

*Hooping through Interdisciplinary  
Intertwinings: Curriculum,  
Kin/aesthetic Ethics, and Energetic  
Vulnerabilities*

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The term “discipline” has two principal modern usages: it refers to a particular branch of learning or body of knowledge, and to the maintenance of order and control amongst subordinated groups such as soldiers, prison inmates or school pupils, often with the threat of physical or other forms of punishment. (Moran, 2010, p. 2)

A body of knowledge and the desire to manage or control – these are two usages of the term “discipline” that are certainly intertwined within the curriculum of teacher education. Students entering into professional education programs seek disciplinary knowledge so they may pass it on to their future pupils as if it is a commodity (e.g., Freire’s concept of banking education). As well, they seek the skills to manage a class so that they become disciplined learners. As the reality of learning to teach begins, however, preconceptions, such as the ideas that teaching is the act of filling up a container (e.g., empty, pacified minds of subordinated students) with knowledge (a substance) – problematic metaphors

identified by many academic theorists (e.g., Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) – have the potential to be challenged.

Research concerned with the curriculum of teacher education, however, indicates that teacher candidates are not prepared for experiences of conceptual rupture, as most hang on the belief that teaching is the unidirectional transmission of a fixed curriculum (Leavy, McSorley & Boté, 2007; Reeder, Utley & Cassel, 2009). Acknowledging the notion “that pre-service teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning remain constant throughout their program” (Reeder et al., 2009, p. 290), considerable efforts are thus required to challenge such rigid associations. Leavy, et al. (2007) suggest that we need to make explicit that “[t]eacher educators can no longer be concerned with imparting knowledge about teaching, rather teacher education must provide avenues for student teachers to understand the values, attitudes and beliefs they bring to teacher education and then to plot and monitor their own professional growth” (p. 1230).

Such an orientation to the dominant values, attitudes, and beliefs teacher candidates have towards teaching and learning provides context for the lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 2000) of teacher education. Imagine, if you will, a particular day in the life of teacher candidates – a gloomy day, to be exact, in the middle of February – during which most of the formalized teaching and learning is circumscribed by a campus environment. As I wait for the right moment to welcome my students, I notice that the usual buzz is noticeably absent, so much so that I depart from my planned curriculum and begin the lesson with the question, “How are you doing?” Perhaps it is the sincerity of my tone that causes something genuine to transpire, rather than the typical response of “fine.” The stress<sup>1</sup> they are living with comes to the fore and I deeply listen to what they have to say. Toward the end of the conversation, one student sums up the collective feelings

of exasperation. He explains that his numerous campus-based assignments feel like busy work, hoops that he has to jump through before he can be in a classroom doing what he really wants to do – teach children.

Conceptualizing readings and assignments that encourage teacher candidates to explore research that pertains to teaching and learning as “hoops” one must begrudgingly pass through says much about the perceived chasm between theory and practice in teacher education. Unlike the hard sciences where a “scientific theory aims to advance knowledge within its particular discipline in an ordered, systematic way by proposing a law about the natural world which can then be empirically verified” (Moran, 2010, p. 74), within the humanities, specifically education, theory “is not so easily related to practice...[for] it encompasses ways of thinking that cannot be easily pigeonholed ...[as it] attempt[s] to question the basic assumptions of those disciplines” (Moran, 2010, pp. 74-75).

Ironically, many such theories exist that question the detached, mechanistic view that learning is a process of “jumping through hoops” such as embodied (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1968; Snowber, 2011; Wiebe & Fels, 2010), complexity (Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler, 2008; Light, 2005), and situated (Lave & Wenger, 1991) learning theories, to name a few. Yet, we might question why these theories are marginalized to the extent that conceptions of learning within teacher education programs are heavily informed by theories that either prioritize the outer body at the expense of dismissing the mind (e.g., behaviorism) or the workings of the mind detached from the sensing body (e.g., cognitivism) (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008). Additionally, we might question pedagogical approaches in teacher education that perpetuate mind-body dissonance and the role professors play in the creation of a curriculum perceived as hoops.

## Kin/aesthetic/ Ethics

Let us return to that moment in time when my students expressed their exasperation with the “jumping through hoops” idiom. Perhaps it was my desire to break the tension or offer an alternative perspective, but in that moment – a time in my life when I was eight and a half months pregnant – my response was surprisingly kinaesthetic. Without contemplation, my body responded in an impromptu flight of three lateral tuck jumps as if soaring through a series of imagined hoops. A jaw-dropping, pregnant pause filled the room and, in the midst of the collective suspension, I asked, “Could jumping through hoops be joyful?”

