CHAPTER 2

Toward a Complex Coherence in the Field of Curriculum Studies

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The field of curriculum is ripe with tensions. Since the 1960s, scholars have repeatedly defined these and identified how they might mitigate inclusivity and coherence within the field (Connelly 2013; Hlebowitsh 2012; Reid 1999; Westbury 1999; Wraga 1998; Young 2013). These tensions are largely referenced to a growing group of curriculum theorists who have been acculturated within a reconceptualist framework of curriculum thinking (Tanner and Tanner 1979; Wraga and Hlebowitsh 2003a). While scholars who have been part of the evolving conversation about curriculum will recognize these tensions, new scholars may not. Accordingly, in this chapter, we consider the current state of curriculum studies within its present context by identifying three tensions within the field. In articulating these tensions, we aim to provide emerging curriculum scholars with three contemporary, though historically referenced,

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heuristics intended to provoke progressive curriculum scholarship characterized by greater coherence.

The editors of this collection challenged us to write about the internationalization of curriculum studies while situating our work within the context in which we pursue our scholarship. They drew our attention to the seminal work of Dwayne Huebner (1999), who noted the importance of grounding in time and place. Here, while we talk about curriculum studies as a field, it is more akin to a polyvocal space, one which, as we note below, does not always involve shared understandings and open dialogue involving all scholars.

We acknowledge that we have particular worldviews that permit us to see, make sense of, and write about what curriculum has been, is, and may be. We are white males, Canadian, of European descent. We work primarily in English. The readings that shaped our thinking and the audience that we address are both shaped by our context, intellectual and material.

Again, we look to Huebner, as the editors of this collection do, who calls us to attend to the historical nature of our scholarship. As we argue for complex coherence in curriculum studies, we are historically mindful. In fact, we open here by noting two pivotal moments in the late twentieth century that led to revolutions within the field of curriculum studies. First, in 1969, Joseph Schwab characterized the field as moribund, arguing that extant methods and principles of curriculum inquiry were insufficient for significant curriculum reification. Then, nearly a decade later, Pinar (1978) declared that curriculum theory was renewed through the efforts of reconceptualist scholars who promoted curriculum inquiry as interpretive, value-laden, and biographic. Curriculum scholars were called to attention. They were challenged to delineate and justify their methods of inquiry and to establish their significance within the broader discipline of education. In this chapter, we consider the future of curriculum studies 35 years after Pinar's declaration on the reconceptualization of the curriculum field.

Since 1978, theorists have worked to articulate methodological and epistemological frameworks for the sustainability, utility, and value of curriculum studies. Significant works include *Understanding Curriculum* (Pinar et al. 1995), *What Is Curriculum Theory?* (Pinar 2004/2012), *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* (Pinar 2003), *Cognition and Curriculum* (Eisner 1982), *Curriculum Theory* (Schiro 2013), *Forms of Curriculum Inquiry* (Short 1991), *Handbook of Research on*

Curriculum (Jackson 1992b), *Curriculum* (Schubert 1996), and *The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (Connelly et al. 2008). The field of curriculum has been characterized differently across these, and many other, sources. These characterizations have been made in relation to the reconceptualist movement, which has emerged as a dominant framework within North American curriculum theory (Pacheco 2012; Pinar 2004). Despite its critics (e.g., Hlebowitsh 2012; Westbury 1999; Wraga 1998), the reconceptualist paradigm remains ubiquitous although not homogenous. The reconceptualists have evolved from Pinar's initial declaration in 1978 to now encompass varied scholarship predicated on diverse methodologies, interests, and traditions. The notion of a reconceptualist framework is always shifting and evolving. As scholars, we were raised within its culture. In this chapter, we address our contemporaries. While our arguments may parallel past critiques, we assert them anew in relation to the current culture of North American curriculum studies, and in relation to current socio-political contexts and international influences.

