Autobiography, Intellectual Topographies, and Teacher Education

It has been almost 3 months. Many things have happened. Only a week and a half to go before heading back to Canada. I have been living on Barber Avenue in Penrith, Australia. There have been many ups and downs. More ups than downs. In a week, I can call myself a teacher. Yet I feel there is so much more to learn. I love this time of year in Australia. The Jacarandas are in full bloom. While several different paths are on the future horizon, I go home to uncertainty. Once again travelling will commence. I am divided by perceptions of self-worth. What type of life will I choose? I feel much closer to self-awareness, and yet so much further from the truth. The next year will be a quest for knowledge. I will live the life of a worker. No more money spent abusively…but rather only on things of necessity. I must prepare myself mentally for what is about to come.

On November 18th, 1998 this was the final entry into my travel journal before returning to Canada. A few months later, I graduated from the University of Western Sydney (UWS) as a qualified junior/intermediate science and history teacher. Over the course of that winter solstice, while living at my parents’ house located in the rural logging town of Kapuskasing, I made the necessary arrangements to secure my professional accreditation from the Ontario College of Teachers. Nonetheless, that January, I returned to Australia to work for a year as a substitute teacher at different schools across Penrith, a city fifty kilometers inland, west of Sydney.

It was during my studies at UWS as an international student that I fell in love with traveling the foreign topographies of Australia. My academic studies were focused on experiencing the bacchanalian dimensions of the world—the carnal desires of my body in relation to the land and with others. In many ways, I was living what Springgay and Freedman (2010) call the sensual experiences of “a bodied curriculum,” of being present in the moment (p. 234). And although I might have “felt closer to self-awareness” at that time, my sense of any relationships with the intellectual history of curriculum
studies and/or teacher education reforms—their disciplinary “verticality” and/or “horizontality” contexts—were not “grasped analytically as self-understanding” (Pinar, 2009, p. 5). Instead, I graduated with relatively little understanding of the epistemological, historical, political, and cultural intersubjective contexts in which I was being asked to work within, or of the curriculum I was being asked to teach. Instead, teacher education for me constituted “learning,” and not necessarily “understanding” the required knowledge and skills necessary to live the traveling life of an ahistorical and decontextualized professionally accredited worker.

Autobiographical excavations of the interconnections between my academic studies and intersubjective formations of becoming a teacher, as currere, were absent from the explicit teacher education curriculum. In response to such ongoing present absence, Britzman (2003) asks:

> What can it mean to think about learning to become a teacher from the perspectives of those who experience this work, to those who surround and supervise them, those who research the field of teacher education, and then consider these populations as encountering, repeating, and rethinking some of the historic arguments over what makes a teacher? (p. 19)

Truth be told, teaching for me as a teacher candidate was a means to an end. Consequently, the intellectual and intersubjective complexity of teaching, or the worldliness of the classroom, was relegated to certain conscious and unconscious borders of my mind. It is often taken for granted, as Britzman (2003) makes clear, that we draw upon our educational biographies to construct knowledge and narratives of what a “good” or “bad” teacher is and does. And, our knowledge of teachers and teaching, she continues, is based on years of lived experiences and observations within the cultural, social, and psychic dimensions of schooling. In turn, as she suggests, there “is little wonder that many students leave compulsory education believing that ‘anyone can teach’” (p. 27). During my teacher education at UWS, I do not recall being asked to critically reflect on prior assumptions of what constitutes a teacher’s professional and/or personal identities, nor on our intersubjective relations with
our intellectual studies. Instead, I remember taking courses like educational psychology, classroom management, and various subject-based teaching methods where we studied how to “manage” a child’s behaviour, their time on tasks, and “best practices” for their psychosocial development as learners that built upon the foundations of scholars like Ivan Pavlov, Burrhus Frederic Skinner, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Howard Gardner. My sense then of what it meant to be a teacher, of what constituted “good” teaching, was reduced to managing, as Britzman suggests, the scope and sequencing of “custodial moments: the ability to enforce school rules, impart textbooks knowledge, grade student papers, and manage classroom discipline” (p. 28). During my teacher education, and at that abusive, narcissistic, consumptive, and presentistic stage of my life, I did not question or critically reflect upon the intellectual, institutional, psychic, or cultural formation of my subjectivity, as a teacher, nor on the possibilities and limitations of conceptualizing “a teaching life” as an accredited professional worker, a future technician of children’s learning.

Building on prior autobiographical research, in this chapter I draw upon the four temporal components of currere—regression, progression, analysis, and synthesis—as a research methodology to deconstruct and reconstruct autobiographical narratives that represent the current historical significance of attending to concepts like “autobiography,” “intellectual topographies,” and “teacher education reforms” in relation to the present circumstances of working as a Chinese-Guyanese-Irish-Scottish hyphenated Canadian curriculum theorist. Part of my ongoing work as a curriculum theorist and teacher educator has been committed toward studying the concept of “curriculum” as the interdisciplinary study of lived experiences within teacher education. Like Pinar (2009), such work has sought to challenge educational reforms that endorse the self-formation of teachers as an instrumental means to an end, or curriculum development as a set of institutional objectives. Moreover, part of my curriculum theorizing asks teacher candidates and teacher educators to reconsider the various ways in
which we might draw upon *currere* as a reflexive framework for grappling with our autobiographical-intellectual self-understandings of becoming teachers in and for the world.

Life writing is a central curricular and pedagogical praxis for all of the graduate courses that I teach (Ng-A-Fook & Milne, in-press). As Kanu and Glor (2003) suggests, *currere* as a research methodology foregrounds “the relationship between narrative (life history) and practice and provides opportunities to theorize particular moments in one’s educational history, to dialogue with these moments, and examine possibilities for change” as well as understand the historical implications of developing common national and provincial curricular reforms despite our social differences (p. 104). And yet, our “social differences,” as Bhabha (1994) writes,

…are not simply given to experience through an already authenticated cultural tradition; they are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project – at once a vision and a construction – that takes you ‘beyond’ yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revisions and reconstruction, to the political conditions of the present. (p. 3)

In this chapter then, I ask readers to reconsider what we might learn about teacher development, becoming a teacher, and developing self-knowledge (or self-understanding) as teachers by returning to the differing historical origins of our biographies in relation to the spirit of re-envisioning and reconstructing ourselves in the face of national and provincial curriculum reforms (Pinar, 2012). To do so, we might ask ourselves questions during such temporal moments of becoming, such as, “How might we compose our personal and professional subjectivities as teachers via such autobiographical, intellectual, and historical research?”

To answer this question, I have organized the rest of this chapter into three sections. The first section, which involves the regressive phase of *currere*, seeks to free-associatively reexamine the historical contexts of educational reforms taking place in China prior to my ancestors’ migration to British Guiana and then later to Canada. Here my attempt is to reexamine and re-experience such past,
as a life narrative “not yet” experienced nor reconstructed in relation to the present accounts of my personal or professional biography. In the next section, I look toward the past to gain a glimpse of the future in my capacity as an incoming director of the teacher education program at the University of Ottawa in terms of what Pinar (2012) calls an allegory-for-the-present. Here I seek to understand how my current social imaginations and fantasies related to concepts such as, but not limited to nationalism, provincialism, cosmopolitanism, and culture have infiltrated my professional and personal understandings of the present contexts of teacher education and curriculum reforms taking place in Ontario. In the final section, I offer a brief analysis and synthesis for the ways in which we might interpret the past and future conceptions of autobiographical narratives in terms of how they work to inform how certain conceptions of the public social imaginary, culture, and history in China or here in Canada have become, as Pinar (2012) articulates, “particularized in the specificity.” They constitute the subjectivity within “which I dwell and from which I work” in the present (p. 46). Let me now turn your attention toward composing the very concept of a cosmopolitan hyphenated subjectivity from the remnants of the past as autobiographical research, as currere.

