

# Introduction

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**T**HIS SPECIAL ISSUE *Cultivating the multicultural imagination: Lived experience, political struggle, and curriculum of hope* articulates the multicultural imagination setting in motion a range of ideas that respond to the complexities of lived experience and political struggle, the dilemmas of historical change, the intersections of art, embodiment and interpretation as powerful sources for curriculum inquiry, theoretical reflection, and emancipatory practice envisioning hope, possibility, and change. Tradition and meaning that have stabilized the definition of multicultural education turn on ontological, epistemological, and methodological axes by provoking the question, what curriculum possibilities does the multicultural imagination incite? Claims to ontological categories and hierarchies, epistemologies of identity and difference, and posthistorical methodologies of disjunctions and proliferations present multicultural education as a contested field in contemporary curriculum theorizing. Contributions to this special issue are made from a diversity of fields, epistemologies, methodologies, and perspectives as well as geographical and institutional diversity.

We begin with *The Dividing Glass: A Conversation on Bodies, Politics, Teaching & Loss* a response to William Pinar's call for 'complicated conversations' in education through the autobiographical processes of *currere* that challenges established orthodoxies. In this article, Alyssa D. Niccolini explores the intersections of political, aesthetic and affective domains in teaching and learning to position the personal as political in curriculum theory and practice. Based on conversations between two former high school teachers from a high-need urban school, Niccolini focuses on the personal as political, through an online collection of abortion stories and the sense of loss after leaving the teaching profession. Niccolini highlights the struggles of lived experience of teachers in multicultural classrooms as she fleshes out the embodied intersections of teachers' raced, classed and gendered lives and its political and academic implications.

Diane Watt expands the conversation to include posthistorical methodologies for curriculum theorizing in *Auto/ethno/graphic bricolage as embodied inter/culturalism: Dis/locating stories of becoming in encounters with the other*. Using her own lived experience, Watt explores curriculum through the autoethnographic tensions between personal and public stories that provoke self-reflection on her own academic work. Writing of her multiple subject positions and the tensions that emerge, Watt juxtaposes texts, images, and academic theory to trouble binaries and hierarchies embedded in curriculum language. Speaking of her intercultural encounters in local and global contexts, Watt uses these moments to create an autoethnographic bricolage that draws upon post-reconceptualist theorizing to engage educators in opening possibilities for an embodied intercultural curriculum of hope and cultivating the multicultural imagination.

Speaking of the educational discourse on equity, effort, colorblindness, identity and difference, Limarys Caraballo's *Identities-in-Practice in a Figured World of Achievement: Toward Curriculum and Pedagogies of Hope* challenges the current high stakes context of standardization and accountability that positions minority students as academically deficit thus reproducing dominant raced, classed, and gendered norms in school and society. Caraballo argues that academic discourses on equity, effort, and colorblindness shape students' achievement under binary opposites that label students as "achievers" and "non-achievers" setting them up for success or failure. Presenting students' narratives on failing and passing, achieving and not achieving, the article examines the interrelatedness of multiple identities, lived curriculum experiences, and academic achievement of minoritized students in an urban middle school. Caraballo offers identities-in-practice as a lens for fostering curricula change and reconceptualizing pedagogies of hope.

Continuing the conversation on studying lived educational experiences of students for historical and academic change, Hollie Anderson Kulago's *Theorizing Community and School Partnerships with Diné Youth* describes how four Diné youth define community and theorize about the types of community and school partnerships that support them in school as well as outside school. Using indigenous methodology and theorizing through a Diné framework Kulago discusses Diné philosophy of community, k'é, a unique concept that brings together family, school and community. Kulago reconceptualizes hope for the Navajo Nation based on community and school partnerships that empower Diné youth toward self-determination and self-education by creating their own community and school curriculum.

Valerie Shirley and Jeremy Garcia's *performing decolonization: Lessons learned from Indigenous youth, teachers and leaders' engagement with critical Indigenous pedagogy* provide another perspective on how Indigenous participants in two separate Critical Indigenous Qualitative Research studies responded to the process of decolonization in developing a critical Indigenous consciousness. While one study examines Hopi/Tewa students, the other explores Diné youth identities/subjectivities. Shirley and Garcia frame their study within critical Indigenous pedagogy as a process of decolonization for emancipatory practice, empowerment of Indigenous youth, and building of Indigenous sovereignty through social, pedagogical, and curriculum change.