Within the current culture of curriculum studies, *conversation*—complicated, complex, or otherwise framed—is arguably the most pervasive metaphoric anchor for contemporary curriculum scholarship and serves as a framework for the eclectic nature of curriculum inquiry (Pacheco 2012; Pinar 2004). For the purposes of our argument within this chapter, we identify three caveats related to the use of *conversation*. We find the metaphor useful for the future of curriculum studies, yet it is one that demands ongoing consideration.

First, there are multiple conversations coexisting under the broad banner of curriculum studies. These refer to curriculum theory, development, evaluation, history, and other discipline-specific and practical contexts of study. Below, we will characterize this multiplicity of conversations as the tension of discursive balkanization. While our argument has implications for all of the communities of scholarship, it is most pertinent to curriculum theorists. Second, our use of conversation within this chapter should not be conflated with its use in cultural, environmental, or discursive studies. Third, the use of conversation is neither meant as an uncritical adoption of the metaphor, nor is it a criticism of those curriculum scholars who employ it in their scholarship. In exploring the current state of curriculum studies, the conversation metaphor is not only unavoidable with respect to North American curriculum studies but also useful to our argument that inclusive and coherent are fundamental to good curriculum scholarship.

Introducing conversation as a metaphor for curriculum theory, Pinar (2004) states, "curriculum becomes a complicated, that is, multiply referenced, conversation in which interlocutors are speaking not only among themselves but to those not present, not only historical figures and unnamed peoples and places they may be studying, but to politicians and parents alive and dead, not to mention to the selves they have been, are in the process of becoming, and someday may become" (p. 43). Pinar (1974, 1994, 2004) further advanced the notion of *currere* as a method. It can be understood as a methodology for engaging systematically in curriculum conversations within a reconceptualist framework (Pinar and Grumet 1976). Four steps delineate the method of *currere*: (1) regressive, (2) progressive, (3) analytical, and (4) synthetical. Taken together, these steps provoke academic inquiry into the socio-personal and systemic conditions that shape possibility as well as limitation within curricular moments (Pinar et al. 1995). They have framed, explicitly and implicitly, engagement in complicated curricular conversations:

> the method of *currere* reconceptualizes curriculum from course objectives to complicated conversation. It is conversation with oneself (as a 'private' person) and with others threaded through academic knowledge, an ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engagement in the world. (Pinar 2012, p. 47)

In this way, curriculum as conversation is meant to engage social reconstruction through a dialectic process that connects private and public spheres, historical and contemporary contexts, as well as theoretical and practical concerns.

While curriculum scholarship since 1978 has led to an eclectic, and theoretically and methodologically engaging field (Ng-A-Fook 2014), we raise important tensions that drive the future of curriculum studies. In advancing these tensions, we aim to be forward-thinking: Our interest is to envision the health, sustainability, and utility of curriculum studies while heeding and integrating previous characterizations of contemporary curriculum inquiry. Underpinning these tensions is our desire to increase the validity and the utility of curriculum studies for the greater good—to consider these tensions as generative spaces that can provoke greater inclusivity and coherence within our field. Specifically, we identify and explore the following three interconnected tensions within the field of curriculum studies: (a) contemporaneity, (b) discursive balkanization, and (c) methodological diffusion.

Contemporaneity

The first tension is what we refer to as the grip of contemporaneity; the locating of contemporary studies in relationship to historical groundings is alarmingly sparse. This tension is symptomatic of a broader trend within curriculum studies, which situates the historical roots of curriculum theorizing strictly within the early twentieth century (Pinar, 2008). It is problematic, we argue, to ignore broader and deeper traditions of curriculum history that extend into antiquity. While it is both commonplace and justifiable for contemporary curriculum scholars to link their work to John Dewey, for instance, rare is the framing of Dewey in terms of his own intellectual influences and precursors, Hegel, Pestalozzi, Herbart, Quintillian, Jane Addams, Montessori, et al. This tension again contributes to diminished coherence, resulting in fragmented tangents of thought that are tenuously linked, if at all, to previous, notable, and useful, theoretical frameworks. Drawing explicit linkages to those historical and philosophical influences that inform our line of thinking is important, yet the delimiting of curriculum studies to a twentieth-century phenomenon severs us from the continuity of thought that stretches into antiquity.

