

Call for Presentations

“Provoking Curriculum Studies as an Aesthetics of Vulnerability”

Hosted at the University of Alberta
October 21-22, 2011

Sponsored by the Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies

Violence is surely a touch of the worst order, a way a primary human vulnerability to other humans is exposed in its most terrifying way, a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another, a way in which life itself can be expunged by the willful action of another, putting the other at risk, causing the other damage, threatening to expunge the other. In a way, we all live with this particular vulnerability, a vulnerability to a sudden address from elsewhere that we cannot preempt.

(Butler, 2004, pp. 28-29)

We now live in alien worlds,
like parallel universes,
and no lines of words are sufficient
for sewing up the fissures.
Some wounds must remain open,
perhaps even beyond healing.

(Leggo, 2009, p. 198)

As curriculum scholars, we constantly come face to face with our dependence on the world outside ourselves, with our vulnerabilities often addressing and facing alienating forces beyond our control. We live in a world that constantly reminds us of our dependence on various forces outside ourselves, and we are increasingly conscious of our vulnerability in relation to global crises, such as the growing ecological destruction of our planet, the deepening domino effects of the recent economic downturns, and the ongoing impacts of worldwide natural disasters. In response to such vulnerabilities, ones we often cannot preempt or may be incapable of addressing in the moment, how might we live our lives as educators responsible for making “ethical” decisions? How might we attend to our research questions and those we teach, when this educational aspect of living puts us and others at risk, even in conflict with each other (with the mischievous playfulness of our desires), during the pedagogical processes of what we call teaching and learning? As curriculum scholars, how might we then address the aesthetics of living our vulnerabilities, for sewing up the fissures, when some wounds, as Leggo (2009) reminds us, must remain open, or are perhaps even beyond healing?

According to Levinas, (1987) the de-centered and vulnerable subject has as its project not to free itself into authenticity but to be relationally responsible to others. His work provides

an aperture to question the concept of the “ethical” as the development of sensitivity of one’s subjectivity to an Other’s. In turn, Sharon Todd (2003) invites us to enter this theoretical aperture by suggesting:

Heuristically, Levinas’s focus on the centrality of otherness to teaching, learning, and ethics lends insight into the demand for alteration that pedagogy makes, and it enables teachers to begin to consider what responsibilities they have towards those they teach. This is not to suggest that students do not have responsibilities themselves; their capacity to receive and to be open to difference is certainly an ethical response, according to Levinas. But the question that remains for educators, is how, in the face of the violence that is implicit in the pedagogical demand for learning to become, might we be open and responsible to the Other? (pp. 30-31)

Therefore for the **5th Biennial Provoking Curriculum Studies Conference**, we invite proposals to provoke an “aesthetics of vulnerability” that relate to how we might learn to live ethically, if there is such a thing, as curriculum scholars in the 21st Century. In turn, we encourage you to provoke us to rethink the various ways in which engaging the aesthetics of vulnerability affords us possibilities for reconstructing the necessary conditions for social justice to take place both inside and outside the institutions of public schooling. We invite you to help provoke how our apprehensions of otherness, of its respective material and semiotic performed aesthetics of vulnerability, might encourage us to rethink our firmly entrenched beliefs about our current curricular theorizing and pedagogical practices. Our hope at this conference, among other things, is that you will all come and help us to provoke particular aesthetics of vulnerability that respond to sudden addresses from elsewhere that we, as Butler (2004) suggests, cannot preempt as public educators. At this pedagogical gathering of curricular provocations, how might we all learn from one another alternative conceptualizations of what Britzman (1998) aptly calls the *arts of getting by*?

For the conference we particularly encourage presentations that consider the aesthetics of educational research, narrative experimentation, film, and/or that include an arts-based component. Topics and themes outside the conference theme are welcomed. All presentation formats are welcome. **The deadline for submissions is March 1st, 2011.**

Please submit a title and abstract (no more than 250 words), format of presentation (with technology expectations), name(s) of presenter(s), and institutional affiliation to Karla del Carpio at provokingcurriculum@gmail.com.

This conference is supported and sponsored by the **Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies**.

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