Posing such a question provokes a conceptual rupture of sorts, specifically that physical acts, such as jumping (and perhaps other acts often associated with disciplining the body, such as push ups), may be experienced as joyful. And, if mapped metaphorically to the discipline of teacher education, such an affective experience could also be possible. Jumps are, after all, commonly associated with expressions of joy, as in “jumping for/with joy.” A series of light, exuberant, even exploding bounces come to mind, an affective quality of movement that is both visible and palpable. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1999) and Daniel Stern (2004) explain that every motion has a degree of felt tension, a rhythm, an amplitude, a projection, and a corresponding emotion or affect, what they term as a “vitality affect.” The vitality affect of a jump through a hoop, therefore, compared to a jump for joy, seems to carry feelings of heaviness, drudgery, compliance, and containment.

If analyzed further through the philosophy of Lakoff and Johnson (2003; 1999), who explore meaning in the metaphors we use in everyday life, my kinaesthetic act also perturbed an ingrained sensorimotor mapping between two conceptual domains. The first domain relates to the jump, an orientational metaphor as it represents direction, in this

case a unidirectional journey through a course situated in a teacher education program. The second relates to that of the hoop, what Lakoff and Johnson (2003) would describe as an ontological (e.g., entity) metaphor that pertains to the curriculum circumscribed by the campus environment.

My reaction of hoop jumping certainly broke the tension as it provoked a burst of laughter for those students in that particular class on that particular day. From a critical perspective, however, taking into account the possibilities for new understandings to emerge, (e.g., that the teacher education curriculum does not have to be linear and contained), I am certain that my kinaesthetic response did little to make a dent. However funny it was at the time, the memory of that hoop jumping moment for those teacher candidates has most likely faded. For me, however, it has yet to leave my consciousness.

In a contemplative moment of vulnerability, I began to ethically question how my pedagogical approach and course assignments contributed to the ontological “hoop” metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003) for the teacher education curriculum. However animated and receptive my demeanor, for much of my formal instructional time, I was up at the front of the room orchestrating discussions around a preplanned curriculum contained by PowerPoint slides. My assignments allocated points for summarizing and critiquing readings. Through careful planning, in retrospect, I clearly defined the hoops through which my students were expected to jump.

And so, with the intention of transforming my own practice and enlivening the curricular experience of teacher education, I aspired to create new associations and meanings with the jumping through “hoops” idiom. No longer comfortable with a distancing stance of laying out hoops for my students to jump through, I wished to step inside the hoop alongside my students and explore the possibilities for expanding the curricular “container”, as well as explore the vitality affects within

and beyond a “jump”. In short, I wished to provoke emergent curricular understandings within the discipline of teacher education (Moran, 2010).

### A Community Service Learning Project

Over the course of the next academic year, I was thus inspired to plan a Community Service Learning (CSL)<sup>ii</sup> project for students interested in connecting their program of study to a supervised volunteer project. Framed around the notion of promoting joyful physical activity, and with the support of the Developing a Global Perspective for Educators<sup>iii</sup> collective, I was able to create a project with the very object students from former years associated with their expressions of exasperation – the hoop. I set out some objectives that described the scope of the project: specifically, that students would learn to make hoops, learn to hoop and engage in physical activity outreach experiences in local schools. Five bachelor of education students and one master’s student, all female, signed up for the project and were receptive to attending weekly meetings, during which I made myself available for collaborative guidance. I then sought clearance from the university Ethics Review Board to interview students involved in the CSL project at the end of their school year, as I anticipated something interesting might emerge. However practical in nature the design of the project seemed (e.g., to experience and promote joyful physical activity), I was interested in how such an experience of making and playing with hoops might disrupt a jumping through hoops conceptualization of the teacher education curriculum.

### Interdisciplinary Intertwinings: Exploring Metaphorical and Physical Hoops

...“inter” is an ambiguous prefix, which can mean forming a communication between and joining together... This ambiguity is partly reflected in the slipperiness of the term

“interdisciplinary.” It can suggest forging connections across different disciplines; but it can also mean establishing a kind of undisciplined space in the interstices between disciplines, or even attempting to transcend disciplinary boundaries altogether. (Moran, 2010, p. 14).

