

Curriculum-in-the-Making

ERIK MALEWSKI

Purdue University

JOANN PHILLION

Purdue University

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE of *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* entitled “The Next Moment in the Field: The Internationalization of Curriculum Studies and Studying Abroad” focuses on what curriculum theorizing might bring to the phenomenon of study in another country. As the reader will see, the contributions are creative and eclectic. Topics include women within global time and space; Japanese secondary school students’ international cross-cultural experiences in the U.S.; novice Canadian teachers’ experiences with intercultural curriculum in Japan and Hong Kong; the interrelation of race, class, and gender with U.S. preservice teachers’ experiences studying in Honduras; U.S. imperialism and imposition embedded in the regulations and rules that accompany overseas teaching; international teaching experiences for early career professionals; subjectivities, relationality, and knowledge construction within international contexts; and the autobiography of an Indian woman studying abroad. The diversity of articles in this special issue is clearly its strength. This does not mean, however, there are not connections and interrelations. At least two themes surface in our analysis: Essays address the mutually constitutive relations of curriculum studies and study abroad and situate the intricacies of studying abroad by way of personal, political, economic, and social analyses and concepts. Accordingly, the articles within this special issue complicate and extend thoughts about internationalization and studying abroad and draw on concepts and theories inside as well as outside the study abroad and curriculum studies literatures. Taken as a whole, these essays redefine and expand what it means to study abroad.

Key to this special issue, questions abound as to what to make of the internationalization of curriculum studies. How we conceive of this contested site—where language, culture, and power are insinuated with each other in ways that are not fully determinable—has implications for how we practice curriculum and pedagogy in the midst of the globalizing efforts of our colleges and universities. How we theorize and practice studying abroad within our educational programs necessarily will be varied, but there is a clear need to address issues of breakdowns, ambivalences, and even the failure of things to go as planned, in addition to the all too common focus on successes. Accordingly, the “complicated conversations” found within this special issue stand in

contrast to much of the study abroad materials from our colleges and universities that represent efforts at internationalization as an uncompromised benefit to all those involved. As these articles suggests, the internationalization of curriculum studies and study abroad holds both promise and perils.

Accordingly, the work of revealing the complicated nature of study abroad and curriculum concerns within this special issue is crucial to curriculum theorizing. Even with the rise of internationalization discourse within curriculum studies and the increase in study abroad programs within colleges and schools of education—where overseas study is now required in some programs prior to graduation and where faculty regularly engage in international cross-cultural studies in their disciplines—there has not been an attempt to relate the two bodies of literature. Building a bridge between the two bodies of thought, upon which to reorient ourselves, to craft “a dwelling place for humans who, in their longing to be together, belong together” (Aoki, 2005, p. 438) is what we attempt here. Therefore, these essays focus on what international cross-cultural experiences and internationalization mean for authentically dwelling together while not losing sight of the dark side of these efforts, including neo-imperialism, empire building, and the advance of global economic, cultural, and political systems.

In the remainder of this introduction we focus upon what these essays offer in terms of thinking at the crossroads of curriculum studies and study abroad before turning toward a discussion of curriculum concerns as a way to close. As the astute reader will recognize, bridging these two bodies of literature is a difficult task. The study abroad literature is replete with generalized studies of language acquisition, cultural knowledge, self-reliance, tolerance for ambiguity, and sensitivity toward one’s own cultural background and cultural pluralism in society (Orahood, Kruze, & Pearson, 2004; Williams, 2005; Wilson, 1982). The curriculum studies literature typically forgoes the emphasis on generalizability and replicability to focus on individual educational experiences and curricular understanding (Pinar, 2004). In some sense, then, the two fields are incommensurable. Yet, rather than paralytic we find these tensions extremely productive and work across the disjunctures to craft new ways of thinking about internationalization. As we found in our own work (Malewski & Phillion, 2009), shifting the lens of analysis can reveal radically new and exciting ways of thinking about curriculum issues and study abroad. By infusing race, class, and gender into our research on preservice teachers’ experiences with international cross-cultural field placements, we came to understand that unique learner experiences were more revealing in regards to studying abroad than generalized assertions about what “students” experience when they engage in academic study overseas.