**Autobiographical-Intellectual Research: Tracing Cosmopolitan Genealogies**

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An invitation to be once again “guest people” at Hangzhou Normal University provoked an autobiographical-intellectual desire to make sense of the historical significance of governmental reforms in what is now called the People’s Republic of China. How might they have created the educational, political, religious contexts for my ancestors to reconstruct a nationalized and cosmopolitan Hakka subjectivity? My ancestors left the former Manchurian imperial territories over
150 years ago for British Guiana to work as indentured laborers on sugar plantations. In 1833, after the British parliament passed a law to abolish most of the global slave trade across its Empire, and during one of China’s most devastating civil wars, several thousand Hakka migrants made their way overseas to work as laborers in its colonies. In 1853, the first three ships carrying 637 indentured laborers from China arrived at the ports of British Guiana, who would all for the most part, work as sugarcane cutters on colonial plantations. By the end of the 1870s and at the height of the era of importing Chinese indentured laborers, Sue-A-Quan (1999) maintains that more than 13,500 Chinese had made their way to this British colony as temporary foreign workers. Countries like the United States and Canada respectively passed government policies like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and Chinese Immigration Act (head tax) of 1885 to control the Global migration of foreign Chinese workers and maintain the existing racialized composition of the individual and collective subjectivities that would make up these fledgling nation states (see Daniels, 2004; Stanley, 2011). After winning the civil war, the Qing dynasty would also pass laws limiting its citizens from leave certain ports to travel abroad. Prior to such laws, China afforded different countries and trading companies limited opportunities to establish factories in port cities like Canton. It would take China another 100 years to recover from the 20 million lost lives, ravaged cities and countryside, and indemnities that the Qing dynasty paid as restitution for the military interventions and negotiated treaties with the British Empire.

In the picture, you can see my grandmother’s father Abraham Fung-A-Fat sitting in the middle row to the far left. Her grandmother Mary Fung-A-Fat and grandfather Charles Fung-A-Fat are both at the center. My family traces its maternal ancestry to the Hung (Hong) family clan, where this surname was made historically famous (or infamous) by its association in our family’s Hakka oral histories to the fortunate and unfortunate economic, social, governmental, educational, spiritual, and military exploits and reforms of Hung Hsiu-ch’uan (or Hong Xiuquan), also known as the Heavenly King of
Taipe Heavenly Kingdom (Platt, 2012; Spence, 1996). “The Hakkas as a people place their origins in the central China plains to the south of the Yellow River, below the former capital of Kaifeng, and through their oral histories and their written genealogies,” as Spence (1996) writes, “trace their successive movements south across centuries, in response to outside invasions, civil wars, and economic deprivation” (p. 26). The Hongs migrated during the 1680s from a northeastern part of Guangdong to Guanlubu and later to Hua where they settled and farmed alongside Cantonese families, the original inhabitants of those territories. Consequently, as guest people they were not fully welcomed as migrant settlers.

Since their arrival up until Hong Xiuquan’s time, none of the Hongs had passed the state examinations (Spence, 1996). His family “dreamed that he would restore their long-lost family glory” that they once held as scholars and ministers within the Song and Tang dynasties (Platt, 2012, p. 13). Although Hong Xiuquan displayed great potential in scholastic learning, he failed the civil service exams on four occasions in 1828, 1836, 1837, and again in 1843. His failure to pass the exam in 1837 resulted in a nervous breakdown (Spence, 1996). “Passing the Confucian civil service exams,” as Platt notes, “was the key to gaining an official appointment in the Qing dynasty government, and that was the goal to which he and his cousin aspired” (p. 14). Moreover, “the actual process of taking the provincial exam,” he continues, “consisted of three days in a dank, musty cubicle in Canton, proving one’s mastery of the Confucian classics” (ibid.). During his recovery he had several dreams, which he interpreted as prophetic visions, one of which was of Confucius confessing his failure, as Sue-A-Quan (1999) suggests, to explain the Truth clearly in his Classics.

Such inspird prophetic visions later provided part of Hong Xiuquan’s rationale for declaring himself to be the younger brother of Jesus and eventual king of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom in 1851 (Spence, 1996). Prior to such appropriated entitlements in the name of Protestant nationalism, and after
failing his third attempt at the exams, Hong Xiuquan served the local community as a village schoolteacher for six years (between 1837-1843). During that same time, and according to different historical accounts, Hong Xiuquan studied passages from the New Testament with his cousins (Spence, 1996). Hong Xiuquan drew upon different passages, or so the story goes, to reinterpret his 40 days of visions and exiled Hakka minority subjectivity from the Qing dynasty, as a sign that he was the Chinese younger brother of Jesus and the other Son of God. Hong Xiuquan, and his cousin Li Ching-fang baptized themselves and pledged that they would abstain from worshiping traditional idols. Indeed, “the entire story of the Taiping Rebellion might be told,” Platt (2012) suggests, “from one perspective, as the rage of a failed exam writ large” (p. 158). In 1844 he and his followers, Sue-A-Quan (1999) explains, destroyed several idols in temples and removed Confucian tablets in schools, which were later part his educational reforms for the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. Such destruction led to his dismissal as a teacher that same year.

Hong Xiuquan then went on to lead a spiritual, class-based, and ethnic (Hakka) rebellion against the Qing dynasty. The Heavenly Kingdom’s armies suffered one of their largest military defeats at the hands of the Qing imperial army supported by foreign military technologies in their bid to take over the territories that today encompass Hangzhou and Shanghai. Platt (2012) explains that, “whatever one’s opinion of its quality of government, this power, which help a significant portion of China’s most wealthy and populous territory for more than a decade was nevertheless best described as a country” (p. xxvii). In turn, Platt maintains, “it was in that spirit that many outsiders saw it at the time: as a competing government, a competing state, a competing vision of what China should be” (ibid.). Before eventually falling to the Qing Dynasty, which was supported by the Hunan army, British colonial gunboats on the Yangtze River, and by the Russians to the north, its borders stretched from Nanjing in the north to Nanxiong in the south, and Wuchang (now one of the cities that has been merged into
Wuhan) in the western outskirts of Shanghai.

Administrators of *Taiping Heavenly Kingdom*, like Hong Regan the Shield King, were deeply influenced by their prior experiences abroad in cosmopolitan centers like Hong Kong and their cross-cultural encounters and exchanges with foreign governments officials, Western culture, and Baptist missionaries like Issachar Roberts and Griffith John (Platt, 2012). Other notable influences, at least for historians like Platt (2012), were Yung Wing, a Chinese graduate of Yale University, who spent most of his life until returning to China among Westerners in Hong Kong and New England. Yu Wing knew Hong Regan while he preached with James Legge in Hong Kong. During a visit Yu Wing agreed to stay and help Hong Regan, and the revolutionaries, if they pledged to implement European and American industrial modernizations across the Kingdom. Part of such “modernization” included reforming the established Manchurian educational policies. We might reinterpret Yu Wing’s historical role to the Heavenly Kingdom as a cosmopolitan curriculum consultant.

