Book Review


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The following review serves two purposes: 1) it focuses on a pair of remarkable books on the methodological process of duoethnography; and 2) it provides an example of how this qualitative method expands the boundaries of curriculum studies in dialogic conversation and life writing, bringing forward critical structures of teaching and learning through research method. These books are reviewed in tandem given their intertwined roots and the conversations generated between them and their potential readers. These books already have and will contribute to the forward momentum of the field of curriculum studies particularly
in articulating life writing and reflexive inquiry as well as dialogic, collaborative, and interdisciplinary arts integrated studies.

The first book (Norris, Sawyer & Lund, 2012) is an edited collection containing 11 duoethnographic studies bookended by the editors’ explanation, rationale, and perspectives on the method. The studies explore a range of curricular topics such as identity, power, and privilege. They also consider the role of duoethnographic methods as they relate to the contributing authors’ transformative learnings. The second text, authored by Sawyer and Norris (2013) is a compact guidebook on the dialogic research method of duoethnography, drawing from examples in the 2012 edited book, critiquing duoethnography as a lived curriculum. These books are essential resources for dialogic research collaboration because they promote multi-disciplinarity, comparative analyses, and pluralistic and polysemic research. Hall (1973) suggests that active translations of meaning advance connotative meanings and cultural significations. The term *polysemy* etymologically stems from “poly” (many) and “sēma” (sign) – a sign with many meanings (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.).

The Method: Duoethnography as a Way of Living

As a dialogic and collaborative form of curriculum theory, duoethnography draws from autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and Clandinin and Connelly’s (1992) view that “the teacher is seen as an integral part of the curricular process and in which teacher, learners, subject matter, and milieu are in dynamic interaction” (p. 392).
Duoethnography also draws on currere (Pinar, 1994), abduction (Charmaz, 2009), the examination of personal and cultural artifacts (Chang, 2008), experiences mediated by individual and cultural meanings (Merleau-Ponty, 1962), heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981), hybrid identities (Asher, 2007), and a/r/tography (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004), among other sources. As the authors state, duoethnography is not a “research tool”; rather, it is a way of living in a contingent and uncertain curriculum of self-accountability and reflexivity. More specifically, duoethnographic studies are stratified, nested autoethnographic accounts of a given curricular context, question, or critical issue. Considering themselves the site rather than the topic of their research (Oberg, 2002), duoethnographers examine personal artifacts, stories, memories, compositions, texts, and critical incidents not only within their own lives, but within the liminal third spaces between self, collaborative partner, and contexts. They excavate the temporal, social, cultural, and geographical curricula of their lives, making explicit their assumptions and perspectives, restorying narratives, collapsing dichotomies, juxtaposing contrapuntal interplaying narratives (Berman, Hultgren, Lee, Rivkin, & Roderick, 1991; Said, 1993), and complicating and complexifying dissonance as a way to challenge socialized meanings. The method intentionally creates a transparency and articulation of perspectives, thoughts, and wonderings, purposefully creating self-reflexive reconstruction. Duoethnography tenets include:

- **Currere as frame for investigation and transformation**
- **Voices “bracket in”**
Self as research site, not topic
(Re)storying self and other
Quest(ion), not hero/victim
Fluid, recursive, layered identity
Understandings not found: Meanings created, exposed, and transformed
Emergent, not prescriptive
Communal yet critical conversations as dialogic frame

The methodology promotes organic, theory-practice connections, deepening conversations within and between particular traditions of curriculum theory including arts integrated studies and place conscious curriculum. As a form of curriculum, the texts examine and critique the curricular issues of representation and reflexivity. Consistent with the work of curriculum theorists seeking concrete individual, local, social, and global change against the current neo-liberal backdrop, these texts call for contingent, uncertain, and socially just transformations (“shatterings”) of existing perceptions deeply embedded in neo-colonial narratives, while promoting, in contrast, the insurrection of subjugated knowledges and counter narratives. This work has been particularly useful in my own work in supporting dialogue in interdisciplinary research and studies using multi-modal representation (see Maarhuis & Sameshima, in press).