In *Flawed Visions of Democracy in the United States: Influences on Current Critical Social Justice Research* sj Miller invokes John Dewey's notion of deliberative democracy for enacting change in social justice research. Miller problematizes current politics of social justice research driven by current disciplinary mandates, leading to inequitable educational practices stemming from a focus on testing outcomes of No Child Left Behind Act and accreditation

systems such as National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Miller theorizes the importance of foregrounding critical social justice research in education and calls for social justice research to move from theory to policy to effect curricula and educational change. According to Miller, one way of effecting change in social justice research is to create new methodologies that speak to the languages and literatures in relation to the counter-narratives of participants.

In *Rethinking the Mainstream Gay and Lesbian Movement beyond the Classroom: Exclusionary Results from Inclusion-Based Assimilation Politics* Nicole C. Ferry explores current mainstream gay and lesbian equal rights movement to analyze the concept of “equal rights” and “equality” within curriculum discourse. Calling upon legal and political platforms that encourage equal rights for gay and lesbian individuals, Ferry argues that the current direction of mainstream equal rights organizations is reinforcing marginalizations and exclusions, with the result that legal or political equality remains focused on heterosexism weakening the struggles and rights of the queer community. Ferry advocates a rethinking and reexamining of the mainstream gay and lesbian movement as essential for teachers and their curricula approach to education, one that underscores equal rights and equal educational opportunities for all students.

Positioning educators, students, and researchers to move away from standardized and outcome based curriculum to a lived, hopeful, and embodied curriculum is Celeste Snowber’s *Dancing a Curriculum of Hope: Cultivating passion as an embodied inquiry*. Snowber explores aesthetic and embodied knowing as pedagogy through the practice of dance and poetry as curriculum inquiry. Asking the reader, what can the body teach us in rediscovering a curriculum of hope? Could hope reside in the belly? Or could unfiltered joy or lament be in the tissues or skin? Snowber makes an impassioned call for profound and embodied transformations validating the presence of the body as a curriculum site for multicultural aesthetics, experiential knowledge, and pedagogy of hope.

In *Examining students’ experiences as a foundation for multicultural curriculum development*, Candace Schlein and Elaine Chan use narrative inquiry to explore experiential and multicultural curriculum in the context of an urban, public, and culturally diverse K–8 school in Canada. Exploring students’ lived stories of culture, immigration, and settlement, Schlein and Chan explore the social and linguistic impact of multicultural curriculum activities for English Language Learners. The article sheds light on the potential of students’ experiential narratives of schooling, culture, and cross-cultural interactions for pushing the limits of possibilities in teacher preparation for engaging in multicultural curriculum change.

Suniti Sharma’s *Resistance, Creativity, and Innovation in the 21st Century: Transforming Curriculum for Educational Equity* positions the present moment for building upon 21<sup>st</sup>. century skills of creativity and innovation in navigating the complexity of an ever changing world. Using autobiographical theory of curriculum, Sharma looks at the literary works of girls behind bars and how they resist convention, think outside the box, and envision innovative curricula for educational equity. The article suggests that girls behind bars respond creatively with new ideas and skills to address social and academic marginalization that demand rethinking of how we as educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers understand, organize and implement school and curriculum knowledge and practices.

In cultivating the multicultural imagination, the above collection of articles advances various forms of curriculum theorizing in the hope that profound and embodied transformations are thinkable, even possible. This special issue grows out of rich conversations with curriculum

scholars who have resisted established orthodoxies and current disciplinary mandates, participated in political struggles for equity and inclusion, and provoked us to think otherwise about the liberating possibilities of reading, telling, and teaching of other lived experiences, other histories, other futures, and the place of our own embodied experiences within these other stories. In so doing, we not only read, tell, and teach the past but position the present moment interrupting the momentum of a seemingly determined history to push the limits of possibility toward an imagined future.