Hong Regan’s vision for government policy, as Platt (2012) stresses, was not a revolutionary one. Much like the Manchus had done after defeating the Ming dynasty, he established a “replica of the imperial government, with duties divided among the same six boards (finance, civil affairs, public works, rituals, and punishments)” (p. 158). Like the Qing dynasty, recruiting talent to occupy positions within these boards was determined by examinations. At first, the content of such exams were “based on the Bible” and not “the Confucian classics” (ibid.). When Hong Regan took charge of the examinations, as Platt writes, he incorporated the Chinese classics to appease former civil servants and scholars who were still loyal to this intellectual history—one that continues today (Zhang Hua & Zhong Qiquan, 2003; Zhang Hua & Zhenyu Goa, 2014). In many ways, the “nationalistic-racial revolution aimed at overthrowing the Manchu dynasty” (Sue-A-Quan, 1999, p. 43) represented a political clash over *what knowledge is of most worth* in the formal curriculum for the Hakka elite, its
civil servants, and Chinese people who pledged their strategic allegiances to the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom.

Now at this point in the chapter, I want to stress that several important historical facts, characters, and misinterpreted historical evidence that could add or challenge the interpretive complexity of my life-narrative account have been left out. Consequently this regressive narrative remains partial and situated. Regardless, what is important to note, at least for my account of this life history, is that during his reign, Hong Xiuquan changed the content of intellectual study for his officials and citizens from the Confucian Classics to the Bible within the jurisdictions of his Kingdoms. And in a sense, this was an inter-nationalized curriculum reform that some of my Hakka ancestors experienced prior to migrating across the ocean to places like British Guiana, the United States, and Canada. As Cynthia Chambers (1994) writes, these historical stories for my family remain “interconnections—connections between my life and someone else’s; between the past and present; between the stories of our lives and the stories of our teaching; between the larger narratives of a culture and the smaller narratives that make up a life”—that is my autobiographical-intellectual life (p. 40). We might then infer from this story that Hong Xiuquan’s Christian reforms in many ways created the (Christian Protestant) educational and pragmatic foundations, a cosmopolitan (or global) sensibility that, despite his delusions, enabled or provided part of the historical and cross-cultural contexts for my ancestors to migrate and later appropriate the necessary education and respective knowledge to become successful cosmopolitan citizens and capitalist colonial settlers overseas in a British Protestant colony like Guiana.

Here David Held’s (2011) conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism might be helpful for us to consider the educational implications of this historical, global, and indeed autobiographical-intellectual event. In Teacher and the World, he situates the concept of cosmopolitanism as the focus on where “a person and community are in the present moment, juxtaposed with what they might become through a
reflective response to new influence fused with a reflective appreciation of their roots and values” (p. 8). Moreover, as Held makes clear, cosmopolitan-minded exchange highlights the emergence of transformed values for which a descriptive language might not yet exist. In some sense then, my ancestors had the educational foundations that opened them up to the possibilities of transforming their value systems in relation to the emergence of reconstructing their subjectivities within an English colonial language that had yet to coagulate within their immediate discursive regime (Baker & Heyning, 2004). However Held also cautions that the term “transformation” in relation to composing a “cosmopolitan subjectivity” does not necessarily mean the absolute abandonment of prior values, but rather acknowledges a continuity of values and beliefs where their fixity can never be promised or guaranteed. Moreover, the term “transformation” does not infer radical change necessarily, but instead involves the incremental reconfiguration of one’s value systems; in Pinar’s (2009) terms this amounts to cultivating our capacities to historically reconstruct one’s private subjectivity in relation to our contemporary engagements with the public sphere. Moreover, to develop, or transform into a migrant subjectivity, a cosmopolitan citizen of the world, or as a teacher within the worldliness of a classroom, is to learn how to absorb, to metabolize, the new into the known, and the (historically) known into the new. What we already know in relation to our subject formation as teachers, or as curriculum theorists, or as fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, and so on, takes on new intellectual-autobiographical qualities we might assign toward self-understanding the temporal and ontological complexities of our lived experiences.

Now if we come back to the picture and its autobiographical-intellectual interconnections to a “heavenly” story, “the Hakka pronunciation of Hung,” as Sue-A-Quan (1999) stresses, “is Fung and thereby generated the inscription” of Hung Kung-fat (or Hong Kung-fat) to Fung-A-Fat for my grandmother’s family name shortly after their arrival to Guiana (p. 300). Like the Hongs, my
grandparents valued the importance of education and civil service within the British Empire’s institutional regime. And like Hong Xiuquan’s parents they made several personal and economic sacrifices so that their children and grandchildren could access the promise of Western prosperity that passing governmental exams, attending universities, and becoming the Empire’s migrant colonial doctors, lawyers, dentists, somewhat guaranteed. My father was able to study medicine due to his newly found economic privilege in the colony, of working hard, living within one’s neoliberal means, learning the dynamics of multinational banking, of managing indentured domestic services, and exploiting the cheap labor of Africans, East-Indians, and Amerindians who were the original inhabitants of Guyana.

In 1975, after the introduction of Canada’s national multicultural reform policies, and with the waves of new immigrants from around the world, our family immigrated to Canada from the United Kingdom and Guyana. Consequently, I am a first generation immigrant to Canada, with transnational dual citizenships, who claims several multicultural and multilingual hyphenated performed identities (Ng-A-Fook, Radford & Ausman, 2014). And although I carried the historical remnants of a Chinese last name, the material and psychic utterances of a Chinese language were (and still are) absent from my lived experiences both inside and outside of the French Catholic school curriculum. Baptized as a “protestant” Anglophone, and with a (Chinese) name like Ng-A-Fook, “successful” integration within a predominately French-Canadian Catholic community and its schooling system did not come easily as a foreigner now living in Canada. At school, students often laughed at the way I enunciated words and stuttered their accentuated accents. As a foreigner learning to become Canadian, a guest in yet another county, sometimes I responded to such sense of failing to learn a new language and its discursive regimes by revolting on the schoolyard or by writing hundreds of lines…after lines, after school on the blackboard. Moreover, at the time, I could not see or understand the present existential benefits of
learning the social and cultural capital of a French Catholic schooling system’s discursive regime. Therefore my French Catholic School which had the French name Cité des Jeunes, and which translates to City of Youth in the English language, this spiritual asylum, was both a host and an enemy. City of Youth…is a thought-provoking curricular concept. What would it mean to develop educational reforms and curriculum policies for teachers to work as “guest people” with students in a cosmopolitan city of youth? My parents, like their parents, believed we had the capacity to “transform” or reconstruct our subjectivities and respective social imaginary as “guest people” in order to appropriate the cultural, economic, and social values of a new discursive regime. And in many ways, this schooling system and its respective curriculum taught me how to appropriate while also learning how to forget my autobiographical-intellectual migrant history as well as the colonized histories of (Indigenous) others (Ng-A-Fook, 2007). I learned, what Tomkins (1996/2008) calls, the common countenance of Canadian curriculum.