An undisciplined space: an opening, a vulnerable place to explore new possibilities, new experiences within and beyond the concrete box of a university campus. Seven animated females suspend spinning hula hoops on undulating hips, waists, ribs, chests, necks, arms, and hands. From playful perturbations to nebulous nudges to moments of flight, hoops pass over, under, and around torsos, limbs, and feet. Energizing music, though audible, does not command the pace as each hooper stretches, pushes, and suspends a playful pulse. Such an explosion of activity captures your attention as it is situated right in the middle of your return route from the cafeteria to your classroom. You stop and notice that some bystanders respond positively to the hoopers’ gestural beckonings and join in the wave of enthusiasm. Other hoops remain propped up against concrete walls, untouched. What thoughts enter your mind? How do you react?

Based on a review of literature on academics who have recently explored hula hoops, you might be analyzing the kinetics of the activity and be amazed by the variations of hand, hip, and chest rotations as well as angles in terms of planes of trajectory that depart from the typical approach, e.g., to “keep the hoop in stable oscillatory motion parallel to the ground” (Balasubramaniam & Turvey, 2004, p. 176). Such a display of rhythmical, positional and manipulative variation might even confirm your assertion that “little is known about individual joint contributions to the overall coordinative modes or patterns of motion that characterize hula hooping, leaving ambiguity and room for interpretation” (Cluff, Robertson & Balasubramaniam, 2008, p. 623).

More likely, however, as human kinetic researchers dedicated to analyzing the practice of hooping are few and far between, you might – especially if you come from a background in women’s studies, critical pedagogy or the like – share the reaction of Moffitt & Szymanski (2011), who purport that such actions of the body are sexually objectifying and have no place in public university spaces. But, if you are able to see past the external sway of gyrating bodies and give permission to let the body out in the academy as Snowber (2011) invites, you might “let the rhythm of what delights” (p. 189) come to the fore. Perhaps for a brief moment you permit your hips to undulate in a mimetic sway as you entertain the idea of “a pelvic inquiry [a counter current against its] relegat[ion] to the third world” (p.189). Why not, as Snowber suggests, “Bring her back!!” (p. 189) and discover “what knowing lies in the center of your belly [...] a hidden, forbidden voice [as you] activate those hips [...] and] feel the sway of your own heart” (p. 190)?

### Hooping in Public University Spaces

The hazards of interdisciplinary work are well known. It has been likened to straying from the beaten path, mucking around in uncharted swamps, and standing on the edge of a cliff. (Klein, 2005, p. 64)

In purposefully positioning this inquiry as an invitation to consider what it might be like to step inside and spin a hoop in a university campus environment, an empathic orientation is created towards the lived experience (van Manen, 1997) of students engaged in the first phase of the hooping project. For them, learning to hoop on campus was liberating in that it enabled a sense of freedom from the tight grasp of conservatism felt not only in the B.Ed. program but within a university situated in a government-based city. It also reawakened childhood memories and a sense of naïve wonder and playfulness where they could, just for a short time, live life as a child might. The following



excerpts from student interviews thus provide a glimpse of what it was like for B.Ed. students to hula hoop on campus in public spaces. Please note that pseudonyms are attached to each quote for confidentiality.

Yvonne, student teacher:

It was liberating! In this program you have to care what everyone thinks all the time... like, if you wear something different, or if in practicum if you are nervous about what you say... you are being judged... [It was] nice to be part of the [hula hooping] group. [Hooping is] harmless – it is not hurting anybody – you just didn't care – really liberating. It reminded me of when I did my undergrad at UVic. There were constantly people tightrope walking and hula hooping in the field. UVic was a giant amalgamation of people who were liberated. When you come to Ottawa and it already has a reputation of being stuffy and stagnant, government – it is nice to feel that you are doing something freeing. This artist community is so underground here, so hard to find. It's really hard to find something that is liberating... It is a way of connecting with yourself more. You can also connect with other people. Good stress release like any other activity, but a different kind of stress release.

Carla, student teacher:

I hated Physical Education (PE) as a child, so when you talked about hooping I kind of shut my ears off initially because I didn't like PE at all. It was too competitive and just too awkward. I realize I didn't like it during puberty – I was awkward, I wasn't fast enough and I was too uncomfortable. When you brought the hoops to class I was intrigued. I guess I really liked it. It was a good way of becoming closer with people in the class. I wanted to do community service learning – I didn't know which project I wanted. I wanted something out of my comfort zone! Hooping was very much out of my comfort zone. Anything physical is very much out of my comfort zone. I wanted to do it because I was nervous to do it.