In the following example of “living the method”, I provide a short “conversational currere” that intends to demonstrate one angle of how the tenets of duoethnography can be used. Duoethnography traditionally
focuses on the conversations of two researchers; however, this example demonstrates how the tenets can be used by one researcher conversing across duoidentities of mother and researcher. I incorporate excerpts from a duoethnography study called “A Curriculum of Beauty” by Nancy Rankie Shelton and Morna McDermott (Norris et al., 2012); my narrative as a mother; and the research voices of colleagues at my institution, Lakehead University, and scholars in the field of Fat Pedagogy. I selected Rankie Shelton and McDermott’s particular duoethnography because I had the pleasure of attending a conference session on this work; I have two teenage daughters, and a toddler-age daughter who incessantly mimics her older sisters; and I also had the opportunity to dialogue, read papers and attend a presentation by colleagues at my own university who are passionate about Fat Studies (Cameron, 2013; Cameron et al., submitted; Russell, Cameron, Socha, & McNinch, in press). Norris and Creswell suggest that:

We take control over our own conceptualizations by bringing them in question. Through the juxtaposition with another’s stories, we see ourselves differently, and through the sharing of our stories and their reconceptualizations we enable others to juxtapose their meanings with ours and learn the process of dialogic thinking. (as cited in Rankie Shelton & McDermott, 2012, p. 225)

In the duoethnographies presented in Norris et al.’s 2012 book, some authors used italics to indicate personal voice and researcher voice. In the following, I use three columns designating Rankie Shelton and
McDermont’s text in Column 1, my lived experiences in Column 2, and Fat Pedagogy research in Column 3. In line with the tenets of duoethnography, understandings are not found; rather, meanings are created, exposed, and transformed. In this dialogic frame, you, the reader, enables emergence of meaning according to your experiences. Pedagogical research values the reader as an essential component of the research and honors the possibilities which arise in the dialogic space within the process. Relational research such as duoethnography “opens windows into alternate spaces, disrupts conceptions of form, heartens lived experiences as theory and knowledge, decolonizes writing, and broadens the richness of living the research of currere” (Sameshima, 2007, p. 312).
### Background

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**Questions that guide this study include:**

- **How to negotiate dilemmas arising from both rejecting and buying into beauty stereotypes?**
- **How does language frame perspectives of beauty?**
- **How do views of curriculum intersect with a curriculum of beauty?**
- **How do relationships among beauty, intellectual drive, and achievement intersect?**
- **How do perceptions of social class and beauty intersect?**

I have three daughters: two teenage girls who play various sports and a three-year old who sees the girls regularly exercising in our basement and who is integrally socialized through our family schedule – whether she’s going to a hockey, soccer, or volleyball game, travelling to tournaments, or staying at home with a sister while the rest of the family is at a game. The older girls are health conscious and like other teenagers are also strongly influenced by media on notions of fitness, fat and beauty.

**Manuscript 1 (M1):**


**Manuscript 2 (M2):**

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<td>The point is that we do not deconstruct the various philosophies of beauty across the centuries from Plato to Kant to Foucault, although we reference a few. . . . We are not arguing for what might be a right or wrong definition, but, rather, to consider the implications of the definitions that were shaped around us and by us through our life journeys. Through the duoethnographic process, our individual histories are rewritten; the exhumation and reexamination of our memories are layered with alternative meanings through the eyes of another. (p. 224)</td>
<td>I wonder how Noelle is being shaped by all the unsaid happenings in our house. In our basement, she plays with her kitchen center and plastic vegetables, moving items from the play fridge to the stove top and onto tea sets while I walk on the treadmill. She is often with her sisters downstairs when they are doing cardio, yoga, or weights with their music and exercise phone apps. In our house, I feel a relentless focus on food and exercise. My daily morning conundrum is: “What should we have for dinner tonight? “What’s our schedule today? Who’s playing what where?”</td>
<td>A healthy body is determined, not by medical treatments and lifestyle choices alone, but by a complex interaction of social influences (Raphael, 2009). (M2) We have bodies not just because we are born into bodies but because we learn our bodies, that is, we are taught how to think about our bodies and how to experience our bodies (McLaren, 1991, p. 156). (M1)</td>
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<td>I love preparing food and I love our family meal times. One of Noey’s favorite pastimes is baking. Today she said, “Mom, let’s not make sweet muffins or we’ll get fat.” She hears her sisters say: “You’re going to get fat eating at the computer!”; “Can I have a sip? No, forget it. I don’t want to get fat!”; “I ate too much. I feel so fat.”; “I haven’t exercised today.”</td>
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Morna:

I also remember around the age of thirteen getting reinforcement from men about my appearances. If I walked down the street and got honked at, I took that as a compliment. So, on the one hand, I was getting a lot of male attention that suggested I was beautiful, and yet with my sister around, I would suddenly feel not pretty enough. One thing this study has done is force me to critically articulate how I can have a foot in both camps: one, that I perpetuate the stereotype about myself a lot—the way I dress, I want to fit into the stereotype of beauty—but at the same time I want to critically deconstruct myself and reject this stereotype, trying to buy into it at the same time. How do I do that?

My older girls were in the Washington State public school system from 2007-2012. Each term, as part of their Physical Education programs, they were tested with the PACER Fitness Test (Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run) which is comparable to Canada’s Beep Test, Shuttle Run Test, or Multi Stage Test. The goal of the battery is to measure aerobic fitness. Students run back and forth between a 20 meter distance within the allowable beep signals. The test starts out slowly as runners jog from one end to the other. As the test continues, runners challenge their speed and endurance levels as they try to keep pace with the beeps. As students drop out, they sit to the side of the gym and the rest of the class continues. These scores are recorded and tracked each term through the student’s education. My daughters, always involved in sports in and outside of school, found this test stressful (the anticipation) and also a means of empowerment (because they were successful).

According to Kirk (2010), PE contributes to the gender order of hierarchicalized bodies, muscular ones for boys (Ryan, Morrison, and Ó Beaglaoich, 2010; Kendal & Martino, 2006) and thin ones for girls (Kilbourne, 2000).

We draw from Monchinski’s (2007, 2008) work on structures of dehumanization and Foucault’s (1984) concept of ‘biopower’ – the idea that individuals and populations are controlled through practices associated with the body. It is a form of invasive and omnipresent health governance and regulation of peoples’ lives through body practices that are predominantly classed, racialized, and gendered. We use Bourdieau’s (1986) ideas of embodied capital to illustrate how schools and youth reinforce ideas of good and/or bad healthy bodies, thus giving capita and power to
When introducing myself to a neighbor who had recently moved in next door, the woman told me that she already knew about my girls because her son told her about Cameo’s pacer score. The subtext was, “Your family is ok”.

The PACER reinforces youth conceptions of good and bad bodies and for my daughters, shaped their thinking of their own bodies, as well as shaped their thinking of those who dropped out of the PACER in the early levels. This test is no different than having two captains pick teams from the rest of the PE class lined up against the fence. Who will be the last student called?

Students who demonstrate their goodness through being ‘trim, tight, lineless, bulgeless, and sagless’ (Bordo, 2003, p.32). (M1)

Educators, in particular health and physical education ones, need to question how the bodies of youth are turned into political sites of privilege and oppression through the evaluation, monitoring, and surveying of bodies. With the increased agenda of high standards and measurement, bodies will continue to be sites of punishment and privilege through such scrutiny, and many youth will continue to suffer from these injustices. Hence, there is a need to explore how schools and physical education courses are (and are not) engaging students in meaning-making practices about their bodies, from the perspective of both a physical and social construction. (M1)
These types of tests introduce binaries such as ‘fit’ and ‘unfit’, ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ and reinforce ideas of a ‘good’ and ‘bad’ biocitizen (Petherick, 2011). In other words, students who perform well and demonstrate control of the body, mastery of fitness and sport skills are considered good biocitizens without actually being labeled as such. Within boundaries between good and bad, students quickly learn that while certain classed, raced, gendered, and sexed body types are privileged and celebrated others are punished and demonized (Andrews, 2008). (M1)

Nancy:

Beauty in me was taught by my mother. She constantly worked to make me feel beautiful. Of all the things that Claudette did, this is the one thing she tried to do right. She used to tell me all the time that “you are only as pretty as you feel” and that “someday your

Morna uses the term “beauty lens” to describe how she sees the world differently than how she judges herself. When she looks upon her loved ones, she looks for internal beauty and in herself, she judges her exterior (p. 229).