Years later, as a developing high school history and science teacher, I did not have the autobiographical-intellectual knowledge or access to life writing methodologies like currere to reconstruct and make sense of a lived curriculum of such social, cultural, and psychological differences in relation to concepts like cosmopolitan subjectivity, intellectual topographies, or teacher education. It was not part of my social imaginary. Drawing on the work of Charles Taylor, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) describe a social imaginary as “a way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people, the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy” (p. 34). Such common understandings created blinders for reading past academic articulations and compositions of my life history and in turn their intersubjective implications for my professional work as a teacher, university educator, curriculum theorist, and educational researcher. In fact, shortly after arriving at Louisiana State University, I asked William F. Pinar about the feasibility of changing my penname in
order to be accepted within the discursive, intellectual, material, and political regimes of higher education. At that time, I did not know how to situate the particularity and historical distinction of a Chinese-Guyanese last name like “Ng-A-Fook” within the autobiographical-intellectual topographies of the inter-national and institutional “social imaginary” of curriculum studies.

Reconstructing the self in relation to the public sphere as an “ethics of self-creation,” and as teacher development, involves as Wang (2004) reminds us, breaking “with one’s traditions and one’s self,” where such a rupture often “requires an aggressive tearing away from both institution and oneself” (p. 46). And yet, how might we work through our autobiographical-intellectual histories and such transformative ruptures toward reconstructing teacher subjectivities that move beyond the intergenerational psychic dynamics of Oedipal violence? Or how can we learn to work more creatively and ethically through such aggressive ruptures? Instead, we might enact such autobiographical-intellectual ruptures as an intimate revolt of self-mobilization toward the “endless play of openness,” that fosters a potential site for reconstructing psychic coagulations of alterity with others and ourselves (Wang, 2010, p. 381). Such kinds of autobiographical-intellectual research, as Britzman (2003) maintains, provides a curricular process that situates our self in history whereby each of our individual experiences becomes meaningful in terms of their relationships and intersections—both given and possible—to our biographies and the different institutional structures that shape them, such as public schooling or teacher education. And “theorizing about such connections,” Britzman continues, affords those learning to become teachers “a double insight into the meanings of their relationships to other individuals, institutions, cultural values, and political events, and into how these relationships interpellate the individual’s identity, values, and ideological orientations” (p. 232). In lieu of such autobiographical-intellectual accounts, what kinds of insights might we provoke in terms of studying our life histories in relation to our academic studies? How might autobiographical research provoke
teacher candidates to open up the possibility of transforming their cultural values and ideological orientations in relation to a city of youth? And by attempting to answer each of our autobiographical-intellectual and curricular questions, what are the implications for self-understanding our subject formations as teachers?

In response to curricular questions such as these, Britzman (2003) suggests that studying the autobiographical-intellectual implications of educational policies affords us possibilities to reconceive how the development of teachers and their continuing education is both a recognized and contested affair among governmental policy makers, different (multinational) stakeholders and the public writ large. “On the one side, education is,” Britzman continues, “considered a human right and so is associated with the possibilities for social justice, social change, and self and cultural transformation,” where one’s educational attainment and sophistication with reading, writing, and adding is related to one’s life chances and capacity to participate in civic life (p. 5). On the other hand, education can be considered in more conservative terms where it is used, “to promote national unity and uniformity, protect for authority,” and work on behalf of the State apparatus to preserve its traditions and narrative continuity (p. 5). After partially retracing my maternal genealogies through patriarchal systems of governance, I am left wondering how we might reread Hong Xiuquan’s nervous breakdown as a village schoolteacher and a student of the Confucian Classics in relation to failing state examinations. Was it because of his failed access to the potential educational promise of improving his capacity to participate in civic life? Was it the stress of studying itself? Or from a more pessimistic and pragmatic protestant impression, was it due to the pressure to improve the economic, cultural, and political chances in life for his children? Or, was he simply frustrated and disillusioned with the state examinations after witnessing Hakka minority merchant elites pay for their sons’ education “to obtain the licentiate’s degrees with ease, and in many cases higher national degrees” (Spence, 1996, p. 102). It
is unclear from our family oral histories whether or not we were part of the Hakka merchant elites in China or whether or not my ancestor sought reprieve from the civil war. However, what I do know is that within the span of 100 years, my ancestors became the minority merchant elites in Georgetown Guyana. At the dinner table, I remember my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and parents discussing the historical contexts of the various political, educational, and economic reforms that once again pushed them to migrate from China to Guyana... to Canada and... to the United States, and.... Their Guyanese-Chinese protestant sons and daughters would now learn as international students with cosmopolitan subjectivities, how to study, negotiate, pass, and access the educational, economic, political, and social capital, which a British university offered through its institutional processes of professional accreditation and its respective discursive regimes. And yet, how might we understand the reconstruction of this genealogy and the historical significance of its autobiographical topographies as an allegorical montage for the present educational circumstances in Ontario?

Reconstructing Autobiographical-Intellectual Topographies as Allegorical Montages

Allegory is, Pinar (2012) explains, the acknowledgement of academic knowledge and its educational significance for individuals at this time, and in this place. Allegory underscores, “that our individual lives are structured by widening circles of influence: from family through friends to strangers, each of whom personify culture, symbolize society, embody history” (p. 51). Moreover, Pinar suggests that allegory provides an analytical framework for us to reflect on the relationships between academic disciplines and their distinctive intellectual histories in relation to our present social circumstances. Drawing on the work of Angelika Rauch (2000), he points out that allegories provide an alternative way for reading the fragmentary pieces of our lives as meaningful representational elements. In this sense, Pinar (2012) asserts that “allegory follows autobiography” (p. 52). Much like Wang’s (2009a)
theorization of chronotopes, allegory provides a model for juxtaposing our narrative montages, where the interconnections among our life histories and academic knowledge “are infinitely multiple” and “the plurality of time/space” is always present (p. 2). Furthermore, our autobiographical interactions with “external time, internal time, and pedagogical time” within this theoretical framework set into motion what Wang (2009a) calls “a dynamic of freeing the present from its unquestioned assumptions and unaware stuck points in the past and of destabilizing the future beyond” fixed understandings and narrations that head toward any finalized destinations (p. 3). To illustrate an example, in What is Curriculum Theory? Pinar (2012) excavates the historical and psychic layers of Weimar, Germany and World War I and juxtaposes it to educational reforms that took place during the George W. Bush American presidency to conceptualize an allegory-of-the-present. “The two moments and places,” as he points out, “could not be more different, except for a few disturbing resemblances” (p. 63). What can we learn from Hong Xiuquan’s past as a village teacher who failed governmental exams in relation to the past and current educational reforms taking place here in Ontario? Or, what might we interpret from the revolution of Chinese commoners that sought and failed to overthrow a dynasty and establish Protestant educational reforms? Or, from the Hakka migrants who chose to reconstruct their subjectivities in order to thrive as merchant elites within a British colony? As becoming teachers, what can we learn from comparing these two inter-national places? For teachers allegory begins, as Pinar suggests, with study, “where it is transposed into curriculum design, or less formally teaching” (p. 55). And such allegorical montages of curriculum design end, as Pinar maintains, in what students make of them. Currere then, provides theoretical and methodological opportunities for working through our—horizontal and vertical—disciplinary translations and respective reconstructions of autobiographical-intellectual topographies as allegorical montages of curriculum design. And yet, how are such curriculum policy designs historical taken up provincially in Canada?
Ontario recently held its provincial election. The Conservative party lost the election on their promise to cut 100,000 public sector jobs. The majority of such cuts were directed at public education and schoolteachers. This is not the first time in Ontario that a political party has sought to use teachers and/or teacher education as political scapegoats. However “there have always been,” as Gidney (1999) eloquently reminds us, “those who say, without rhyme or reason, that each new generation, or its schools, is going to hell in a handbasket” (p. 284). During the Common Sense Revolution, Mike Harris’s government promised to reduce taxes, the size of government, and create policies that supported business at the expense of public education (Pinto, 2012). And although he cut the public service, amalgamated school boards, municipalities, addressed rising property taxes by restructuring the funding formulas for financing public education to curtail overspending by different school boards, his government left office and the public taxpayers footing the bill for a 6 billion dollar increase to our provincial deficit. And, although the government cut the public sector from the full time equivalent of 81,000 to 61,000 employees, the spending on outside consultants, as Pinto notes, increased from 171 million in 1998, to 662 million in 2002.