Pinar's (2008) introduction to the re-issuing of George Tompkin's *A Common Countenance* is a plea to curriculum studies scholars to be historically minded. History plays a seminal role in our search for meaning in the present. Our hopes and plans for the future depend upon our articulation of past to present and upon our understanding of what it means to *be* within the landscape of educational thinking and theorizing. "To understand one's own situation," Pinar (2008) states, "requires close attention to its history (p. 142)." This history is often engendered and partial (Hendry, 2011). There are limits that one must attend to when tracing such genealogies, and yet it is inconceivable to frame curriculum as a mere product of the twentieth century. As long as societies have sought to question what must be taught and how it can be taught, the curriculum of schools—however these may be conceived—has been subject to inquiry, speculation, vision, and revision.

This sentiment echoes the work of Kliebard (1995), who argues that the history of education enables us to engage more critically with contemporary educational contexts. When curriculum scholars are informed by the past and situate current rhetorical, reformist, and conceptual

trends in their historical precedents, they neither revel or exaggerate the benefits of future reform (i.e., neophilia), nor cower in the face of it (i.e., neophobia). Rather, they see the reconfiguration of logic in their own work by relating it to the ongoing conversation in increasingly connected and coherent ways. This is the via *media* between two extreme reformist positions: "the consideration of curriculum theory and practice in historical perspective may serve to curb the field's persistent but uncritical penchant for novelty by tracing the course of ideologies and movements and analyzing their consequences in curriculum practice" (Kliebard 1976, p. 247). While history does not offer answers to curriculum studies scholars about the present and the future it does challenge us to interrogate the questions that we ask, while putting these into a broader perspective:

> Perhaps, more than anything, what the study of the history of education can provide is not so much specific lessons pertaining to such matters as how to construct a curriculum or how to run a school as it is the development of certain habits of thought, and the principal one among these is the habit of reflection and deliberative inquiry. It is the habit of holding up the taken-for-granted world to critical scrutiny, something that usually can be accomplished more easily in a historical context than in a contemporary one. Ideas and practices that seem so normal and natural in a contemporary setting often take on a certain strangeness when viewed in a historical setting, and that strangeness often permits us to see those ideas and practices in a different light. (Kliebard 1976, p. 2)

In 1968, John Goodlad penned a provocative piece that invoked the Roman god, Janus. Janus, the namesake of the month January, who bridges new years with the ones past, was represented as having two heads. Janus looked forward, even as he looked back. He was the god of archways and of doorways. Goodlad, with rare prescience, contextualized the ideology and rhetoric of 1960s progressive education in light of its earlier incarnation, which would serve as a tour de force in North American schooling, particularly during the interwar period (Christou 2008). Goodlad's (1968) article documented continuities and changes between present and past; he sought, ultimately, to temper his contemporaries' neophilia by drawing out cautionary examples of the pitfalls that might arise from running headlong and enthusiastically into progressivist reforms:

> The future, like the past, must have its excesses. Excesses are the creative thrusts of individuals and of society, the counter-cyclical reactions to yesterday's excesses. But let us temper them with our lessons from the past so as to forestall crippling neuroses. Our excesses make of this sober educational pursuit our sport, our recreation. (p. 46)

Curriculum studies, Goodlad argued, is the working out of a path between our present situation and a projected future, informed by the past and infused with equal parts hope and caution.

Hope is rooted in a growing awareness of the possibility of change, which history repeatedly documents. Curriculum scholars are—and we know this because they have been—agents of change. Looking at the matter somewhat differently, curriculum history is a series of cautionary tales; it can cause contemporary heads to shake with dismay at the realization that many of our most pressing problems are persistent. Some of these are profound and yoked to our human existence in a modern age—i.e., equity, justice, concern for the individual learner, fears about the ability of schools to meet the challenges that an uncertain future will bring—and some of these are historical relics, which are no longer useful. Drawing on an evolutionary model introduced by Dewey (1910), Kliebard (1976) notes:

> Intellectual progress usually happens through the sheer abandonment of questions together with both the alternatives they assume—an abandonment that results from their decreasing vitality and a change of urgent interest. We do not solve them, we get over them. (p. 248)

In other words, we do not "solve" educational problems as much as we evaluate them in context. As the context changes, questions may become vestigial. They served some purpose in the past, but they merit no further inquiry in the present. Historical work in the curriculum field helps us to identify these and to contextualize them properly.