Emma, student teacher:

You can't hoop and not smile! I guess it is because you

associate it with your childhood of being young and carefree – the act of going back to that and doing the simple movement of having a hoop around your waist. You grin and feel childlike, happy, carefree... Not having so many strict rules for how you have to move and how you have to be, being able to move your body in ways you wouldn't normally move and not being so rigid, being able to relax and enjoy.

Elizabeth, student teacher:

I think for me being in the moment and being able to enjoy and taking the time out of my day to do that – a lot of times I would drag myself to campus and wish I wasn't here. I have this assignment to do, I have to get to work (da da da da)... and I would get here and start hooping and be happy and forget everything else for a while. So that was really huge for me this year. Since I get bogged down with everything, obviously taking the time to keep the collectivity is very important. This year it's been hard for me to do that, so to find the time to do an activity was really big! I get really frustrated, I am a perfectionist and hate not being able to do things perfectly and to know with the hula hooping there are certain things I can do physically and some things I can't do physically and it's okay. We all have our expertises and different movements and we can move in different ways and being able to let that go!

Nadia, student teacher:

When I pick up a hoop, I personally begin to feel a little flutter in my heart. As I speed up and start to... on my waist, start to rock back and forth and pick up momentum, I feel like I can do anything in that moment once the momentum is going. Um, one thing you can't do, though, is stop smiling. (Rebecca's Question: why is that?) It's just, you can't be mad doing [hooping] ... no matter what worry you might have, it's just, you don't think about it in that moment. (Rebecca's Question: and why is that?) Because it's just too much fun. You just, no you kind of get into a rhythm and you get into a groove, and you just, you don't think of anything else except what you're doing in that second.

Such excerpts reveal a sense of shared joy in the experience of hooping in a university environment. More than an avenue of stress release, it also cultivated a space for sensations of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Lloyd, 2011; Lloyd & Smith, 2009) and delight (Kretchmar, 2005). While spinning hoops on campus, students were able to joyfully live in the moment, forget their worries, and build their confidence as they experienced the magic of motility, the Merleau-Pontian (1962) feeling of “I can.”

### Hooping with Children in Local and First Nations Schools

Once comfort was experienced in the process of making and playing with hoops, the teacher candidates were ready to enter the second phase of the project, during which they were encouraged to share these experiences with children in nearby schools. Some introduced hooping during their practicum placements; they organized lunch hour physical activity events or integrated hooping into their Health and Physical Education (HPE) classes. As a group, however, we all travelled to a nearby First Nations school on three occasions to learn about aboriginal hoop dancing and introduce the children to hula hoops. Such an experience emerged as it was connected to their Schooling and **Society** course where their professor, Nicholas Ng-A-Fook, compiled preparatory literature [e.g., Brookfield (1995), Donald (2009), Fletcher (2000), Freire (1970/90), Kirkness (1998)]. He also introduced me to the First Nations school principal, who put us in touch with the school’s hoop dance instructor, as well as a grade six teacher who taught several students who hoop danced. In addition to our visits to the First Nations school, we also put on a full day of hooping workshops at a local Intermediate School where, over the course of rotating half hour sessions, we encouraged approximately 700 students to move with hula hoops. While much can be said in terms of the collective excitement

experienced by all, excerpts from the student interviews hone in on what was most significant for the teacher candidates.

Nadia, student teacher:

The [name of place of First Nations school] experience was amazing. I ended up learning much more from the kids than they learned from me. Um, it was amazing to see how quickly we're able to bond with the students and to merge the different uses of the hoops together. And I think that came a lot with meeting with [name of their hoop dance teacher], too. She was able to say, "Why not try it? It doesn't matter what your background is, what experience you have." It was nice that we could tell them about our hooping, our hula hooping, and they could tell us about hoop dancing, and we kind of joined them together inside of the gym.

