

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FIRST 10 YEARS OF THE CURRICULUM STUDIES SUMMER COLLABORATIVE

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To mark the inaugural issue of the Curriculum Studies Collaborative Journal, it is important to acknowledge the history of its origins, as an outgrowth of The Curriculum Studies Summer Collaborative (CSSC). The CSSC, which has grown into a successful international Collaborative, was our brainchild when we were just beginning our careers at Georgia Southern University. For years, Julie, an alumna of the Curriculum Studies program at Georgia Southern, had heard her mentors talk about the need for a conference that would both highlight Georgia Southern's important contributions to the field of curriculum theory and provide opportunities for doctoral students, most of whom were practitioners, to gain more exposure to a diverse range of international curriculum scholars. Daniel, a graduate of the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, recognized the unique, practitioner-oriented nature of the doctoral program at Georgia Southern and saw an opportunity to bring the more traditional conference experience most Ph.D. candidates have directly to his students. Together, Julie, a faculty member in the then-named Department of Teaching and Learning, and Daniel, a faculty member in the Department of Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading, decided to organize a conference that emphasized

collaboration – between the two departments; between the conference organizers; and between senior, junior and emerging scholars, as well as practitioners.

As young scholars, they wanted to contribute to the landscape. They wanted a conference that celebrated the iterative and creative process that creates Curriculum scholarship. And, they wanted a place where they would not feel as though they were interlopers in someone else's territory, but create a space where they could extend a home for a new generation of scholars. It was a vision where emerging scholars and established scholars mixed in formal and informal spaces to generate collaborations. Georgia Southern supported this vision to create this space for the students, the scholars, and the field. Dean Thomas Koballa would often come to the opening reception and speak to the Collaborative attendees to help kickoff the event. There were a few lean years early on where Dean Koballa supported the conference before it became fiscally independent. Cordelia Zinskie and Kent Rittschoff, the most recent chairs of the Curriculum, Foundations, and Reading Department, also lent support to the Collaborative, recognizing its contribution to the department and the field. There is no question that Georgia Southern University provided a central support system for the Collaborative to launch, and in return, the students in the Ed.D. program have gained an experience of immeasurable importance that allowed them to connect our program to a wider world of Curriculum scholars and scholarship.

The first planning council for the Collaborative was Julie, Daniel, Michelle Reidel, William Reynolds and Robert Lake. Reynolds, one of Julie's mentors, was especially enthusiastic about the idea and put great time and effort toward developing the "Southern Signature" panel series that would highlight new and innovative curriculum work focused on the American South. Reidel thoughtfully developed an interactive space in the Works-in-Progress sessions designed for presenters so they could obtain useful feedback for their works. The next year, Ming Fang He and Sabrina Ross joined the council, bringing new ideas and excitement for what the conference space might generate. Over the years, the composition of the planning council has undergone

many changes, including the addition of doctoral student representatives and faculty members from other institutions.

BUILDING THE COLLABORATIVE

In addition to developing the Collaborative as a space for students in the doctoral program to interact with curriculum scholars and educational researchers from all over the world, Julie and Daniel also envisioned the Curriculum Studies Summer Collaborative (CSSC) as an alternative to the large, formal, and product-oriented conferences that they often attended. While these conferences often focused on showcasing expertise and promoting work that had already been completed, CSSC was intentionally designed as a space where scholars and students with different interests and levels of experience would come to work together, to share ideas, and to get feedback. This working-with approach was what distinguished the Collaborative from other conferences. The CSSC is an ongoing attempt to create a space designed to promote dialogue and cooperative action. Rather than following a traditional formal, product-oriented structure, the CSSC was envisioned as a process-oriented, generative, space intended to support the ongoing work of the field and inspire innovative curriculum work. The fact that it took place in the summer also made it possible for more practitioners to be involved.

To facilitate this collaborative design, a set of four “core” session structures was developed. First, there was the “Curriculum Dialogues” strand, which focused on sometimes difficult but necessary conversations. The goal of this strand was to promote discussions about both theoretical and practical work that sought to expand, complicate, and articulate the field of curriculum in theory and practice. The second strand, entitled “Pushing Methodological Boundaries,” emphasized academic work as well as creative performances and exhibits that refused the limits of traditional methodological models. To provide insight into the intricacies of methodological discussions, presenters were invited to share works that did not fit neatly into categories of academic work. Documentary films, theatrical performances, music, and indigenous crafts have been presented at the Collaborative through this strand. It is not enough, however, to simply present this work without content,

this methodological strand presents an opportunity for researchers to explicitly discuss the context in which the work emerged and the process through which their alternative methods were developed. A third session strand, entitled “Works-in-Progress,” specifically focused on discussing and developing emerging, unfinished work. This strand was structured around the provision of feedback to provide safe spaces for initial presentations, student work, hunches, and newly developed intuitions. Finally, to maximize opportunities for graduate students and early career scholars to benefit from the expertise of senior researchers, the fourth strand, “The Emergent Scholar,” was developed. This strand focused on workshop style sessions designed to provide academic and professional enrichment and development. As the conference grew, additional special themed sessions, such as the “Southern Signature” sessions, “Campus Culture in the Era of Hate,” and “Curriculum Studies and the Pandemic,” were included in the program. Nonetheless, these four “core” strands have remained to help facilitate collaborative, productive conversations among attendees.