In the first essay, “Time as Becoming: Women and Travel,” Claudia Matus challenges notions of time as unwavering across geographical and psychic space. Notions of progress, advancement, and place-building, she argues, are underwritten by Western concepts of time which inhibit all academics, but women academics in particular, from “becoming-in-the-making.” Glossing over contradictions and the unknown, the quest has been to mobilize knowledge from expansionism and nation building. Matus wants us to ponder what it might take to abandon such a path and embrace the unknown as a way of knowing, of becoming someone we do not yet know, and seeing in this stranger ourselves. University time, she explains, is too linear, too rigid, too smooth, and too standardized. Go abroad, get credits, return home. Thinking of the non-normative, she examines time as force. That is, she wants the reader to think in excess of the normative to move into novelty, surprise, and what study abroad does to unhinge the ontological and epistemological in international cross-cultural experiences.

The second essay, “Internationalization and Study Abroad: Narrative Inquiry of Japanese Female Exchange Students in the United States,” authored by Reiko Habuto Iileji, employs narrative inquiry to examine a high school student exchange program. More specific, the author is interested in how the personal development of Japanese female youth is impacted by academic study in the United States. She recounts the ways in which their lives were changed via the image of a cultural identity tree. The first element of such change involved language learning in general and understanding language as culturally bound and context specific in particular. This required that the Japanese female youth overcome their own anxieties regarding cross-cultural international interactions. The second element, Iileji teaches us, is the importance of learning to learn. Learning too, her participants found, is context specific and requires adapting to the communities in which academic study takes place. As they began to acculturate, Japanese students explained that they became more sensitive to other cultures. Accordingly, improving cross-cultural international skills and abilities was the third element of her findings. Not surprisingly then, leadership abilities and coping skills were the fourth and fifth elements of Japanese students’ experience engaging in an exchange program. Given the results of her inquiry, Iileji offers some recommendations as a way to close. She suggests initial orientations are key toward helping students prepare to acclimate to a new international context. Similarly, students who engaged in exchange programs noted the importance of support from other foreign students, as well as members of the host community. Crucial to minimizing stress and anxiety, she explains, exchange students must experience a balance between the culture shock of living in a new country and the familiarity of peers who originate from a cultural context similar to their own.

In the third essay, written by Candace Schlein and entitled “Exploring Novice Teachers’ Experiences with Intercultural Curriculum,” we are offered insights into the development of transnational notions of curriculum among future teachers who will need to participate within the global landscape of teaching and learning. More specific, Schlein focuses upon the transformative lessons she and her participants learned on the way toward becoming intercultural teachers, ones who are proficient in creating intercultural curricula. Future teachers who were socialized into the teaching profession in Hong Kong learned that teachers are thought of in high regard when compared to their home contexts. In Japan, they learned that Japanese teachers have a more significant role in the moral development of their students and often play the role of an authority figure *in loco parentis*. Participants, Schlein teaches us, had to learn to adapt to these new and differing expectations of teachers. Key to this study, participants learned differences in cultural norms between North American schools and the schools in which they worked. Far from static, Schlein describes how culture is dynamic and alive among participants and members of the host community, from differences in acceptable disciplinary practices to assumptions about the characteristics of children and youth and how they learn.

The fourth essay, “Making Room in the Curriculum: The Raced, Classed, and Gendered Nature of Preservice Teachers’ Experiences Studying Abroad,” by Erik Malewski and JoAnn Phillion, addresses the ways that social group identity and the values of the host community shape the experiences of preservice teachers abroad. Taking note that students of color and those from working class backgrounds had different experiences while involved in a study abroad program in Honduras, Phillion and Malewski turned toward literature in order help them redevelop the program. To their surprise, there was little scholarship that examined how race, class, and gender impact students’ experiences. Instead, the literature focused almost exclusively on general trends in students’ perceptions and learning. Concerned over what it might mean when students’ identities and the values of the host community were misaligned for meeting