Yvonne, student teacher:

They (the children at the First Nations School) were teaching us, and we were giving them some directions, but by the end we were taking directions from them. We still had the reins, we still oversaw the project, but they were teaching us about their beliefs and their background and how it comes into play in a physical way. With us, with us... I feel that I am trying to say – when I hooped in a practicum school, there were cultural beliefs there but we didn't really touch on those. Maybe the kids never really made that connection or maybe I didn't make that connection. But in [name of location of First Nations school], it was necessary to make that connection between culture and physical; otherwise you would not understand hoop dancing at all. (Rebecca's Question: Can you give me an example?) When we were interviewing the kids there and asking what hoop dancing meant to them, one student said, "Oh, it is in my family and I'd like to show my grandmother, she'd like it. It's been passed down, it's part of my heritage...We are losing our language and we have lost the language – so least I can do is to keep up what is physical, what I know and tangible."

Emma, student teacher:

What stands out for me the most, I think, is definitely having you come to my placement, my practicum school [with the hoops] because I got so attached to those kids. I was able to have that experience with them. I think I felt they were so deserving of that experience because they might not get attention elsewhere. I think definitely having you come in. I've never seen, I've never seen kids so excited about something at school. (Rebecca: laughs). No, it's true, though, because I never got a chance to see my kids do physical education. I only taught math and English, so I think that was a surprise for me to see them in that light. So it was good, they were so excited. I was just shocked at the things they come up with and how much they already knew using the hoops. Yeah, especially the boys, they were all in there having a good time. So yeah, it was a good experience, and I think that one will stick with me.

Elizabeth, student teacher:

I would say that the most useful thing for me was to think about ways that we exclude or don't encourage people who are not necessarily engaged by what is done in a standard way – and always looking for opportunities or ways to include people in our goals in ways that are engaging to them and ways that are more personal to them, and not necessarily doing something just because that is the way things have always been done but letting them find their own ways. Even within hula hooping, I think it was interesting to see the different ways the children/students at [name of Intermediate School] kind of made it their own. They would even take the different moves that we were teaching and put their own spin on them. Just letting that happen and letting people use what you've given them and make it their own. That's true for teaching and for so many other things: giving people a starting point and letting them take it from there, and finding starting points where everyone can start from the same point, but end up in a different place. Still achieving what you want them to, but to let it be their own because people learn better that way by letting them use what you've given them in whatever way it works best for them.

## Hooping without Hoops: Fluid Understandings of Curriculum and Pedagogy

In some way, all interdisciplinary activities integrate different perspectives in a new whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, whether the goal is solving a particular disciplinary problem or building a new critical paradigm. (Klein, 2005, p. 65)

Understanding that teaching can be more than an act of transmitting information circumscribed by a series of curricular hoops students are to jump through invites an emergence of a new paradigm, a bodily way of experiencing bodies of knowledge, as well as engagement between teacher and student bodies (Smith, 2004; Snowber, 2011). Maintaining the present day tendency to think of curriculum as “being something fixed and ready-made in itself” (Jackson, 1992, pp. 5-6) – in other words, a noun instead of a developmental action of unfolding – hardens both the students and professor to the possibilities of becoming vulnerable and part of the lived curriculum (Aoki, 1993; Pinar, et al., 2000; van Manen, 2008).

Entering into a space where the curricular hoop moves in response to teaching and learning perturbations might, for some, require a jump, as in a leap of faith. Others, such as the teacher candidates who spend time with hoops, by contrast, discovered many ways to delve inside and refine and soften waves of bodily responsiveness. Unlike a beginner hula hooper, who shows outer signs of awkwardness through excessive and exaggerated rocking, hoop dropping and long stagnant pauses before the hoop is wound up and released once more, a seasoned hooper, who engages in a community of practice, learns to sustain the hoop in a way that expends less forceful energy and, at the same time, exudes more positive and playful energy. By inviting teacher candidates to share what they learned from the CSL project beyond the physicality of making and

playing with hoops, an interdisciplinary intertwining emerged as fluid conceptions of curriculum and pedagogy became apparent.

Elizabeth, student teacher:

I think that typically we see teachers in a very authoritative manner, and they're very rigid, and, it's just, I don't think it should be like that. Because that's not how, what, learning is like. It should have motion, it should be changing levels, and you should be getting down to the same level as your students. They shouldn't always be looking up at you.

Emma, student teacher:

I learned that the teacher student boundary should not be so rigid and to allow students to learn and explore a certain thing and to teach me... Not rigid – being more co-experiential – more fluid, I guess, having not such strict boundaries for what they have to be learning and how they have to be learning... It is the same thing with the hooping. I explain it in a certain way, but for them a certain movement feels better in a different way. You cannot say it's wrong if it works for them.

