The Mystery in Curriculum Development: Coming to Know Ourselves as Teachers and Individuals in the World

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Abstract:
In this paper, we address mystery in curriculum development in a personal and storied way. We share our belief in the ongoing nature of mystery across time and situation, in the teaching life and beyond, into the worlds we inhabit in our daily lives with others. As self-study narrative researchers over many years, we turn to the work of Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin, William Pinar, Ted Aoki and Maxine Greene to illustrate our perspective that mystery awaits us as we uncover new meaning in the seminal stories we have lived, and which inform us in present day learning and understanding in an ongoing way. We describe two theories that we utilize to guide our path to unearthing the mystery held in our stories—one is Connelly and Clandinin's *narrative inquiry* and the other, Pinar's *currere.* Both consider curriculum development to be an ongoing and circular course wherein it is always possible to find new meaning from experiences that can open one to new, present-day worlds, where one can live and share interactions with others.

Keywords: narrative; curriculum; *currere*; mystery; personal experience

Le mystère dans le développement des programmes d'études : Apprendre à se connaître en tant que personnel enseignant et individus dans le monde

Résumé :
Dans cet article, nous abordons le mystère dans l'élaboration des programmes d'études d'une approche personnelle et narrative. Nous partageons notre conviction que le mystère est omniprésent à travers le temps et les situations, dans la profession enseignante et au-delà, dans les mondes que nous habitons au quotidien avec les autres. En tant que deux qui font la recherche d'auto-étude narrative depuis de nombreuses années, nous nous tournons vers les travaux de Michael Connelly et Jean Clandinin, William Pinar, Ted Aoki et Maxine Greene pour illustrer notre point de vue selon lequel le mystère nous attend lorsque nous découvrons un nouveau sens aux histoires significatives que nous avons vécues et qui informent continuellement notre apprentissage et notre compréhension. Nous décrivons deux théories que nous utilisons pour guider la découverte du mystère que recèlent dans nos histoires : l'une est l'enquête narrative de Connelly et Clandinin et l'autre, le *currere* de Pinar. Toutes deux conçoivent le développement du programme comme un chemin continu et circulaire dans lequel il est toujours possible de trouver de nouvelles significations à partir de nos expériences, qui peuvent nous ouvrir à de nouveaux mondes, où nous pouvons, dès ce moment-ci, vivre et partager des interactions avec d'autres.

Mots clés : récit; programme d'études; *currere*; mystère; expérience personnelle

As self-study narrative inquiry researchers, mystery is at the core of our thinking about curriculum development. Having explored our own lived experiences through graduate studies and subsequent writing over a number of years (Podolski, 2018; Podolski, 2021; Shields 1997, 2005, 2019) we have learned that coming to know ourselves through focusing on the seminal stories of our own experiences can be emotional, surprising, even life changing, in what is revealed—an awakening to new perspectives on past tales. Engaging in the process of reinterpreting what we thought we knew about ourselves and our world is the critical ingredient that shifts our mindsets, opening us to teaching and learning from within our very being. For us, this coming to know through unravelling the mystery found in the process of reinterpreting particular life events provides a solid base for the ongoing development of our personal and professional selves. Mystery remains ever-present as we cross time and continue to seek new knowledge from the past through the reinterpretation of experiences we have examined and learned from previously. Mystery then is a constant companion in a learning journey.

We believe that mystery lies in the intangible journey of self-knowing—that ongoing progression of constructing and reconstructing situations and events as they occurred in the distant and recent past to re-form our perspective on the present. This ongoing cycle of coming to know ourselves is important because our worldviews and subsequent behaviours are embedded in our histories, where they linger until we inquire into them, decide to own them, change them or discard them, as we add insights that can change our viewpoints and behaviours. Being conscious of the possibilities inherent in this path allows us to meet students and others in a space where new learning can emerge through sharing seminal stories that have informed our lives. Such exchanges offer new direction for present day learning and living. In this way, curriculum development is also personal development.