The irony embedded in the tension of contemporaneity is that it, in itself, has been a persistent historical concern of curriculum studies scholars. This is evident from the sources discussed above and epitomized by the 1974 ASCD publication, *The Curriculum: A Field Without a Past* (Ponder 1974). This report conducted an expansive survey of literature published in the curriculum studies field and noted a dearth of historical scholarship or reference to the historical. The opening lines are damning:

> The curriculum field has witnessed reform after reform in its brief history, each new generation of curriculum workers has attempted to answer continuing and recurring questions with little regard for their historical antecedents. This characteristic stance has given rise to the charge that curriculum specialists are "ahistorical" in outlook, in that their theories and proposals suffer both from a lack of knowledge of the curricular past and from selective and superficial understandings of the work of curriculum predecessors. (Ponder 1974, p. 461)

The report cites a survey of doctoral dissertations in curriculum conducted by Wick and Dirkes (1973), which found no studies of a historical nature. This survey would substantiate Goodlad's (1966) critique of curriculum reforms and rhetoric that permeated the educational landscape in the 1960s; his analysis led him to the conclusion that "a substantial number of the new crop of reformers have approached the persistent, recurring problems of curriculum construction in the naive belief that no one had looked at them before" (p. 91).

This points to a generational breach in the field of curriculum studies. In each generation, Kliebard (1968) argues, "issues seem to arise ex nihilo; each generation is left to discover anew the persistent and perplexing problems that characterize the field" (p. 69). Various scholars have taken up the subject of a generational divide that separates each new group of curriculum scholars from those who preceded them within a broader historical context. Most notably, there have been two extended discussions hosted in *Curriculum Inquiry*. Hlebowitsh prompted both of these discussions with the publication of two provocative articles, first in 1999 (Hlebowitsh 1999a, b; Pinar 1999), then again in 2005 (Hlebowitsh 2005a, b; Westbury 2005; Wright 2005). We return, in other words, to the idea of curriculum as conversation that is inclusive, not only of our contemporaries, but also of our past and our prospective future.

Discursive Balkanization

The second tension evident in curriculum scholarship squarely addresses the blurred and disparate boundaries of what (and who) constitute curriculum studies. We refer to this tension as discursive balkanization. Borrowing from Pinar (2008), this balkanization can be understood as a fracturing and diffusion of the field of curriculum, characterized by

"a tendency in the field to ignore discourses, to fail to teach curriculum theory comprehensively" (p. xvii). This concern is not new: "curriculum is a complex endeavor suffering in a permanent discussion both about its theoretical state and the relationship between curriculum theory and curriculum development" (Pacheco 2012, p. 13). Since Schwab's (1970) claim that the curriculum field is moribund, scholars have sought to clarify and define the boundaries of curriculum studies (Jackson 1992a) while defining its diversity as an aspect of strength (Pacheco 2012).

As a consequence, curriculum scholars with very different interests engage in immensely different conversations all under the canopy of curriculum studies. While this diversity has generative potential, it more often creates divisive classes and scholarly factions. Egan (2003) notes that "this dividing up the field of education into many sub-fields, none of which apparently has much that is useful to say to any other, seems to me still to be the curse of the study of education" (p. 18). Egan (2003) pursues the question, "how much longer can we stagger on, producing mountains of 'knowledge' that are supposed to improve education, while patently doing nothing of the sort—and in the process earning the contempt of the wider academic world" (p. 18). While we are reticent to suggest the need for imposing boundaries on the field, we see the need to acknowledge how the diverse nature of curriculum studies can limit coherence in our conversations as well as our contribution to education as a public occupation. Moreover, we assert that curriculum scholars from various disciplines and fields should be able to engage in conversations, even when the terms and parameters are not obviously amenable (Miller 2016). These conversations ought to use consistent language and share common curricular concerns, which will enable the field to move beyond fixed debating positions championed by foils.