program goals and requirements, they conducted research into the variation of students' experiences while involved in the program. They found that participants from historically oppressed groups described how race, class, and gender positively and negatively shaped their experiences. Through an interpretive phenomenological methodology, they explored the ways in which a Latino participant in the program believed that his race and ethnicity became an asset in Honduras while it had been perceived as a detriment within U.S. educational contexts. They also explored the ways in which a white female from a working class background struggled to relate to her middle and upper middle class peers on the trip. Malewski and Phillion conclude with a call for formal curricula on-site that open up spaces for discussions of the ways the alignments or misalignments of race, class, and gender between peers and participants and the host community shape experiences while abroad.

The fifth essay, "Authority and Imposition in the Study Abroad Curriculum: A Poststructural Lens," by Jennifer Mahon, asks what are the implications that U.S. preservice teachers who study abroad bring with them a host of rules and requirements mandated by their U.S. teacher education program. She asserts that behind concerns over rigor and professionalism lie a distrust of experts who reside in other national contexts and a belief in the superiority of U.S. educational systems. Accordingly, she turns toward post-structuralism to explore notions of authority and imposition, and the discourse that authorizes the belief in the pre-eminence of U.S. teacher education programs, and what might be excluded or foreclosed in the process. She finds a larger system of thought that acculturates future U.S. teachers to existing ways of thinking and acting within the current educational milieu and the reproduction of ethnocentrism through U.S. teacher education programs. Mahon finds that post-structuralism is beneficial for exploring the as-yet unknown that is just beyond the horizon of intelligibility. The notion of the nomadic inquiry is employed as an organizing axis for thinking through discursive practices. That is, it is employed for exploring culturally and historically specific ways of acting that present themselves as common sense. She hopes that such a turn might displace the centrality of U.S. rules and procedures and elevate theories and practices found within host communities, often in "third world" contexts. Ultimately, Mahon asserts, the idea is to displace the notion that there is any one or best approach to student teaching and that promise might be found in a proliferation of possible experiences abroad. This is in contrast to attempts by U.S. teacher education programs to extend their influence and ideas of rigor into other nation-states.

The sixth essay, "Interpreting the Unfamiliar: Early Career International Teaching Experiences and the Creation of the Professional Self," authored by Barbara Garii, focuses upon how international opportunities are integrated into teachers' sense of professional self after returning home from a teaching experience abroad. More specific, her interest is in identifying the knowledge integrated into the classroom by teachers who began their careers teaching in international contexts. Garii notes that three themes are evident in her research. Participants reported undergoing professional growth by way of developing positive relationships with students and parents, experiencing a broader understanding of what constitutes a teaching community including parents and members of the host community, and learning from unexpected challenges including negotiating a new cultural context and living conditions. They also reported a new identity as North Americans who were teaching in different national context and therefore had experiences as cultural, political, and economic outsiders. Garii teaches us that upon returning home, these teachers find themselves more sensitive to and comfortable with linguistic and cultural differences and open to diverse attitudes, participation, and expectations. They also hold broader understandings of educational community and view students and schools within the context of

surrounding neighborhoods and people. Equally important, Garii asserts that experiences teaching in international settings cannot be replicated within home countries, giving evidence to the importance of teaching abroad for the formation of professional selves who are more socially aware and just.

The seventh essay, “Travel and Implication,” by Susan Talburt, employs post-colonial theorizing, anthropology, and cultural studies to examine study abroad as a cultural production. Her concern is with technocratic character of study abroad discourse, a language that individualizes skill building and knowledge acquisition, with a focus on static identities and non-relationality underwritten by imperialist logic. Accordingly, she turns toward the complex subjective processes that constitute the curricula of study abroad as an alternate to imperial ideas of unitary identities and cultural tourism. Her point is that the self and other are not discrete but insinuated with each other, that places and spaces are intertwined, and subjects of travel are not merely rational but decentered and fragmented. Talburt asks important questions about the actual processes by which culture and identity are co-articulated by embodied subjects within a myriad of contact zones. Through her research with participants who studied abroad in Spain, she found three themes: cultivation of self insinuated with cultural capital making, non-implicated knowledge focused on locating a reductive authentic Spain, and descriptions of identities and cultures as discrete rather than relational. Talburt asserts that the curriculum of study abroad needs to address implication. In particular, she advocates teaching and learning that implores participants to interrogate their own observations, study the meanings they made, and position those meanings within individual and relational histories. At the core of a reconceptualized curricula is the study of the construction of travelers subjectivities in relation to the construction of place in the making, continuously reconstituted through the interplay of home and destination.