As we delineate our thinking in this paper, we move from perspectives on mystery and how it pertains to curriculum development to naming four particular theorists whose work underpins our interpretation of curriculum and to sharing stories of our own experiences that provide examples of how mystery continues as a present force in our personal and professional lives. Sharing stories of our experiences provides examples of ways that mystery has unfolded over time for us from revisiting past events and situations where meaning has shifted or changed our vision of ourselves, our teaching and our research direction. The stories we share are in italics.

In the next section, we describe our thinking about where mystery lies in our shared curricular vision. Mystery in our own curriculum development begins and is grounded within our lived experiences; mystery directs our individual inquiries as we interpret and reinterpret our life stories. Our understanding of mystery as an ever-present force, and our dependency on it in interpreting curriculum through our stories of lived experience is a continuous process that is never exhausted.

Conceptions of Mystery in Pedagogical Thought

For us, mystery is not only what happened before or will happen after our corporal existence, rather, it is in discovering who we are in the moments between, in what Arendt (1958/1998) describes as the incalculable quintessence of natality—and what we interpret as continuing to live anew as we animate our worlds with our words and deeds. Uncovering the mystery involved in discovering who we are requires studying our actions, our discussions with others, and the thoughts stimulated by our lives and relationships across time (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Pinar, 1994, 2012). Through adopting a curricular perspective that supports the uncovering of what Connelly and Clandinin (1988) call "personal, practical knowledge", the mystery that we hold within ourselves can be revealed and connected to a pedagogy that is comprised of the events, situations and experiences we each have lived. Therein lies the source of what we can actually claim to know. The mystery is finding the hitherto unknown meaning that is held in these places within us, and which we can apply to present and future learning. Who will we be each day, beginning by being ethically present, in the world in which our actions and imaginations are most palpable?

To move further into mystery and the lessons awaiting us there, we position ourselves within an understanding of who we are as teachers and individuals. Our belief is that what we can do is study our lived experiences through telling and retelling, or writing and re-writing, our stories of experience (Clandinin, 2013), as we seek meaning in our interpretations and re-interpretations of what we have lived across time. We have found that unwrapping the mystery of our own experiences is a moral act requiring some courage; we must traverse received ways of knowing (Belenky et al., 1997) from school, teachers, family members and cultural expectations to construct a personal story that rings true for ourselves. There mystery awaits for us to formulate our own tale.

Rethinking the past—what we thought we knew about ourselves socially, emotionally and spiritually, as well as politically (Zemblas, 2003), has resulted in an awakening to new visions of who we are in the present. While revisiting and uncovering some tales is hard, emotional work, taking this course of action provides a curriculum that ignites an ongoing journey—a way of continually coming to know our selves and the culture we inhabit. The mystery along the way lies in uncovering certain or unexamined knowledge we previously had espoused in our surroundings, and in the fact that we can come to see ourselves and the world around us anew.

In Pinar's (1994) essay "The Trial" (an allusion to Kafka's novel of the same name), character "K" is arrested, yet free to seek answers to his position in his community. He does not know his arrest is internal, and so does not look within for answers as to why he is arrested. His curriculum is external to himself and his life experiences. For curriculum to be authentic, mustn't it hold the mystery of what we have yet to know about ourselves? Without mystery, we live like K, empty in/of ourselves and reliant on others for placing meaning in our lives. When knowledge is seen as predestined, it is a victim of a certain arrogance (Greene, 1995b); it turns away from the mystery embedded in our lives and does injustice to creativity, curiosity, imagination (Aoki, 2005; Greene, 1995b) and, we would say, to mystery. And without mystery, we believe personal curricular discoveries are nearly impossible.

Conceptions of Mystery in the Classroom

When we, as teachers, enter a classroom, we set out on a voyage, an exploration of mystery, a sense of wonder. This voyage attends to the immediacies of inner universes, to the particularities of wisdom—to local visions of what knowledge is of most worth in a classroom—and it is where a personal philosophy, a distinctive pedagogy, can begin (Greene, 1995a, 1995c; Podolski, 2018, 2021). This perspective aligns with Dewey's (1910, 1938) notion that education is a process of endless exploration, and thus discovery, which for us, means education begins in the presence of mystery.