A ‘biocitizen’ is defined as someone who looks after their health, not just for their own sake, but also for the sake of the community and state” (Halse, 2009). (M1)

I remember overhearing a conversation between the girls when they were in middle school in the United States. . . . The complete lack of, and

It is as though “fat” does not exist in outdoor education.
husband will be so lucky to have you for his wife.” I used to ask why. Many times she repeated, “Because you can cook, sew, play piano, and you are smart” and other things I don’t remember. I remember wanting to believe her—I remember wanting to believe her.

Morna:

As I said, the biggest contributor to my conception of beauty is my sister, Megan. She is three years older than I, and since my adolescence, I remember her being the prettier one.

Other people, especially boys, reminded me of this constantly. I remember Mike T. coming to my house to be with me (to make out), and yet when he left, I discovered he had stolen a photo of my sister from the TV room!

States. They were discussing what wearing different brands meant. Wearing the brand Aeropostale provides the ticket into the “You’re ok” group; Wearing Hollister says, “You’re cool and care about yourself”; and Abercrombie & Fitch hollers, “You like showing off”. I remember when Jordache jeans and Lacoste shirts were the “in” thing. Ironically, Jordache now makes private label jeans for brands such as Abercrombie & Fitch (Jordache Enterprises, 2013).

At the high school level now, my daughters are less concerned with wearing the ‘right’ hoodie and define their individuality through clothing as long as it’s not ‘loud’.

Thinking about all three columns at once, it seems our biggest challenge is fear. My girls don’t want to be loud. They want to blend in, not stand out, so they study the situation and find “normal”.

disregard for, size diversity perpetuates an assumption that the outdoors is a place only for bodies deemed fit and able. Other assumptions were also in play, including that participation in outdoor activities automatically means one is fit and that students interested in preserving the environment will eat only healthy, organic foods. Recently, I had a classmate tell me that I could not be “outdoorsy” because I did not “look the part” and that my food choices did not support a “natural” lifestyle. That is when I realized that my own moments of feeling targeted could be one reason for the lack of fat representation within environmental education. (M2)
Morna: The issues of class clearly intersect with issues of sexual beauty. They are both forms of privilege too. Rich people usually look stereotypically ‘beautiful.” Why? Because they can afford the good hair colorist, the caps on their teeth if they need them, the personal trainer, braces, manicures, etc.

We are quick to see groups—the rich and beautiful, cliques in school, categories of people, and we are less careful about supporting and acknowledging individuality.

Nancy: My concept of worth—whether its beauty or not, I am not sure—is definitely linked to my mental power and my ability to break through the barriers of gender exclusion into a powerful existence where my voice can be more influential than my brothers’.

The older girls played hockey in boys’ leagues for 6 years because we lived in a small hockey community. As they grew older with their teams, the boys continued growing taller, and in the physical game of boys’ hockey, it became increasingly dangerous because of size differences. I suspect they always felt pressure to perform well as girls on boys’ teams but they also enjoyed the attention. They currently play on girls’ teams now.