Another feature of the Collaborative that helped create a more informal and dialogic dynamic was the opening session. Each year, the conference would open with a small reception and welcome, followed by a documentary film or speaker that served as a shared text to provoke conversations throughout the Collaborative. Although the subjects and genres of the films and speakers have varied widely, each of them touched on a relevant social issue that could be considered in relation to curriculum and/or pedagogy. For example, we viewed, *How to Survive a Plague*, *Hell and Back Again*, and *Girl Rising*. Examples of speakers we learned from are, Clayborne Carson, founder of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education institute at Stanford University, Tom Kohler, a local Savannah activist, and Matt Teutsch, the director of the Lillian Smith Center. The opening session provided an opportunity for attendees to come together in a common space to share food and drinks while engaging with a shared text. This helped set the tone for the generative, dialogic environment that the conference hoped to create. Of course, given that the conference took place in historic downtown Savannah, these opening events often gave way

to informal get-togethers in or near the conference hotel, where the conversation often continued late into the night.

ADVANCING THE FIELD

Certainly, the Collaborative was generative in the sense that it was designed to provoke conversation among those attending, but it was also designed to be generative for the Curriculum Studies field. As Curriculum Studies has always been a field that has both cherished its own rich history and looked for new lines of inquiry and opportunities to grow, expand, and cross disciplinary boundaries, the Collaborative was also envisioned as a place where curriculum work might be refined, renewed, and transformed.

The CSSC planning council has aimed at having a healthy mix of honoring established scholars while also providing a space for emerging scholars to have their work highlighted. There was an intention to program sessions that encouraged informal gatherings and conversations with the belief that it is in these spaces that ideas are generated, that projects are seeded, and that collaborations are born. This balance was crucial to defining the ambience of the Collaborative.

Perhaps the quintessential moments of honoring established scholars were in the years 2013 and 2014 when the Collaborative celebrated the collections of William Schubert and Edmund Short being donated respectively to the Georgia Southern University library. In 2013, Julie Garlen emceed an event that included both Bede Mitchell, the Dean of Library, who spoke about what the collection meant to the library and William Watkins, who talked about his long relationship with William Schubert. A similar celebration was repeated the following year as Edmund Short donated his collection to the Georgia Southern University library. This celebration began with Bede Mitchell and was followed by an interview with Dr. Short conducted by Jim Jupp. These important collections of prominent Curriculum Studies scholars can still be accessed at the Zach Henderson Library on the Statesboro campus of Georgia Southern University.

Ming Fang He and Denise Taliaferro Baszile have both established a presence of counter narratives that have been showcased at the Collaborative since its inception. In 2012, Dr. He led a panel, *Counter*

Narratives of the Curriculum of the South, which exemplifies the way Curriculum Studies negotiates the power structures of the South. While in 2014, Taliaferro Baszile presented a riveting piece, *Rhetoric and Revolution: Curriculum Studies as Counterstory*. The presence of counterstory at the Collaborative strengthened the influence of Critical Race Theory on the field and pushed the notion of the personal being political. It asked the larger questions of the ways our identities are wrapped up in historical and social contexts that we were birthed into. While there was certainly a focus on race and place (particularly, the South) the questions of queer identity and counterstory were also included in the proceedings. An example of which was Dana Stachowiak's 2018 presentation, *We Interrupt this Regularly Scheduled Conversation: Making Space for Non-Binary and Transgender Narratives in Curriculum Studies*. Afterwards, Dr. Stachowiak became part of the planning council for several years.

Marla Morris and Mary Doll have also been fixtures at the Collaborative. They consistently presented together as a panel, one following the other, reading straight from their papers. Attendees were provoked to reconsider what they knew about myths, literature, spirituality, and psychoanalysis. In their 2018 presentation, *Mythologies and Fictions of Curriculum*, they challenged the audience to consider the importance of archetypes and the stories in and of their lives over and above the importance of static data and facts.

There are numerous examples of how emerging scholars have found a platform and a voice at the Collaborative. One would be remiss not to discuss the number of doctoral students that have presented. Over the years, Ming Fang He has brought a large number of her students to present their research interests to a panel of established scholars as discussants, such as Isabel Nunez, Brian Schultz, William Ayers, and Nirmala Erevelles. This opportunity offers these beginning scholars invaluable advice and encouragement from more seasoned voices. The works-in-progress strand created a welcoming space for early career scholars and doctoral students to get feedback on their work during nascent stages of their research.