As a teacher, to engage the site-specific mystery of any classroom involves inward and outward movement, an attention to individual students with their odours, their auras, their freckles, their scars—a personal pedagogy that finds possibility in collaboration and conflict, in the lived curriculum that Aoki (2005) so wisely urges educators to attune their pedagogical attention to. Greene (1995c) asks teachers to explore tensions to resonate a unique dialectic; teachers are asked to restore educational meaning by discovering a pedagogy and curriculum in their lived worlds—their local social world existing through exchanges of energies between biological bodies in a school classroom—to explore the local mystery there, in its spontaneity, in what Maxine Greene calls the "dance of life" (p. 60).

Greene (1995a) notes how other great thinkers, namely Sartre, Arendt (borrowing from Brecht) and Heidegger, wrote extensively on how mystery and imagination within our lives may be endangered by a thick cloud of empty yet opaque "thereness"; Greene highlights how Arendt connects Sartre's description of a cloudy, bleak, meaningless existence in his novel *Nausea* with Heidegger's notion of "mere talk" in his classic, *Being and Time* (as cited by Greene, 1995a). We believe this empty condition exists in our schools when what is personal dissolves into bureaucracy, into what Arendt (1972) calls "rule by Nobody" (p. 7). In curriculum planning, we believe the threat is identified by Pinar (2012) as the Tylerian rationale, which conceptualizes curriculum as meeting an evaluator's predetermined objectives, expectations and standards. If learning goals and success criteria are determined before the learning begins, where is the mystery? Beyond the edge of the familiar, mystery is contained in the blank pages of the curriculum—in getting to know the lives of students in the hallways, in waiting for the bus, along with custodians, parents, colleagues and all the other would-be-strangers. Within this mystery, a sense of community awaits.

Theorists Who Inform Us

While a number of theorists, such as Atkinson (1995), Cole and Knowles (2008); Ellis and Bochner (2000) and Palmer (2000, 2004), write about the value of inquiring into and with personal story as both methodology and method, in this section we turn specifically to the work of four theorists whose work underpins our own. Firstly, Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin's (1988, 1994, 2000) *narrative inquiry* offers a powerful methodology and thoughtful methods to rethink and utilize our past experience. Ongoing inquiry is central to this theory, as is motion from past to present and from our selves to the larger community, as we inquire into our stories of experience. Secondly, William Pinar's (1994, 2012) *currere* offers another path for unearthing past experience that involves

an inward search to help us move into a rich and meaningful present. Thirdly, Ted Aoki's (2005) *lived* and *planned curriculum* connects our personal and professional lives, grounding a curricular approach within our very being, rather than merely turning to the guiding documents we study. Fourthly, Maxine Greene's (1978, 1995b) overall notion of *pedagogical imagination* provides a pathway for us to inquire into the mystery of who we each are and might become across time and situation as we engage in our own personal and moral development.

Our Paths to Mystery and Curriculum Development

In this section, we share stories of experiences that offer insight into how we use narrative inquiry and *currere* to develop curriculum situated within our own being and place in the world—within what Heidegger (1927/1996) refers to as *being-in-the-world* or what Aoki (2005) would call our lived curriculum. Our stories include thinking about our way forward into the perpetual mystery of tomorrow, where our pedagogical perspectives can be shared, and new learning can emerge. Carmen uses self-study narrative inquiry to share shifts in personal understanding, while Adam uses *currere* as an example of openings created through the reconstruction process.

Carmen:
Narrative Inquiry as a Path to Mystery and Curriculum Development

I begin by sharing my introduction to narrative inquiry, about coming to understand the roots of this theory. I follow with a story I reconstructed, in my doctoral work, from my school teaching days as a resource teacher, of an event that challenged my thinking and shifted both my ontological and epistemological views. Lastly, I reflect on ways that mystery has impacted the way I think of that story across time to the present.