Not unlike the Qing dynasty, or Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, only a handful of advisors set policies for the Harris government and his Common Sense Revolution. The ideological origin of the revolution was, as Pinto points out, “a small group of white, middle-class Harris insiders, all men with the exception of one woman, Leslie Noble” (p. 35). In turn insiders described the “mood and style” of this government as a “boys club” (ibid.). Their treatment of difference stemmed, she continues, from their neoconservative and neoliberal ideological roots. The conservative government deliberately created policies that kept issues related to various social, cultural, and economic inequities under wrap. Words like “racism, anti-racism, and equity” were banished “from all policies, programs, initiatives, public pronouncements, and institutional dealings” (Pinto, 2012, p. 37). In turn, as Pinto astutely notes,
the gaze of whiteness became the unacknowledged norm; the school and its common sense curriculum provided the site for the ideological effacements of difference to take place.

Shortly after taking office, the conservative government appointed John Snobelen as Minister of Education. The appointment was controversial for two main reasons: 1) He never completed high school; 2) He was captured on videotape explaining to senior bureaucrats how he would manufacture a crisis to gain public support for educational reforms (Gidney, 1999). Within three years of his first policy announcement “the Ontario curriculum was completely rewritten and implementation was well under way” (Pinto, 2012, p. 54). Part of the reformulation of the educational systems reconceptualized teachers as “frontline service workers,” who were now accountable to their “clients” and “customers” (Gidney, 1999, p. 236). In order to achieve such reforms in a relatively short period of time, the government outsourced the majority of its policy work to various educational consulting firms comprised primarily of former civil servants who sought to make more money working in the private sector. The number of secondary school courses for students to choose from was reduced from 1400 to approximately 200 across thirteen disciplines (Pinto, 2012). The overall expectations put forth in the curriculum policy documents and structure for assessment were standardized. “Ontario’s Common Sense Revolution,” as Pinto asserts, remains “a critical event in Canadian policy and politics” (p. 189).

To be fair, in Ontario both the New Democratic and Liberal Parties have historically used teachers as political scapegoats in order to accomplish their neoliberal agendas. Although (what some might call) a more benevolent Liberal government reintroduced policies of promise that address issues of diversity and equity across its curriculum policies, it still maintains the standardized testing in Grades 3, 6, 9, and 10 that the former governments put in place.

Amidst this manufactured crisis and common sense revolution, I designed and taught Grade 9 English, Geography, and Mathematics curricula at an inner city high school. At the end of that school
year, with the labour environment for teachers deteriorating, I decided to return to search for knowledge. That summer, like my ancestors, I left the revolutionary site of the Ontario public schooling landscape to begin my academic studies as “thoughtful resistance” at York University (Pinar, 2009). It seemed to me at that time, that teachers were embroiled in a losing battle with the government and public opinion. Teaching, to echo Joseph Schwab (1969), had become moribund. I did not want to be contracted as a future long-term occasional frontline service provider, a hired gun who delivered other people’s mail, or took standardized accounts of student learning.

At graduate school, I began to question temporal distinctions and historical significance of my life history as a student, teacher candidate, and becoming a teacher in relation to my academic studies (Ng-A-Fook, 2001). I experimented with currere as a research methodology. And while doing so, I drew upon postcolonial and poststructuralist feminist theories as an analytic filter to retrace, decolonize, synthesize, and reconstruct my autobiographical-intellectual life histories (Haig-Brown, 2009). I sought to “understand” curriculum as a “complicated conversation” (Pinar, 2012, p. 49). During my Ph.D. at Louisiana State University, I continued to question the implications of being a “guest person,” first generation immigrant, a neocolonial settler, international student, and future academic gatekeeper in relation to the original inhabitants of the land (Ng-A-Fook, 2007). On September 11th, 2001, on a quiet Tuesday morning, I witnessed the tragic collapse of the World Trade Center, and with it the economic towers of the United States. This tragic inter-national globalized context set the stage for attempting to understand one’s life history in relation to his academic studies. Much like here, I sought to understand what we might decipher as “insight” or even “hindsight” from juxtaposing such allegorical montages of educational failure, manufactured crisis, and financial collapse. What are these stories historical significances for the present and the future in terms of becoming teachers and teacher education?

In Globalizing Education Policy, as Rizvi and Lingard (2009) explain, the “modern nation state”
symbolizes a territorial and psychic boundary that separates the “inside” of its “domestic political interactions” from the “outside” of “its international or interstate relations” (p. 13). The government, representing the interests of the state has the authoritative jurisdiction over the subjects and institutions located within its territories. However the nation-state, cannot maintain its authority, as Rizvi and Lingard describe, without the consent of the public. Consequently, they argue, it requires a social imaginary that envisions “national formations as inevitable, timeless and natural, territorially bounded and entirely legitimate” (ibid). Curriculum policy is derived from the authority a nation-state has over its citizens. Today such neoliberal governmental authorities in Ontario promise to provide the highest quality education so that our children will become more socially cohesive, globally competitive, and prosperous. As part of their vision for the 21st century, the Ontario government has been clear that we need:

… all Ontarians to be at their best. We have invested in publicly funded education heavily and we will continue to do so because we know that a strong, publicly funded education system is the foundation of our province’s future prosperity. Our schools need to help students develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, and caring citizens who can contribute to both a strong economy and a cohesive society. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009)

This narrative of the schoolmen’s dream seeks, as Britzman (1998) reminds us, “to keep the lid on the radical anxieties and uncertainties of education and nation, all in the name of progress” (p. 51). And yet, concepts like “globalization” have changed the ways in which policy is now conceived as within our social imaginary and in terms of the reconstruction of narratives in the name of progress.