In 2011, Brandon Sams and a panel from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill led a discussion about whether Curriculum Stud-

ies should draft policy positions. Ten years later, this debate about staking policy positions as an academic field is ongoing. There is an increasing frustration with the fact that the scholarship and research in Curriculum Studies is not reflected in the United States' education policies and, thus, not in classrooms. The disconnect is palpable when our working students come to understand the critiques Curriculum Studies offers but feel powerless to act on these understandings in the classrooms they inhabit. Some in the field feel strongly that having a collective voice with specific positions can amplify the importance of our work and can possibly reshape education in the United States. Other scholars feel that this will have little impact on U.S. policy and would function as an internal facing document setting ideological boundaries for scholars in Curriculum Studies and privileging some research agendas over others.

Every year that the conference has been held in person, there have been informal opportunities to talk with other scholars at the conference. Earlier, the opening sessions were mentioned in this regard, but our lunch sessions and evening sessions have also been a place where informal connections were encouraged. These lunch sessions highlighted a panel that was deemed to have broad appeal because of relevance to the current educational or social climate. Sometimes, these panels were invited, like when four scholars speculated about future movements in the field. Usually, however, we pulled them from the submitted proposals. These presentations were a mix of established, well known and emerging scholars. The goal was not to highlight individuals but to provoke thought and push Curriculum Studies forward. The evening sessions was a third space for these more informal conversations. Typically, there would be an offsite gathering where scholars would gather to mingle and listen to a panel or speaker. For instance, in 2013, in the setting of a beautiful basement in a downtown Savannah restaurant, Jane Page, a founder and the initial chair of the Curriculum Studies program at Georgia Southern University, recalled the struggles during the beginnings of the program. Also, in 2016, the journal, *Curriculum Inquiry*, launched a special issue, *The Child in Question: Culture, Texts, Curricula*. This event highlighted nine scholars published in this special issue, including editor, Rubén

Gaztambide-Fernández, Karishma Desai, and Debbie Sonu. The Collaborative was founded on the vision of established scholars mixing with emerging scholars while honoring and creating space for informal conversations to lead to more formal scholarship. Establishing this balance has been the key to our success and will continue to be the guide moving forward.

GENERATING NEW COLLABORATIONS

As the conference has matured, evolution and new opportunities have been necessary parts of the journey. In 2017, Julie accepted a position in Ottawa, Ontario and stepped away from her role as a co-chair of the conference. Daniel handled the duties for several years with the help of the planning council, and particularly, Julie Kimble. The planning council became more regional with members extending from Texas to North Carolina. The relationship with Jim Jupp at the University of Texas- Rio Grande Valley has been essential and has introduced a borderlands perspective at the Collaborative that is invaluable to understanding our past and future. Other changes such as adapting to social distancing requirements of Covid19, the launch of a podcast to recognize scholars in the field, and the beginning of this journal are new areas of growth for the Collaborative.

Covid19 threatened the Collaborative in 2020. Lockdown was instituted in March and decisions had to be made quickly as to whether to hold the conference online in June or cancel the conference altogether. The planning council agreed to hold it online and to offer it for free. At that point, organizers were new to video conferencing and did not have many models of how to hold an online conference. They had to create the platform and the method of navigation, while trying to ensure that no trolls would interrupt the proceedings. It was novel at the time, and there was considerable energy spent on educating the participants how to work the conferencing tools. In 2021, organizers were more comfortable with the online format as were presenters and participants and there was the largest turnout yet. An added dialogue space was required to help bring back the informal conversations that was missing in 2020. In 2022, the Collaborative was held as a hybrid

format to include those who were ready to get back together and those who felt most comfortable avoiding crowds.

Daniel Chapman and Marla Morris began *The Curriculum Studies Genealogy Podcast* as a way to recognize the influences on curriculum scholars. Ideas have broad and unexpected origins. Rather than only focus on current ideas of curriculum scholars, the thought was to situate their ideas within a larger pattern of thought that has evolved over generations. The history of Curriculum Studies is troubled like all of history, and there certainly is an urgency to the now; nonetheless, how current scholars have been influenced by people and ideas along their journey cannot be ignored. Not only is this a way to honor and remember our past but also to explore how ideas adapt to situations and how they reveal phenomena and obscure phenomena at the same time. It is Daniel's and Marla's hope to create an archive of interviews that curriculum scholars can access for many years.

This journal has always been a part of the vision. Julie and Daniel discussed its creation early on. Curriculum scholars have needed a new outlet to support their scholarship, and a journal such as this would further establish the Collaborative as a bedrock of Curriculum Studies scholarship. But, neither Daniel or Julie had previously edited a journal, and with other commitments as early scholars, it was postponed. It took Marla Morris to push the idea, and with her previous experience as editor of the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, the timing was perfect. The CSSC required a journal. This was the clear next evolutionary step for the Collaborative. *The Curriculum Studies Collaborative Journal* will support the Collaborative and vice versa. Additionally, *The Curriculum Studies Genealogy Podcast* will act as the third leg. The symbiosis of the three, conference, journal, and podcast, will make each more dynamic. After Julie left, new people stepped up and created new opportunities for the Collaborative. As the Collaborative moves into the future and different people take over the established vehicle, it will continue to shape and be shaped by the Curriculum field, events in the world, and, more importantly, the people who become involved.