From their 1988 book *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience* onward, Connelly and Clandinin, both together and separately, have theorized both methodology and methods for the study of personal experience (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1990, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2013). The formalized study of the events, situations and experiences one has lived is delved into and becomes the study of oneself in relation to people, places, events and situations one has experienced. Mystery lies at every turn of such inquiry as one travels the path laid by Clandinin and Connelly (1994):

> Methods for the study of personal experience are focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. By inward we mean the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions. By outward we mean existential conditions, that is, the environment, or what E. M. Bruner (1986) calls reality. By backward and forward we are referring to temporality, past, present and future. To experience an experience is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way. (p. 417)

Having taken this direction back and forth across time, as well as inward and outward from self to community, I understand it to be a path of uncovering what I thought I knew, of becoming mystified as my cover stories collapse and secret stories are cracked open for me to examine and re-interpret. Curriculum becomes a search for embodied meaning, a search based in inquiry—and it is

an ongoing mystery because what may emerge is unknown until arrival at this place, and then from that place, as I move on from this present into the next future.

Carmen's Story

I was a doctoral student in the summer of 1993, in Michael Connelly's classroom, when I first read Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) version of curriculum theorizing:

> *Curriculum is often taken to mean a course of study. When we set our imaginations free from the narrow notion that a course of study is a series of textbooks or specific outline of topics to be covered and objectives to be attained, broader and more meaningful notions emerge. A curriculum can become one's life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow. (p. 1)*

This definition jolted me awake to the fact that curriculum was not divorced from my being as I had been taught in my master's degree in special education: it was not a set of aims, objectives and procedures devised by experts "out there" to be adopted, but rather, it was comprised of my life experiences, and my path was to find the learning moments held there. I understood then that my way forward as a teacher and scholar lay not in attempting to fix students in difficulty, in a disembodied way, but rather in meshing my academic studies with my life experience, and helping students to do the same.

Looking Back on a Moment in a Teaching Life

I remember one particular story I wrote in my doctoral dissertation in 1997 about a student I moved from her grade 3 classroom to a special class, when I was a resource teacher in the 1980s. Every morning, she came to me with excuses: she couldn't see out of one eye; she had a headache; she couldn't do the work. She was clearly miserable. Collaborating with her teacher, I administered tests of ability and achievement, as I had learned in my master's studies, and found her to be in the below-average range of ability and far below the range for her age in achievement. I made a home visit to discuss next moves with her parents, and I ended up advising a special education class in another school. All involved felt this was a good move, and so she went.

As I wrote this tale in my dissertation, years later, reflecting on that decision, I saw that I had enacted the one solution I had been taught to see. I used the tools I had been taught, but neglected to look beyond that for any other potential way to view possibilities for this student. I wrote that I felt that rather than serving the student, in actuality, what I had really done in this removal was make life easier for the teacher and the class. Through the recovery of meaning process that followed this revelation, I was able to see this story in this new way. Bearing the weight of this awakening, I felt both sad and angry. While I could no longer help this particular student, I could apply the lesson I learned from this situation, which was to search within myself for a broader view of pedagogy than set scripts could offer, one which I could apply with other students going forward.

Thinking About This Story Now

What I feel now, when I think of this reconstructed story, is mystification in my inability to see beyond what I had been taught to do. I find the faith I had in myself as a resource teacher and in the school system surprising because even as an education student I was critical of the need to separate special needs students from the rest of the school—yet I adopted complete trust in others' conceptions of children such as this one, rather than thinking critically myself about what I might have done differently for this student. My action was one where I enacted my professional learning, rather than incorporating my own beliefs and lived experience.

Especially puzzling is the fact that my growing-up years were spent with a very developmentally challenged younger sister whose daily moves and tantrums were a constant mystery to unravel for myself and family. We had to be creative, insightful, calming and supportive to get through the days trying to understand her. In my own way, I handled my part in this scenario as a teenager with no training, just a reliance on my own instincts, experience and day-to-day thinking. Yet, using my own lived experience was not even a thought in my professional work, at the time of the story I just told.

I felt mystification moved to mystery when, through my dissertation writing, I awakened to my actions and thought about other ways that moment might have unfolded for her in our school. I remember feeling an awful sense of having failed that student by not considering other options for her.