As I have made reference elsewhere with others (see Ng-A-Fook, Radford, and Ausman, 2012), that in 2008, like other nations, Canada experienced “a financial perfect storm of a sputtering U.S economy, tumbling oil prices and falling domestic demand that conspired to hurt the country’s growth prospects” (CBC News, 2008). During this inter-national economic crisis, the Ministry of Education
created several different educational reforms in response to the increasing multicultural and multinational diversity now present in Ontario classrooms all in the name of social cohesion and economic prosperity (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008, 2009, 2010). Yet many of these policy reforms failed to challenge the inequitable future distribution of common capital investments available to immigrant families due to the ongoing institutional symbolic, material, psychic, and often violent manifestations of poverty, racism, sexism, misogyny, and homophobia outside of the public schooling system (Greene, 1996). In many ways the narratives of “competition,” “strong economy,” “cohesive society,” “prosperity,” and “progress” still seeks to keep the lid on our imagined future individual and collective radical anxieties and uncertainties in the face of policies that support the economic exploits of globalization.

Here we might turn our attention to the forward-looking work of David Geoffrey Smith. In *Curriculum and Teaching Face Globalization*, he outlines three kinds of globalization operating in the world today. What he calls Globalization One “is the revival of radical liberalism, or neoliberalism” (p. 35). And, it dates back to the political era of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. Globalization Two, he asserts, “represents the various ways that people around the world are responding to Globalization One through acts of accommodation or resistance” (p. ibid.). Globalization Three provides the potential conditions for a new kind of global dialogue regarding a sustainable future livelihood to emerge. Historically, Smith asserts, “what we are left with today under Globalization One is a secular residue of the Christendom ideal, with economic theory providing a theological justification for the new universal operation of The Market as God” (p. 39). Moreover, as Smith (2011, 2014) stresses in his more recent work, this techno-economic theological logic continues to inform the global imaginary. “When knowledge and its production are reduced to economic interests alone qua The New Knowledge Economy, the very concept of knowledge,” he (2014) cautions, “metastasizes into a
commodity form that necessarily stands apart from any necessary embodiment in a knower” (p. 48). In a globalized world Market Logic becomes the new social imaginary, where faith in neoliberalism and neoconservatism, and their Christendom ideals, promises to address our individual and collective fantasies. Within the narrative promises of such fantasies, as Greene (1995) reminds, children are “spoken of as if they were raw materials to be shaped to market demand” (p. 32). At what costs!

The institutional winds (political, economic, cultural, and so on) that once supported traditional organizational frameworks for public education have shifted to meet the demands of our current digital knowledge economy here in Ontario (Brushwood Rose, 2006; Jenson & Brushwood Rose, 2007; Corrigan, Ng-A-Fook, Levesque, & Smith, 2013). In response, teacher education programs and school boards across our nation have rewired the infrastructure of public education and are now poised to implement different forms and practices of curricular programs in the name of economic and social innovation for the 21st century (see Clifford, Friesen, Lock, 2004; Friesen & Jardine, 2009). Now the curriculum must be hardwired for Smartphones, iPads, iPods, and so on—where teachers and students’ bodies are plugged-in more readily to the globalized multinational social imaginary of the Matrix—its virtual reality.

In the film The Matrix, Morpheus explains to Neo that the “Matrix is everywhere; it’s all around us, here even in this room. You can see it out your window or on your television. You feel it when you go to work or go to church or pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.” In response Neo asks, “What Truth?” Morpheus then replies, “That you are a slave, Neo. That you, like everyone else, was born into bondage …kept inside a prison that you cannot smell, taste, or touch. A prison for your mind.” In this kind of social imaginary, much like agent Smith, standardized testing becomes “…the cattle prods, the surgical strikes, the electrical probes that administer the first shocks” (Taubman, 2009, p. 16). In turn, the testing extracts the necessary
information as data to hold the system and/or revolutionary individual accountable. And in the name of standards, promise to level the playing field for all students while opening up our psyche to the market. This is the virtual reality that now lives with the past juxtaposed with the future in the present.

In many ways, the Matrix, or in our case nation-state, utilizes a core curriculum and standardized testing to maintain a certain social imaginary that works in turn to imprison our capacity to imagine the potential multiplicity of our subjectivities within the discursive framework of public schooling. Now when we plug into social media like Facebook or Google it uses different logarithms to calculate our historical search patterns and in turn filters our future navigations, our local, national, and international re-searches, on and across the Internet, while targeting us with personalized advertisements. Eventually, as students studying within this Matrix, we are “educated” toward accepting a certain future form of socioeconomic, intellectual, and disciplinary bondage to the Market, as an unquestioned faith in neoliberal Christendom ideals. In this future virtual reality the CompPsy complex is the next Son of God for teacher education.

In the *Future of Curriculum*, Ben Williamson (2013) explains,

The CompPsy complex is an emerging scientific field and style of thought, then, which melds understandings of the technical and immediate social contexts of learning with the design of effective interactive technologies, informed by computational thinking, and the psychological management of student emotions it embodies certain values, concerns, and politics, and through the design of specific curricular programs and technical systems it catalyzes certain actions and experiences. (p. 81)

Within the discursive regime of “CompPsy,” authority is given, as Williamson optimistically points out, “to transdisciplinary knowledge, to innovation, and to creativity in addition to self-improvement, well-being, and personal competence” toward producing subjectivities that are composed of individual entrepreneurship, ethical-economical and psychological quality (p. 82). And yet, the CompPsy complex, like that of the nation-state or multinational corporations, still “seeks to act upon and make up persons to be self-managing [or self-consuming] in order to benefit an economy that requires expertise across
informational and technical discipline” (ibid.). Within this complex there has been a “thorough hybridization” of our conceptualizations of “leisure time” as a “playground” and our “work” within “the factory” in relation to “Internet culture,” and what Williamson calls, “the interactive economy” (p. 51-52). This 21st century merging “of play and work has resulted in ‘playbor,’ a neologism that accurately captures the ways in which the affective elements of play have now been merged into,” what he calls “the value-making tasks of the expert learners” now positioned as “creative playborers whose affectiveness, well-being, and creativity are understood to be essential prerequisites for economic reinvigoration” (p. 52). The CompPsy complex has afforded us an opportunity, Williamson argues, to switch from hard to soft governance in turn permitting a greater number of players to participate in curriculum design within public schooling and teacher education programs. The future of curriculum design he suggests will embody cool “soulful capitalism,” if there is such a thing, and the “affective playbor of the creative and digital industries,” where “the future of the economy is positioned as being dependent upon creativity and innovation that in turn are to be promoted and encouraged through new and innovative forms of schooling” (p. 63). And yet, do we want to hand over our creative souls to a market economy?

The danger in doing so, as Pinar (2012) warns, is that technology then infiltrates our body like a disease. And like the Matrix, the world becomes as technostructure, where our lived experiences become blurred, “crystallized in the concept of the cyborg” (p. 173). As cyborgs, our mobile devices become creative prostheses for engaging the social imaginary, where our subjectivities become ahistorical playborers, “and time itself flat-lines, as the past and the future disappear into an endless present” (p. 174). Now I will live the life perhaps not of a worker, but that of a soulful playborer, a techno-hipster, enslaved to the Matrix and its respective centralized cyborg curriculum that prods me with standardized testing, as shock treatments, that prepare me mentally for the techno-Market
economy. Within this imagined future promise of education, where our assigned workstations in life are instrumentally assigned, where, as Greene (1995) reminds us, “automatic responses are called for,” and our “consciousness of agency is denied” (p. 35). We become subjectivities that live to navigate their autobiographical-intellectual experiences with the world always only, working just on time, to meet the virtual demands of a 21st century digital knowledge economy.