In the opening lines of the Introduction to *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses*, Pinar (1995) notes:

> This is an unruly book, a cacophony of voices. That is the reality and our stylistic intention. We walked a fine line, not wanting to submerge individual scholars and lines of discourse in *our* narrative. To do so would be to create a "master" narrative. What we have tried to do is represent the field as it is, not as we wish it to be, or even what it looks like from our point of view. (p. ix)

Cacophony is an appropriate adjective to represent the dispersion and variety of conversations happening concurrently within curriculum studies. In the citation above, the term has connotations of richness and diversity. Capturing the cacophony entails giving space to many perspectives, many approaches, and many voices that fall within the "fine line" that outlines the borders of curriculum studies. Etymologically, cacophony is not associated with richness and abundance; it is a compound of the Greek roots *kako* (meaning bad, evil, or discordant), and *phonē* (meaning sound, or voice). Cacophonous sounds are out of sync and dissonant. Curriculum studies may in fact be more cacophonous than conversational. While "very much in motion," this motion resembles a dispersion of sounds cast without coordination into the wind (Pinar et al. 2008, p. xiv).

Pinar (2008) astutely situated the fragmentation of the curriculum field within the reconceptualization movement, noting that even as the reconceptualist movement coalesced, it scattered: "Once that tradition had been displaced, the cohesion splintered. Now there is a certain 'balkanization' in the field, a certain tendency for student and practitioners of each discourse to act as if his or her discourse of affiliation and labor is the most important" (p. xvii). Pinar hoped that the text would serve as a correction and promote consolidation in the field; while it depicted the discursive balkanization in curriculum, its aims were, perhaps, too ambitious. We believe that curriculum scholars must seek to engage collectively in a conversation that can serve to foster some common language, definitions, or epistemologies and trespass porous borders in the curriculum field.

Kliebard's (1982) provocative perspective on the matter questions the very existence of a self-identifying definition to connect curriculum scholars:

> One of the surest ways to kill a conversation on the subject of curriculum theory is to ask someone to name one. There appears to be so much disagreement and confusion on this subject that discussions revolve not so much around the merits of rival theories as the question of what in the world we are talking about. (p. 11)

This quotation relates to the first tension noted above, jargon, but it also highlights the coexistence of distinct discursive communities that are only loosely bound and constellated. Further, this implicates the fifth tension to curriculum studies, methodological dispersion.

Methodological Diffusion

The final tension addresses the methodological diffusion within the field and refers to the dispersion of methodologies during the reconceptualist period in curriculum scholarship. Curriculum scholars have prioritized and emphasized diversification and expansion of theoretical curriculum frameworks for curriculum conversation (Hlebowitsh 2014; Ng-A-Fook 2014). The field of contemporary curriculum has achieved sufficient theoretical diversity; as Maxwell (2004) recognizes, this achievement is "fundamental and irreducible, and one that displays an 'incredulity toward metanarratives' (Lather 2004) that assert a unified, totalizing understanding of some phenomena" (p. 35). While the diversity of frameworks is useful for engaging in complex conversations, the field has largely neglected to refine these frameworks in terms of their methodological appropriation over the past 35 years. Reflecting on Schwab's second sign of crisis, Wraga and Hlebowitsh (2003b) noted, "varied forms of enquiry, including structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstructionism, and post-modernism (to name a few) have been introduced to the field, manifesting a greater commitment to talk about rather than to engage with curriculum endeavors" (p. 427). The result of this neglect is a mistaking of conceptual frameworks for methodological clarity and sufficiency.