The importance of reflecting on this tale, which I have reconstructed a number of times, resides in working through the way that circumstance and the expected socio-cultural interpretation of schooling removed my responsibility for individual thought and actions toward an interpretation that accepts mystery. I think of the power in a chapter of Greene (1978), titled "Wide-awakeness and the Moral Life", where she recommends "throwing off sleep" and becoming aware that the responsibility for our actions lies at our own feet. In my experience since that time, I have found that taking a narrative inquiry path keeps me centred on the mystery held in my interactions with others as they unfold. While I cannot know what may transpire in relationship with others, I can open myself to new ways of seeing and take personal responsibility for my actions rather than rely on a script designed by others.

Adam:

Currere as a Path to Mystery and Curriculum Development

> Pinar (1994), writing of the way he teaches, says,
> I have knowledge of my discipline, some knowledge of my students, and some self-knowledge that I am willing to share. As well, I come ready to respond, not only as a student and teacher of literature, but as a person. (p. 9)

He adds: "My students and I have come to feel that we rarely need to go to subject matter outside ourselves. . . . We work from within" (p. 10). Pinar sets an active milieu within the classroom where mystery, in the form of new understanding, can unfold for each student and himself, as they share

their thoughts, feelings and perspectives with one another. New inquiries arise from class conversation addressed on subsequent occasions, and thus, the unfolding mysterious nature of learning for all involved continues. The world of shared thoughts and ideas that emerges from introspection, which may both mystify and demystify one's point of view, also becomes a path for theorizing curriculum that is personal and storied.

In *Autobiography, Politics and Sexuality* (1994), Pinar posed a question that points directly to the importance of inquiry as a way of seeking meaning in personal experience, explaining, "I want to try to understand the contribution my formal academic studies make to my understanding of my life" (p. 19). His route was through *currere,* a method he began developing in the 1970s with Madeline Grumet. In *Understanding Curriculum*, *currere* is described thus: "Stated simply, *currere* seeks to understand the contribution academic studies makes to one's understanding of his or her life" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 520). As such, Pinar (1994) proposes four steps of *currere* and characterizes them as follows: 1) *regressive*, where one returns to the biographic past; 2) *progressive*, where one moves forward in time to the present and imagined possible future; 3) analytical, where one examines both the past and the present; 4) *synthetical*, where one returns to the lived present with new understanding.

In *Understanding Curriculum,* Pinar again notes that *currere,* as a study of autobiographical text, "communicates the individual's lived experience as it is socially located, politically positioned, and discursively formed" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 416). So, to enact *currere,* one must return to study events, situations and experiences that have grounded one's life in the past, bring the mystery of what one finds there into the present, and possibly into the imagined future, analyze what one has found in this search of the past, present and future, and synthesize all that into a new perspective for use in the lived present, all the while recognizing that mystery endures.

Adam's Story

Positioning Myself Within the Mystery in Curriculum Development

As I grew up, there was a patch of forest between my grandparents' and our neighbours' cottages. I'd spend hours turning over rocks there. It was a pastime of mine because under each rock was a world and mystery—creatures crawling and scrambling. I would describe or even carry specimens back to others at the cottage. I'd learn their names—study what others had said or written about them—ants, centipedes and salamanders. This practice of turning over stones carried me into my secondary schooling. Academically, I studied biology and would later teach the subject as a secondary school teacher.

This was a pursuit of mystery fueled by wonder and curiosity, not simply a trivial pastime. I see mystery, its presence or repression, as connected to being. I link the pursuit of mystery to another event in my teenage life. When the steel plant in the town I grew up in fell in and out of bankruptcy, things became rough, and an opioid and addiction epidemic spread through the city. I and many others began relying on a self-induced feeling of mystification—but this ended up becoming a slow

project moving towards de-mystification, that is, removing mystery, curiosity and emptying oneself of all feeling, becoming like a stone in the forest.