Releasing our Imaginations Toward Uncertainties in Teacher Education

In this chapter I offer but one international interpretive reading, as currere, of teacher education reforms and their potential implications for our subjective formations as teachers, curriculum theorists, university educators, and policy makers. While “training” within the teacher education program at UWS, I did not study the historical contexts of the curriculum policies I was being asked to teach in the future. Nor did I understand the epistemological, ontological, and intersubjective implications for appropriating certain canonical intellectual histories, while also excluding others, into my future curriculum designs. Here, we might take note of the thought-provoking work of Jennifer Gilbert (2010). In Reading Histories, drawing on the work of Britzman, she asks us to reconsider the theoretical groundings that inform each of our theories for “reading” histories, for what constitutes the worldliness of teaching, and of becoming teachers in the face of globalization and its marketed demands. “If education and educational theory have a primal scene,” she tells us, “it may be the act of learning to read” (p. 67). Moreover, learning to read, she continues, is more than acquiring a skills or mastering a techniques. Instead, reading evokes our intimate connections to the “conflicts and pleasures that animate family life,” where the psychic dynamics of that life “insinuate themselves into the school” (ibid.). However such conflicts, as Gilbert asserts, do not ruin our capacity of thinking things through. Rather conflict is necessary, as she maintains, to the formation of our subjectivities and intergenerational histories.
Drawing upon the Oedipus complex to work through our self-understandings provides a relational concept where we might animate our “conflicts between identity and generation, self and elder, and past and future” (Farley, 2010, p. 24). And “read metaphorically,” as Farley suggests, this analytical complex offers us a language and way of thinking through “some of the combustive tensions that arise when youth meet markers of history, before and in spite of pedagogical efforts,” and in turn, “invites us to reflect on the difficult qualities of psychical life that we might prefer to forget or school away: aggression, fear, narcissism and helplessness” (p. 27). Therefore, even when such temporal, ontological, and epistemic migrations away from our families, work as a violent repudiation of one’s family history, learning to read our autobiographical-intellectual histories, as currere, as becoming teachers, metaphorically or allegorically, might afford us opportunities, as Gilbert suggests, toward acquiring extrafamilial knowledge that can exceed one’s family life. It provides a place for the generative possibility to reconstruct our subjectivities like my ancestors amidst the destruction caused by a civil war. Learning our autobiographical-intellectual histories then, while provoking potential insight, also involves the “painful labor of making a relation to that which disrupts the self” (Farley, 2009, p. 544). How might we then foster theories for reading within teacher education in response to educational reforms, our intergenerational deconstructions (or destructions) and reconstructions, as self-understanding, that seeks in turn to create, as Gilbert (2010) proposes, a psychical space to repeat and perhaps work through the conflicts that come from being a next generation of teachers, curriculum theorists, university educators, and educational researchers in the face, among other things, globalization?

Such working through, I suggest, involves recovering our imaginations in ways that lessen our social paralysis, where our “attention turns back to the importance of wide-awareness, of awareness of what it is to be in the world” as cosmopolitan literate teachers (Greene, 1995, p. 35). Such reawakening,
perhaps like Neo, or my ancestors, also requires rereading and reinterpreting our educational biographies within the current CompPsy complex and its projections of the social imaginary and virtual realities that compose subjectivities within a globalized digital knowledge market economy. For scholars committed to internationalization like Paul Tarc (2013), “a cosmopolitan literacies lens presents a significant challenge to dominant short-terms, course-based modes of schooling” we often encounter in teacher education (p. 112).Narrating our past relations, he tells us, can help teacher candidates to understand that there is a longer historical trajectory to what might feel totally new in one-off intercultural, and I would add, political event. It requires a capacity to understand the juxtaposition of differing international historical and contemporary events that coagulate and take shape through our subjectivities, through our academic studies, as self-understanding.

Moreover, cosmopolitan literacies, as Tarc (2013) makes clear, aim to foster “a set of epistemic virtues that press the learner to understand cultures as dynamic and relationally produced under specific historical trajectories, geospatial relations and geometries of power” (p. 104). Cosmopolitan literacies push us toward self-understanding the “difficult relations we have with knowledge and how our personal histories shape how we are able to engage with difference” and narrative to make sense of our lived experiences of becoming teachers in, and for the worldliness of the classroom, for a City of Youth (p. 105). Traversing across the different historical and political divides that “cut into our psychic terrain” (Pinar, 2009. p. 23), while taking note of our intersubjective theories for reading both alterity, represents a “distinctive psychic intervention” (Tarc, 2013, p. 104). It requires an intervention, that moves beyond teaching by the numbers. Intersubjective interventions summon us toward “thoughtful resistance,” as “inner dialogue and study,” both “academic versions of prayer,” against “the totalizing regime of commodification and exhibitionism” (Pinar, 2009, p. 16). Maxine Greene (1995) calls such thoughtful resistance an “imaginative thinking about alternative social arrangements and possibilities of
things being otherwise” (p. 34). And so, how can we release our imaginations, through autobiographical-intellectual research, as currere, as cosmopolitan literacies, toward becoming Other/wise?

Let us we return to the story of Hong Xiuquan. Here we might reread his failure and nervous breakdown as the inability to achieve what the cultural contexts at that time prioritized as means to an end. However, it was not necessarily due to his lack of studying the Classics, but rather that such academic studying did not provide the “promised” (messianic) instrumental means to an end toward improving his life chances and that of his family clan who had invested so much in him as their future. Hong Xiuquan’s intersubjective academic relationships with the state curriculum, of studying as a potentially prayerful act devolved “into instrumentality” (Pinar, 2013, 76). And in turn, studying for the examinations in of itself, as a means to an instrumental end, worked to construct a certain kind of social imaginary. If we recall, Hong Xiuquan’s life was dedicated to studying to become a certain imagined governmental subjectivity in the future and in turn access the promise of its cultural, economic, and political capital. His failure to access such capital dynasties for his family reverberated forth where the temporal and psychic movements “of fantasy enacted through sublimation into culture is reversed back into oneself, to the subjective processes of self-formation: at first self-shattering and later…self-mobilizing” (Pinar, 2012, p. 138). In response to this historical event of failure he sublimated within his prophetic visions his future fantasies as Christendom ideals, and reconstructed the future social imaginary of his individual subjectivity, and in turn the educational policies of a nation-state that would symbolically, psychically, and materially tear away from the traditions of his forefathers in ways that were acceptable to Hakka culture at that time. Despite the sublimations of the personal delusions (devolutions) of his subjectivity within a nationalized Christian faith, policy makers like his cousin Hong Reagan (the Shield King) sought to create in some small way a “modern” nation-state that
responded to the intercultural, intellectual, and international colonizing demands of an emergent hyper-technological global marketplace.