The eighth essay, “From the Red-Dot-Indian Woman to Jet-Set-Mangoes and All the Hyphens In-Between: Studying Abroad and Discovering Myself,” written by Suniti Sharma, provides an autobiography of an Indian woman living in the United States and traveling to Honduras. Sharma describes the ways in which study abroad continuously resituated her identity within multiple indeterminable and hybrid spaces. Along one dimension, she describes how participants in the study abroad and members of the host community reduced her to a universal Indian woman, an other. Along another dimension, she explores her own lived history in the context of becoming anew within a “third world” past (India) and a “third world” present (Honduras). Along a third dimension, Sharma discusses her experiences in relation to those of traditional age preservice teachers who struggled to making meaning of poverty, social class, and racial, ethnic, and national differences. She learns what it means to be seen differently in different contexts, to experience “wide-awakeness” (Greene, 2000) in regards to the selfish life she has crafted since living in the United States, and to have childhood memories and family history surface during her time in Honduras. For her, the experience of studying abroad brings her to sense she is caught between three worlds. In the first world, Honduras brings her back to her past as a young woman growing up in India. Study abroad brings her to question the life she has made while living in the United States, a world with which she is intimately familiar and yet remains a stranger. Finally, study abroad offers experiences of a world that is yet to come, a sense of new awakening to her own becoming and what the future might hold, as indeterminable as that might be. Equally important, Sharma paints a complex portrait; she explores how she is at the same time the other and, as a Brahmin, implicated in certain relations of privilege and domination.

In summary, we argue the myriad of political, cultural, and economic lessons that students and teachers learn from how peers and members of the host community perceive and treat them must inform the curriculum literature. The inclusion of research into the infinite variations of experiences abroad not only helps mark subject positions but also allows the engendering of economic, political, and cultural analyses that inform curricular understanding. Explorations of unique learner experiences abroad encourage “infinite understandings” as a counterforce to generalized research with all the possibilities regarding how teachers and students are positioned within various international cross-cultural contexts. We propose these infinite variations in educational experience constitute “curriculum-in-the-making,” not static knowledge to be gleaned from context and stored but discursive understandings at the crossroads of embodied beings with embodied cultures. Key to this special issue, the specificity of individual experiences and host cultures are in mutually constitutive relations. Host cultures are made up of the thought and practice of various participants at any given moment in time. Similarly, what participants perceived is due in part to the subject positions available to them and their lived histories. What we hope this special issue illustrates is that with the internationalization of curriculum studies and study abroad, the focus cannot be on merely discovering already existing cultures separate from self and subjectivity. Rather, “curriculum-in-the-making” means understanding that the ideas and practices of participants engender cultures just as cultures engender perceptions and experiences. This relationality, for us, constitutes a living curriculum.

REFERENCES

- Aoki, T. (2005). *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (W. F. Pinar & R. Irwin, Eds.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Greene, M. (2000). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Malewski, E., & Phillion, J. (2009). International field experiences: The impact of class, gender and race on the perceptions and experiences of preservice teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education* 25(1), 52–60.
- Orahood, T., Kruze, L., & Pearson, D. E. (2004). The impact of study abroad on business students' career goals. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10(7), 117–130.
- Pinar, W. F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Williams, T. R. (2005). Exploring the impact of study abroad on students' inter-cultural communication skills: Adaptability and sensitivity. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 9(4), 356–371.
- Wilson, A. H. (1982). Cross-cultural experiential learning for teachers. *Theory Into Practice*, 21(2), 184–192.