I was somewhere underneath the numbness, much like Sartre's character Antonie Roquentin in Nausea*, who lived in Mud Town, I set on a path that was leading me toward alienation and isolation, towards nothingness—simply existing but not tapping into the mystery of my existence.*

In a classroom, I believe a similar predicament is risked if I, as a teacher, am simply there—I must turn over stones and ask who I am and who the students are. There is mystery to uncover, curiosity, a path towards wonder, towards education, relationships, growth and, at times, love. Now, I aim to know a curriculum that includes melancholy, pain, depression, curiosity—mystery—all things that pull one out of nothingness, out of the standardized, tranquillized curriculum that is simply there. I continue to experience the mystery in learning more about my subject and who the students are. I also honour my younger self by keeping him in mind; he dared return to the forest and away from the small apartments and a narrow world that was becoming more and more moribund; he dared to turn toward curiosity, toward a world filled with mystery.

Connecting the Above Story With My Teacher Self

After years of teaching biology and then visual arts, I now hold a teaching position titled Student Success Teacher. In my role, I work with students who are labelled at-risk; often it is their well-being at risk. In many cases, the students' behaviour puts them at odds with teachers and the expectations of the school. Behaviour is often the stone, the hard surface, covering a mystery. It is the privileged position of a teacher to be able to ask students questions, to get to know something about their lives. Escaping into the safety of following policy, such as sending a student to the office, without daring to enter the mysterious space the student-teacher relationship offers, de-mystifies curricular encounters. To be effective in my new role and connect with students, I've learned I must risk something too. To turn over the stone, I risk telling my own story.

A story I reflect on often, is one where I developed a good rapport with a student who was later expelled from our school for a number of understandable reasons. Because he was returning to the school frequently and pulling other students out of class, the staff were told to walk him off the property if they were comfortable with doing so, or contact the office otherwise. I ran into him in the hall one day—and my first reaction was one I regret. He asked if I had any hot chocolate—it was winter and the students and I would often make and have hot chocolate when we were doing art critiques. But I told him he was not supposed to be in the building. He looked at me, and I could see how disappointed he was in me, and in that moment, I felt like my words betrayed the trust and relationship we had built together during the semester that we got to know one another. He shook his head and started walking in the other direction.

At that point in my career, I was very familiar with the planned curriculum (Aoki, 2005)—the progressive discipline policy and Board documents, I felt myself dissolving into them. In a strange sense, my obedience to authority reminded me of the use of narcotics that absorbed my younger self in nothingness years ago. But now this nothingness was a retreat into the safety of following

expectations without daring to enter the mysterious space my relationship with this student offered me. I could see my former student looked hungry, and I could tell by his appearance he was struggling.

I opened myself up to my feelings—to my own struggle as a youth, and more feelings, and a sense of mystery poured in. The embarrassing and foolish mistakes I had made as a youth came to mind; I thought about my world as it was at that time and how it was so tightly and emotionally bound within my mere 16 years of existence. The thoughts I felt awakened empathy, compassion and sensitivity rather than judgment. I chose mystery in that moment. I chose to make a connection to the promise of what could be possible between us.

I yelled his name and said, "Let's go to my office and I'll make us hot chocolate." He smiled, we went and chatted, and we enjoyed the quality of our brief time together. Then, I fulfilled my obligation by walking with him out of the building. That was the last week I or anyone else ever saw him. The following month, and for much longer, students were grieving his loss. I was too. A girlfriend of his said I was one of the few people who were kind to him. I asked, "One of the few teachers?" She said, "No, people." This comment has stuck with me.

Turning Over Stones

Looking back, I know I could have done more to get to know him. I could have taken more risks to enter the mystery between us; I could have turned over more stones. I see now mystery is guided by emotions and feelings, and emotions facilitate something rather than nothing. I aim to position my pedagogy in a curricular space that confronts mystery. In my experience, gratitude is often a result of this positioning, as the quality of being held in the depths of mystery between myself and the students is explored.