Carla, student teacher:

There is more connection made if you are mimicking someone's body if you are teaching them how to make a move when they are following what you are doing with your body. That sort of puts a different emphasis/connection than someone just listening to what you are saying. Listening is more of a passive way of learning. Whereas, if you are watching and mimicking someone in a physical way, then there is a connection there because you are both in sync with each other. It automatically forms more of a connection between teacher and student - it is active engagement as well.

Yvonne, student teacher:

I noticed the change right at this practicum from the last practicum –they always tell you to not just stand but to move around the room – before I consciously thought of moving around. This time I just moved, I just moved...I

guess a lot of teachers walk around to see how their students are doing - now it is just instinctive - I walk around the room.

Elizabeth, student teacher:

Teachers ask students not to move when they are moving. When teachers are teaching, the students are asked to sit quietly. So, that automatically cuts off that sense of connection. Students don't get to respond physically and they don't get to mimic what it is that the teacher is doing, even if it is subconscious. Teachers are generally standing in front of the class and not generally walking all around the classroom. Teachers are fairly stationary, there is not usually as much encouragement of interaction and response to what their movements are...I think traditional classrooms are set up to be focused on one person – whoever is doing the talking or presenting – and everyone else is still. I can only think of when students are working independently or working in groups; the teachers try and circulate, but I don't consider that as an interactive motion. Students are stationary and the teacher is sort of walking around the classroom, and they will stop and talk and then keep going so their motion is not tied to anything that the students are doing.

### Lingering in the Curricular Hoop

Lastly, when the student teachers were asked to comment on the jumping through hoops metaphor and its relevance to the teacher education curriculum, new associations with the hoop metaphor were certainly forged. Also, students were able to intertwine what it was like to physically stay within a hoop and also spend quality time within an assignment. The focus of the curricular journey thus shifted from a destination to a present moment, co-creational unfolding.

Carla, student teacher:

When I was more engaged in an assignment and gave myself the time to stay in the hoop and play with the hoop/assignment or really feel connected to it, I definitely got more out of it and it was more meaningful. When I



was hanging out in the hoop of the assignment versus just checking it out and getting it done and jumping through the hoop of that assignment – that was not as meaningful as when I hung out. Sort of rolled it around and made it my own, and tinkered with how I responded to the assignment. There are some assignments that are easier to do than others and that maybe having more assignments that are suitable to lingering in the hoop and playing with it would be beneficial. (Rebecca's Question: What kind of assignment would help you linger?) The reflective assignments! The ones that were responding to an article...The ones that I connected to most were responses to articles from the Schooling and Society course because we were not assigned the articles, we chose the articles that resonated with us... For me, personally, that seems to have a purpose outside of getting the mark for.... The assignments that to me seemed like "I am just doing it because you have asked me to do" did demonstrate learning, but I don't want to demonstrate learning unless it serves a purpose.

Emma, student teacher:

While I now love literally jumping through hoops, I still think the sentiment behind the metaphor is apt for the B.Ed. program. Hooping was a breath of fresh air.

Nadia, student teacher:

I think I was very lucky to have, not stumbled upon this, but like I said – as soon as I heard about this, I knew that it was something I needed to be a part of. In terms, well, the whole jumping through hoops thing – I didn't find that metaphor to apply to me. I think it definitely applied to a lot of people in our class. (Rebecca's Question: Can you tell me why?) I think that, I think for them it was just getting one assignment done and moving on to the next one. But for me, because I had an experience with the hoop...I relate the hoop to the actual. like it's, I don't look at it and think, "Oh, I need get through, I need to do this to get to the other side," so to speak, the other side of the hoop. I think of it as, I kind of think of it as all the experiences that came along with it. When you create your hoop, you think about all the experiences that come along with using the hoop and wherever you take your hoop. So, now every time I look at it, I think back on our B.Ed.

experience and all the positive experiences we had with the hooping group.

### Becoming a Hooper: Creating and Stepping into a Space of Energetic Vulnerabilities

The student teacher reflections indicate what kind of effect a CSL hooping project played in their B.Ed. experience. It was a source of stress release, joy, and a pivotal hub that afforded a sense of connection between the student teachers and the children they visited in local schools, as well as allowed their course readings to emerge. Volunteering my time to facilitate such a project also affected me, a professor within a B.Ed. program, as it also connected me to the joys and fluidities possible in stepping inside the curricular hoop. For the first time, I ventured out of the circumscribed concrete walls of the university campus and visited teacher educators during their practicum placements. Instead of lecturing about teaching, I also experienced it side-by-side as we collaboratively taught children in local schools. More than an abstract discussion of theories of embodiment, complexity or situated learning, we collectively experienced the possibilities of living within an animate curriculum where student creation, organized chaos and energetic expressions of joy emerged.