Today in China, as Smith (2014) reports, a neo-Confucian renaissance is taking place within its public schooling system as part of an effort for this nation-state to recover a deeper sense of its identity in a globalizing world. And yet, Smith explains, “educational theory in China today has fallen victim to the precepts of Western modernity” (p. 55). Subsequently, Chinese “students are required to memorize and recite Confucian sayings, but in a way that completely violates the spirit and truth at the heart of Confucianism itself” (ibid.). Here the education system continues to work, Zhang and Gao (2014) remind us, like a social superstructure, which functions in turn as the mouthpiece of the state, where a curriculum of memorization provides a means to an end, and reproduces a pedagogy of forgetfulness in its intellectual and disciplinary aims to develop a distinct Chinese national identity. The main reason Confucian literature is in the form of aphorisms, axioms, brief conversations, and stories is, Smith stresses, because the “aim is to be suggestive, hinting, and open, rather than pedantic and heavy handed” (ibid.). Moreover, the curricular and pedagogical point of Wisdom Traditions as a praxis are to create autobiographical-intellectual spaces “where students can begin to consider the auspices of their lives, and this is best done through a simple remark or point that offers itself for reflection in the context of the students’ life situation” (ibid). In this sense then, I suggest that, rereading and reconstructing our autobiographical-intellectual narratives as allegorical montages, as juxtaposed temporal snapshots, provides a generative space for us to recursively reflect on our life histories in relation to our academic studies of becoming a teacher and “cultivation of a cosmopolitan subjectivity” (Pinar, 2009, p. 145). It provides a space to rethink and re-compose the private familial dynamics of our subjectivities within and in relation to the public sphere. Autobiographical-intellectual research asks us to reconsider our subject formation within the macro historical and political contexts.
of countries like China or provinces like Ontario who are they themselves attempting to redefine their identities in terms of their intercultural, intellectual, international, educational relations with countries like Brazil, Britain, Finland, Russia, or the United States.

Come this July, I will become the next director of our teacher education program. Here in Ontario, the current Liberal government has created several curriculum policy reforms that focus on developing future responsible active citizens for the 21st century (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 8). The current governmental regime envisions the future that promises to build a prosperous society supported by the foundations of a strong education system.

Today, Ontario's publicly funded education system—acknowledged as one of the best in the world—partners with parents, guardians and communities to develop graduates who are personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens. We now have more high school graduates than ever before, and more students are meeting the high provincial academic standards than were decade ago. Our graduates are also entering a world that is more competitive, globally connected and technologically engaged than in any other period in history. With a track record of success that we can build on, and with the opportunities available in a more interconnected world, the time has come for us to aim even higher. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2014)

As part of this overall prophetic vision for the educational system, the Ministry of Education has put in place full day early childhood programs, revamped their curriculum implementation strategies, signed agreements for access to social media platforms like Microsoft 365 and Google’s Gmail, and plan to make significant changes to teacher education in September 2015. Part of such reforms to teacher education include increasing the duration of the program from 8 months to 16 months, and doubling the required amount of time teacher candidates need to spend in schools from 40 to 80 days. At the same time, they have cut the total number of candidates that can be accepted into the different provincial teacher education programs from 9000 teacher candidates to 4500. The government funding given to universities for each student has been cut by twenty-five percent in order to bring it in-line with other professional accreditation programs like those in nursing and law schools.
Amidst this line of political rhetoric, large-scale provincial reforms and budgetary cuts to teacher education, the government is not limiting the number of teacher candidates that are trained abroad in other provinces or at international institutions like State University of New York, Potsdam, in the United States. Teacher Education has become a neoliberal global market economy at universities. “Train them,” we might say in the corporate boardroom, and now “let them compete to access the life of an accredited worker” within the virtual realities of the Matrix and its CompPsy complex. To make up for our financial shortcomings, international students are being recruited as the new clientele for the contributions to our economic shortcomings. Train them and let them compete! And to ensure that teacher “training” is accountable in places like the United States, teacher candidates, much like Hong Xiuquan must pass standardized exams. Although multinational sponsored state exams are not yet here in Ontario, several stakeholders are sounding the alarms of accountability through various media platforms like the National Post, and promising to enhance our individual and collective prosperity, by standardizing what knowledge is most worth for becoming Canadian teachers (McDonald, 2013). Train them and let them compete! And yet, what might we learn from studying the past is that in-corporate- ing policy measures that cannot guarantee, nor save our children from our uncertain (economic) fantasies of the future that run in the face of a global neoliberal Market economy and the ensuing wake of its planetary destruction?

More optimistically perhaps, my (radical) hope for the longer teacher education program coming to Ontario is that it will provide opportunities for teacher candidates to take the time to study and create meaningful analytical and synthetical interconnections among their life histories and academic studies as they experience the cultural, historical, political, and psychic rituals of becoming a teacher. In such future fantasies, I am not sure if autobiographical-intellectual research will be part of their teacher education. However, at least for me, autobiographical-intellectual research as currere has provided a
form of intersubjective migratory praxis where its narrative migrations, between regression, progression, analysis, and synthesis, have afforded a place without an originary departure or final return, to critically examine past memories, present educational experiences, and future hopes within and across international nation-states in relation toward reconceptualizing social imaginaries, educational policies, and concomitantly our individual and collective cosmopolitan subject formations within teacher education at this time, and in this place.

Endnotes

1 I would like to thank Professor Zhang Hua for inviting me to participate at the 2nd International Conference on the Reform of Curriculum & Teaching and Teacher Development. I would also like to thank Karen Qian for providing the necessary information and support prior to my departure for Hangzhou. I would also like to thank all of the professors and graduate students who facilitated my lived experiences while in Hangzhou. I was deeply honored and grateful to be once again a “guest” and to have an opportunity to share the innovative research currently taking place within Canadian curriculum studies in relation to our differing interdisciplinary intellectual histories, institutional programs for teacher development, and innovations in life writing research methodologies either here or back in Canada. Finally, I would like to thank Tasha Ausman for her careful and thoughtful editorial suggestions.

2 Here verticality is, as Pinar (2007) explains, the historical and intellectual topography of a discipline. Whereas horizontality, he suggests, refers to analyses of present circumstances, both in terms of internal intellectual trends, as well as in terms of the external social and political milieu influencing the international field of curriculum studies. Studying the verticality and horizontality of such interdisciplinary topographies, as Pinar (2007) makes clear, affords us a unique opportunity to understand a series of scholarly moves both outside and within (as a form of wayfinding) what Chambers (1999, 2006) has called the topos of Canadian curriculum studies.

3 As I have indicated elsewhere (Ng-A-Fook, 2012, 2014), currere is the Latin infinitive form for curriculum and means to run the course. Pinar’s (2004) method of currere consists of the four following intertwining parts: regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical. In the regressive phase, one conducts free association with memories in order to collect autobiographical data. The purpose is
to try and re-enter the past in order to enlarge and transform one’s memories. The second phase, or the progressive, is where one looks towards what is not yet present. In the analytical stage, one examines how both the past and future inhabit the present. At the analytical stage, how might I bracket such experiences in order to loosen emotional attachments and their respective limit-situations? The synthetical is the last stage, where one brings together past, present, and future limitations and possibilities in order to re-enter the present moment, hopefully, with a sense of greater self-understanding. William Pinar’s (2004, 2012) concept of currere has been an integral part of my research as a curriculum theorist.

4 Due to the scope of this collection of essays and chapter, I am not able to delve into the complexity of various countries or characters that played some role in the formation and destruction of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom. For a more detailed account see Platt’s (2012) Autumn in the Heavenly Kingdom or Spence’s (1996) God’s Chinese Son.

5 Due to the scope of this paper, I cannot go into the historical complexities of the Common Sense Revolution and ongoing impacts of such reforms in terms of curriculum policy and the educational system writ large.
References:


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