I see that mystery is a perpetual presence within curriculum that I can turn towards or away from. Turning towards mystery I've found to be luminous because, by embracing and inquiring into uncertainty, I can embrace a personal connection to others and an openness to life. I believe a moral life in schools requires mystery, as noted by Greene (1978) in her notion of wide awakeness. When awake, the fragile, desperate, lonely and strange appear in curriculum encounters, along with adventure, connection, and possibilities beyond standards of achievement—all potentially await in embracing mystery.

Mystery, then, facilitates an emotional response and sensitivity through which moments of connection can be made between people within schools. In the student success room where I teach, I have heard the critique that I am having snacks with students and we are chatting rather than working, that we are having hot chocolate, which is not working towards the curriculum expectations. But I know in such moments I am hard at work asking questions and entering the mysterious nature of each student's reality to better the quality of curriculum we experience. In such small acts, I'm turning over stones.

Conclusion: A Curricular Worldview

For us, the narrative-based curricular theories we lean on comprise a worldview that guides how we understand ourselves in both our personal and professional lives. We approach our interactions with others knowing that like us, their perceptions about living and learning are based in the situations and experiences they have lived. Through our shared interactions with students and others, much like Pinar noted above about working with his students, we can add to our own interpretations of what we thought we knew about ourselves and others through a shared dialogue rich in an exchange of personal perspectives. In this way we can continue to enlarge our collective vision of teaching, learning and living.

In adopting autobiographical theories of curriculum, the circular aspect of pedagogy continues a return to the four directions of narrative inquiry described by Connelly and Clandinin, as well as Pinar's *currere*. Subject matter becomes a vehicle for students and teachers to engage in dialogue in a milieu that is rich in personal interaction and interpretation. Here curriculum as a (race) course is understood as ongoing—there is no final destination, but rather a route to continued ongoing learning. Pinar (2016) writes that "from the point of view of study, self-formation follows from our individual reconstruction of what is around and within us; this capacity for selection, for focus, for judgment . . . is the great mystery to be solved" (p. 14), and we would add re-solved across time in an ongoing way.

> Greene (1978) notes that
> through conscious endeavor on the part of individuals to keep themselves awake, to think about their condition in the world, to inquire into forces that appear to dominate them, to interpret the experiences they are having day to day . . . they [can] feel themselves to be autonomous . . . and develop a sense of agency required to live a [personally constructed] moral life. (p. 44)

In this view, mysteries arise, and inquiry continues as there are always new questions to address when curriculum is viewed as life experience. We believe one must be awake to the lessons within our stories as they help us articulate who we are as individuals and help us embody a curriculum that, through inquiry, takes us into life's ongoing mysteries. We are all governed by the way we each construct our world and ourselves in it. No matter what our experiences, we ourselves must make sense of them and live our lives accordingly.

These perspectives are congruent with the claims we make in this paper about studying our own experience, using the methodologies and methods we write about here to uncover situations, events and experiences that continue to inform us in the present. Looking outward, the path of self-knowledge calls upon one's pedagogical imagination (Greene, 1995b). As Greene notes, the discovery of a new version of what is irreducibly unique and biographical is regenerated in each classroom a teacher experiences—which requires one to imagine numerous possibilities that go along with the lived account of teaching and learning.

In terms of curriculum development, there is something teachers can do to experience the mystery embowered within the walls of their classroom: engage in dialogue, sensitive inquiry and provocative questions—these restore connectedness between living beings. With careful listening, mystery unfolds as we discover one another in the world of the classroom.

> Atkinson (1995) writes,
> Story is a tool for making us whole; stories gather up the parts of us and put them together in a way that gives our lives greater meaning than they had before we told our story. Story is a tool for self-discovery; stories tell us new things about ourselves that we wouldn't have been as aware of without having told the story. (p. 3)

We know from our own experience that there is mystery to unpack in each of Atkinson's points. As educators, we believe that Atkinson's description attests to the ethical process of supporting students as they engage in the difficult task of deconstructing and reconstructing their own experiences, share them, learn from them, and transform their lives in the process. Therein lies the heart and soul of a curriculum based in narratives of experiences that we engage in together with students. As we noted earlier from Connelly and Clandinin (1988), therein lies the path we have followed and the path we intend to follow going forward in the world.

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