“The US sports world, in particular, perpetuates and benefits from gender stereotyping and inequality (Messner, 2007)” (M1).
<table>
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<th>Morna:</th>
<th>The comment from Morna’s study, “fat people are lazy” is a common way to “view” people in the dance world. A decade ago, I was heavily involved in a Chinese Dance Academy in Vancouver. I practiced several times a week for performances and international dance examinations. During that time, I was fit, strong, and lean. Looking back, I was also very unhealthy physically: I wasn’t eating enough. Mentally, I was constantly stressed as I was always hungry, but I was satiated by compliments and empowered by my body’s trained capabilities. The way my body looked and performed was focal. Every dance practice was spent critiquing body lines—my own and the bodies of others (shape, line, curve, extension). Everything was public—leotards, tights, and midriff-baring costumes. My whole life at the time was consumed by control and will. Of course, fat was a result of laziness—a lack of will power.</th>
<th>Fat people, particularly women, are demonized and characterized as weak, lazy, and indulgent (Bordo, 2003) (M2)</th>
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<td>In 2008, I anonymously polled a group of twenty undergraduates using a questionnaire about their feelings on appearances and pedagogy. One of the responses included: “I often think fat people are lazy. We have a moral association with beauty. We see people as less if they are fat or “ugly”.”</td>
<td>A growing number of scholars, particularly those working in fat studies/critical obesity studies, have begun to challenge dominant obesity discourse claiming that it ignores the historical, cultural, social, and political roots of obesity and perpetuates questionable “facts” such as body fat being unhealthy, that more people today are obese than in the past, and that today’s youth will have shorter lifespans than their elders because of obesity (Gard &amp; Wright, 2005; Rail et al., 2010). (M2)</td>
<td>We argue that one place to start understanding this culture of internalized oppression is to understand how we ourselves have (re)produced or resisted weight-based oppression. (M2)</td>
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Nancy:
I think we both are uncomfortable with ourselves when it comes to judging beauty in ourselves but really work to make sure others do not have feelings that physical beauty matters more than internal goodness.

When asked who is beautiful, the girls respond with Dan Howell, a vlogger, BBC Radio presenter, who is “funny and has a beautiful face”; Emma Watson, an actress who “doesn’t seem like she’s evil” and Jennifer Lawrence, an actress who “is really funny and likes to eat”.

On the surface I hear my daughters saying the right things (i.e. beauty is the internal), but they know too, that the physical matters—the normalized “beautiful” Hollywood star who looks anorexic is considered successful in every media outlet.

I am relieved to find that the “facts” I had internalized despite them being patently untrue in my case (e.g., fat people eat more, exercise less, are less healthy) were being contested in the research literature. (M2)

A tool that has been adopted and promoted as the “instrument of choice” to measure body fatness is the Body Mass Index (BMI), a ratio of weight to height that classifies people into distinct categories of weight (WHO, 2000). Although the BMI is rife with flaws and highly contested (Anderson, 2012; Campos, 2004), it is ubiquitous and individuals are coerced to conform to society’s “normal” weight classification. (M2)

Counterpoint is a musical term referring to a combination of independent melodies in a single harmonic texture in which each retains its linear character. The three columns attempt a duoethnographic counterpoint. The words juxtaposition, polyphony, distinct, harmonious, art, composition, and handling are all part of the semantic field of
counterpoint (Merriam-Webster, 2013). The work of a duoethnography is a composition, an intentional creation of “inter-textuality” (Hall, 1997, p. 232) which is created when meaning is contingently generated across multiple texts, where one work is reflected in another. Although individual texts can signify independently, when in conversation through placement and juxtaposition, the texts are no longer static and open a space to challenge conventional views. Cole and Knowles (2001) suggest the form itself has the power to inform. The polyvocal conversational currere intentionally allows for reading left to right, right to left, or out from the center. As Bourriaud (2002) explains of relational aesthetics, the artist, or in this case, the duoethnographer, by inviting in social context and relation, becomes a catalyst and inspirator of meaning making. The reader of a duoethnographic study engages in a complicit conversational currere with the texts and is challenged to name and negotiate discursive contradictions which in turn encourage deeper questioning.

To close, together these two books on the method of duoethnography, create their own dialogue in support of politically engaged, socially complex and cosmopolitan, and inherently democratic curriculum theory. Duoethnography presses our field forward by legitimizing a space to revive repressed, embodied knowing, challenging our socially constructed frameworks. The duoethnographic writing process, like life writing,

\[ \text{[when] practiced in a disciplined way allows for the ‘coming through’ of life experiences that don’t count in conventional} \]
registers of value, mainly because those registers (status ideologies of intelligence, beauty, etc.) can’t allow for the true complexity and deep interdependence of all of life (Smith, 2013, p. xv).
References