In the absence of methodological clarity, the generation of scholarship, knowledge, and curriculum as inquiry becomes a shaky, non-transparent structure, easily discredited. If others (both curriculum scholars and other educationists from outside the field) cannot follow our methodological conversation than we not only diminish inclusivity within our conversations but limit the capacity of curriculum work for greater influence. Methodological diffusion—characterized by young methodologies and lack of comprehensive explication—jeopardizes the validity and utility of curriculum research. In calling for methodological clarity, we value Davis et al.'s (2008) notion that sufficiency-seeking inquiry involves distributed, non-centralized, but connected, scholarship; such work delves into multiple interpretations of local curricular experiences to provoke new conceptions of teaching and learning, while simultaneously considering diverse contexts and theoretical lenses. Underpinning this view of methodological clarity is (a) a commitment to diverse, rigorously articulated methodologies; and (b) a pledge to connect methodologies to both theoretical frameworks and to other methodologies to ensure

commensurability across curriculum studies and to provoke coherence of a greater whole. In articulating this tension, we wish to incite curriculum scholars to seek as much coherence through the methodologies they employ as they seek through the curriculum conversations they engage.

In one of the few texts exclusively dedicated to curriculum methodologies, Short (1991) recognized that since the reconceptualist movement in curriculum studies, multiple inquiry modalities have emerged, which were highly adapted to curricular studies, and required greater attention, recognition, and articulation within the field. Short (1991) contended that not only do, "varied forms of curriculum inquiry need to be recognized and articulated within the field of curriculum studies itself, but their viability also needed to be demonstrated and legitimated beyond curriculum studies" (p. ix). Short (1991) further commented on the state of curriculum methodologies:

> In fields of inquiry that are relatively new, like the field of curriculum inquiry, it can be expected that alternative schemes for organizing the field into fairly well-established domains of inquiry will compete with each other for some time before a dominant pattern emerges. The very fluidity of a field of practical activity such as curriculum practice may also contribute to the appearance in the field of curriculum inquiry of new and competing domains of inquiry … This whole matter of domain identity is of no great consequence unless its changing and multifarious character makes is difficult to locate related inquiry or inhibits the application of use of this inquiry. Nonetheless, it is well to know how a field of inquiry is structured and how to find one's way around in it. (p. 6)

Mapping curriculum methodologies continue to be a pressing concern given the relative renewal of the field since the 1970s and the politics of educational research (Pacheco 2012). Specifically, the *Scientific Research in Education Report* of the National Research Council (2002) asserts an overt valuing of empirical, randomized control, generalizable research for education in fulfillment of accountability and standardized frameworks (e.g., No Child Left Behind 2002). We agree with the multiple objections raised by curriculum scholars to the prioritization of this form of research (Lather 2004; Lincoln and Cannella 2004; Moss 2005; Willinsky 2005), especially as they relate to diverse forms of curriculum inquiry. We recognize that the current state of curriculum methodologies may not offer a sufficiently defensible alternative that works to establish what Lather (2004) calls the "conditions of the legitimation of

knowledge in contemporary postpositivism" (p. 673). And here, legitimation does "not revert to the dominant foundational, formulaic and readily available codes of validity" (p. 676).

In particular, we attend to Lather (1993, 2004), who considers the validity of post-modern research. What are the criteria we can meaningfully use to examine validity in curriculum research, framed discursively as conversation? We begin to answer this question by positing that this conversation is necessarily dialogical and reflexive. In alignment with methodological trends toward the autobiographical and hermeneutic (Pinar et al. 1995; Slattery 2003; Smith 1991) and in relation to the dominant framework of curriculum as conversation, curricular validity is constructed as narrative that defends perspective-based evidences obtained through transparent, rigorous, and dialogical methods.

From methodological discussions outside the field of curriculum (i.e., qualitative research methods, measurement, program evaluation, feminist), dialogical and transgressive articulations of validity have begun to emerge. For instance, Cho and Trent (2006) acknowledge that validation occurs through an ongoing and recursive dialogical narrative between researchers, participants, and research consumers so that the "usefulness and validity concerns become directly connected to those in the setting" (p. 335).