As I leave this experience of hooping with students who were receptive to step inside a curricular hoop, I wonder what might stay with me as I venture into my future pedagogical interactions? I know that not every B.Ed. student is prepared to move in such freeing, gyrating ways and that many come into the B.Ed. program to perpetuate their linear and contained conceptions of teaching and learning. Some will have the expectation that their course professor should be up at front, doing her job of delivering a curriculum. My challenge is to find and create openings for exploring the spaces – the vulnerable openings where we, as teachers and students, might depart from what is pre-planned and

orchestrated and together step into the curricular hoop. While I have experienced interactive flow in environments that have to do with movement pedagogy (Lloyd & Smith, 2006), I am in the process of developing sensitivities to live such moments in the campus environment. For some, moments that fall within the realm of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) – what, in teacher talk, have been labelled “teachable moments” – have been chalked up to happenstance or conceived of as mystical, even sacred (Kahn, 2009; Keen, 1999). What I am beginning to sense through my practice of hooping, however, is that such experiences may be cultivated out of an intentionality, a vulnerability, and a responsiveness to enter, create, and live within the sustained, phrase-like quality of the present moment (Stern, 2004). In closing, I wish to share how I have learned to slow down time in my practice of hooping and create invitational moments for full-bodied, fluid engagement. Moving with hoops has thus transformed my relation to the curricular conception of the hoop. Becoming a hooper has also transformed me in that I have reclaimed a bodily way of being that resonates with my former balletic self.

“Whoop, whoop, whoop”... the sound of my hoop circling around my neck travels toward the smallest of my hair follicles dancing in my inner ear, ready to reach out like limbs and adjust their vibrating frequency so that they merge like an oscillating handshake<sup>iv</sup> with the delightful sound. The pulse of my hoop is thus more than a metronome beat of passing time. It is an opening, a vulnerable, vulvable invitation to step inside a living, breathing moment that ebbs and flows. My feet slowly begin to step and turn in the circling direction of my hoop. Such movement expands the sound. Time slows and, with the shift of cadence that plays on and with a centrifugal force, the circumferential action of the hoop becomes more forgiving. More space opens and becomes visible, so much so that my right shoulder nudges up and slips inside. The hoop no longer stays within the safe haven of the crook of my neck, a bodily support for what many believe to be the locus for learning. It now rolls across the top of my widened shoulder blades that have expanded and

dissolved into the rounded flesh of my upper spine. Eager to greet the hoop, my circling chest catches it as my chest both absorbs and propels it around in one fluid motion. The sweetness possible within a living moment emerges. I long to stay and savour... my desire is sustained by circling, delicate steps that intentionally play in and with time. My neck continues to soften in an undulating sway even though the hoop has descended. Similarly, my hips, which have yet to receive the hoop, also partake in the active and reactive dance, for they move like the hairs of my inner ear – responsive, always in motion, waiting to form a chiasmic connection of their own. My hoop, as it passes over and around me, thus forms one bodily current in and with time. Nothing else exists. I have entered the realm of the sacred. I am a fluid being living at home within the currents possible to sense on dry land.

#### Notes & Acknowledgements

<sup>i</sup> Research indicates that teacher candidates are not prepared for the stress they will likely experience in their program (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007).

<sup>ii</sup> For more information about CSL at the University of Ottawa visit: [www.els-sae.uottawa.ca/els/](http://www.els-sae.uottawa.ca/els/).

<sup>iii</sup> I would like to thank professors affiliated with the Developing a Global Perspective for Educators ([www.developingaglobalperspective.ca](http://www.developingaglobalperspective.ca)), namely Dr. Sharon Cook for funding the project, as well as Dr. Nicholas Ng-A-Fook, who integrated the project within his Schooling and Society course and introduced the students to a First Nations school.

<sup>iv</sup> It was only a few months ago that I learned that ears are not passive entities ready to receive active information. The evolutionary development of the ear coincides with the development of limbs as amphibious life reached out of their watery homes in search of forming a sensuous chiasmic connection with land (Miller, 2011).

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