indigenous, is the human experience that belongs to all of us and presents us with the ever-present and universal challenge of finding ways to be separate yet together. To acquire the type of wisdom capable of sustaining educational experience, I believe—as a student of experience, I will require more than a love of knowledge. I think I will need to be acquainted with the knowledge of love. In my experience, such knowledge is necessary in order to see complexity within categories, to avoid idealism, conformism, and stereotypes, to avoid deforming what is

held within boundaries, and to be conscious enough to accept what is within them. Otherwise, I believe my philosophy will not reach the comprehensiveness needed to engage in a conversation that is authentically concerned with what is sustainable or not.

As I continue to teach in public schools, I hope to continue my critical investigation. In another 10 years, I wonder how my stance will have transformed. Because the philosophy I have described is based on an awareness of what is personal to me, it is not obscure or indifferent; it is not useless or superficial, and I believe it has the potential to sustain its educational value in my professional life.

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