Like others (Lather 2004, 2010; Lincoln and Cannella 2004; Willinsky 2005), we assert that validity remains a fundamental consideration if curriculum research is to gain influence within educational agendas and in specific contexts of practice. Accordingly, curriculum scholars might serve collectively to rationalize and explain their research methods as a contribution to some broader conversation. Further, they might explore the enabling aspects, boundaries, and limitations of this metaphor for curriculum inquiry. In short, curricular scholars need to now think as methodologists and articulate the structures that validate their practices. This involves linking methodologies within a coherent, overarching framework, and connecting methodologies to the conceptual theories that shape curriculum conversations.

Looking Toward the Future

Forty-four years ago Schwab (1970) famously argued that curriculum was moribund, yet curriculum studies as a field perseveres. Connelly (2009, 2013) has repeatedly argued curriculum maintains continued

interest to education because it is deeply embedded in policy, practice, politics, and social discourse. The current state of the curriculum field is characterized by various epistemological and methodological approaches toward its theory and practice (Ng-A-Fook 2014). The reconceptualist movement, from its inception, intended to transform the field by shifting its focus from traditional concerns (i.e., curriculum development and practice) to the individual through autobiographical inquiry (Pinar 1976; van Manen 1978). As accurately predicted by Pinar (1978), "the field of curriculum studies will be profoundly different in 20 years time than it has been during the first 50 years of its existence" (p. 205).

Given this transformation, scholars have repeatedly raised concerns that curriculum theorizing has lost its moorings (Connelly 2010; Hlebowitsh 2010; Hopmann 2009). As Hlebowitsh (2014) has recently noted, "the problem … is that the curriculum studies field still has a way to go in terms of making any difference in the lives of people" (p. 91). Despite these concerns, the reconceptualists eschew responsibility for educational practice and policy writ large and declare that their work has emancipatory and critical purposes for individuals (Pinar 1978; Pinar et al. 1995; Pacheco 2012; van Manen 1978). Herein lies a dilemma. The multiple realities currently existing in curriculum studies are divisive and lead to a general disagreement about the relationship between theory and practice. If these realities are at all overlapping, they are not engaged in a commensurable conversation.

We conclude our chapter with a call for curriculum scholars to consider the following question: What characterizes curriculum theory in a *post*-reconceptualist world? The three tensions identified in this chapter begin to shape a response to this question. While there are aspects of these tensions that may not seem new as they have been articulated by curriculum scholars in various guises over the past five decades (e.g., Bowers 1991; Hlebowitsh 1999a, b; Tanner and Tanner 1979; Wraga 1999), each generation of curriculum scholars must face its challenges anew. As Kliebard (1995) recognizes, history does not repeat itself. "At best," he notes, "historical awareness will keep us from repeating only handful of that infinitude of mistakes" (p. 194). Historical events and themes reflected in present day are always mediated by and particular to their contexts. Current curriculum scholars must be historically minded but they cannot be bound by the arguments made by their predecessors.

By endeavoring to understand what has characterized curriculum studies in a *post*-reconceptualist world, we see significant value in retaining

conversation as a dominant anchor for curriculum studies. To this end, we must examine the way in which *conversation* has evolved within our field. Specifically, we must examine who is able to participate in the conversation, how that conversation is referenced, the degree of coherence within the conversation, and the value and function of the conversation. We hope that future conversations extend between curriculum scholars and between curriculum scholars and the public—students, parents, teachers, and other educationists. We acknowledge that to open curriculum conversations to others and to make them inclusive potentially challenges their coherence. Here, we draw on Taylor's (1979) notion of coherence, which involves drawing upon multiple perspectives, warrants, and interpretations that may be distinct and dissonant but that can be rationally connected through a conversation that sustains a continuity of discourse, historical, and contemporary. This form of complex coherence requires a diversity of perspectives. What is more, this conversation evolves and shifts; curriculum scholars are bequeathed the duty to incessantly examine the validity and the effectiveness of their methods in light of their contributions. Hence, curriculum as conversation entails engagement with experiences of teaching and learning as a means of understanding ourselves within the broader context of life and our relationships with others, with our environment, and with the broader world of ideas, past, present, and future. If this sense of curriculum studies is to flourish, it is only be through a conversation that is historically grounded and framed within boundaries and methodologies that enable complex coherence.

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