

# THE GENEALOGY PROJECT

## THE FOUNDING OF A PODCAST

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CREATING OUR CURRICULUM OF LIFE:  
ON GENEALOGY, ON CONFLUENCE

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GENERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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When thinking about a new journal, my first thought about this was to have a multimedia aspect to the journal that would include a series of ongoing podcasts that Daniel Chapman and I would do collaboratively. This turned into The Genealogy Project. Since we began this project about a year and half ago, Daniel and I have interviewed many scholars across generations. As conversations unfolded, I found that many of us have had inter-connected life histories and backgrounds.

As I began thinking about a podcast in curriculum studies I thought that it might be a way to archive the work being done by my generation. I wanted to make sure that our work did not disappear from the archives. But, too, I wanted to show that my generation is also linked backwards to previous generations. As Derrida teaches, the **archive** is more about the to-come. **The Genealogy Project Podcast is about archiving the future of a field.** What we are able to do in the field today is due to the work that was done by scholars who came before us and mentored us. As my generation mentors future generations to-come, the field will go its own way and take on new life. I would like to showcase scholars from all generations to join in the conversations we are having about the field.

As Foucault put it, *archaeologies of knowledge*—as he called it—are completely “arbitrary.” I did not know, for example, that the International Journal of Critical Pedagogy was founded by the late Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg. How serendipitous! Leila studied with Joe, Daniel studied with Leila, Shirley is on our advisory board, and Shirley and Joe were very instrumental in my own development as a scholar. Now, Leila is offering us space in the IJCP to help lift us off the ground. Our stories are intertwined.

I was the Editor of *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* for 7 years and I also organized the Bergamo conference during that time. After many years have passed, I decided that I was ready to start **a new journal in the field of curriculum studies**. Daniel had already founded the Curriculum Studies Collaborative Conference a decade ago which has been quite successful. I asked Daniel to join me in this venture and to connect the journal with the conference, but also to open up the journal to scholars across the field, not necessarily linked with the conference.

Generally speaking—although I cannot speak for Daniel—I do know that his work comes out of the Greensboro tradition while my work comes out of the LSU tradition. Where we do our graduate work shapes who we become in the future. That Daniel and I come from different institutions is important to note. That difference makes a difference. My work has been mostly in the psychoanalytic tradition. Daniel, I would say, comes from the more political wing of the field. We hope this collaboration will feel welcoming to all scholars from any theoretical aspect of the field to join in the conversation.

I thought it would be interesting to hear from Shirley, Leila, and Daniel about how all of our scholarly lives have intersected. **I would like the others involved in this first issue to speak for themselves and introduce themselves to our readers.**

## CREATING OUR CURRICULUM OF LIFE: ON GENEALOGY, ON CONFLUENCE

SHIRLEY R STEINBERG

Writing, for we academic types, can be an incredible burden, a rote-task, a way to promotion, or an unexpected joy created by a confluence of love, radicality and relationships; this reflection is an homage to the latter. There are few people I have known, loved, and respected for as long as I have Marla Morris and Leila Villaverde, yet this is the first time the three of us have contributed to the same publishing project. Marla got me going a year ago when she invited me to write a piece on genealogy. Describing her Genealogy Project© to me, she provoked my memories to throw open my pedagogical gates to trace exactly who my ideological/scholarly progenitors were (Steinberg, 2022). In that chapter, I paid gratitude to those who had come before, those who influenced me. The work that Marla has introduced into a notion of critical Curriculum Studies now includes the essential knowledge brought by genealogy, I am honored to contribute to her vision and a new journal. A dear friend, Marla and I have related to one another as part of the few Jewish women in Curriculum Studies for over a quarter of a century. Her scholarship and friendship have been invaluable, and I wish her *Mazel Tov*.

### *Updating My Genealogy*

My notion of genealogy has been extended through my recent *ah ha* by understanding that genealogy implies the past but does not insist upon it. Genealogy is tentative, changing constantly as we add events, people, and ways in which we have grown, learned, and interacted that have, in turn, consistently re-written our story. Those additions can be provoked by many, including our own students. Leila Villaverde was *that student*...she has continued to re-write within my story for over three decades: *if you become a teacher, by your pupils you'll be taught* (Hammerstein, 1951). As my student at Florida International University (1992), Leila was without aggression or resistance, Leila read the world of our classes, of our writings and of our surroundings. Her amiability was often mistaken as shyness or reluctance...reality was, Leila had no time for girlish performance nor flash. Confident in what

she knew and did not know, Leila was-and is-the ultimate scholar, collaborator, support, sounding board, innovator, and initiator. She is without guile, and certainly, one of the smartest women I know. I often wonder how one can be so busy, yet available...so loving, yet so pragmatic. Leila's reach is enormous, keeping track, influencing, and caring for so many. Locally, as the consummate daughter, mother, partner, and professor, internationally, with me, as my dear friend, younger sister, and my conscience (which results) from my often-reactionary pissed-offedness. Leila Villaverde may not be capable of messing up, she takes her time, listens to her thoughts before speaking, yet never shrinks from needs: either local or intellectual. Somehow most of we critical pedagogical types have evaded most of these attributes. Leila has always been part of my story but entered my genealogy unexpectedly 3 years ago in a much different way.

In early 2018, Leila told me that our precious Rochelle Brock (see below) was diagnosed with terminal cancer. (Leila, Rochelle, and I all graduated together from Penn State, continuing as an extended family for almost 35 years). Working with Rochelle in the same faculty at UNC-Greensboro, Leila immediately became Rochelle's protector, advocate, medical recorder, transportation, chef, communications operator, and closest advocate until Rochelle died in late 2020. Unable to visit more than a couple of times due to Covid-19 in 2019, I relied on Leila for updates. Her responsibilities increased exponentially: along with her family, students and teaching at UNC-G, scholarship, and the inception and continuation of her vision and creation, The Experiential School of Greensboro, (<https://theexperientialschoolgso.wordpress.com/>), Leila became Rochelle's person. The ultimate collaborator: Leila, primary caregiver, friend, and colleague was the confluence of information about our dear one. Operating as a CEO, board of directors, and operations manager, Leila supervised and ushered Rochelle to her transition and passage...all this and maintaining the rest of her aforementioned world.

My genealogy, my history and heart include those I have love and gratitude for...Leila is part of that genealogy. She was the consummate student, is the continual contributor, colleague, collaborator, advisor, and sister friend. We create our own curriculum of life, those

who populate it sit not in one spot, but are fluid and continual as we move through life's circumstances: birth, publications; as student, as teacher; new positions, retirement; support, advice: love and loss. May we continue to create confluence as we build our genealogy, may we all have a Leila Villaverde in our lives.

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## GENERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### LEILA E. VILLAVERDE

I was 19 when I walked into my afternoon class titled, Multiculturalism and Education, taught by Shirley Steinberg at Florida International University. I sat towards the back right corner, listening, taking copious notes, and doodling. I distinctly remember one assignment where we had a few choices, one of which was a response journal to suggested texts. I'd never done one nor had much of a relationship with reading period, so decided I would give this a go. I went to Barnes & Noble off Kendall Drive in Miami with my dad and perused the aisle where I would find these texts. I held both Maya Angelou's *Why A Caged Bird Sings* and bell hooks's *Feminist Theory From Margin to Center*. I showed them to my dad, and we chatted a little about both. He said get both, but I didn't. I was drawn to hooks and the possibility she/this text offered. I didn't realize it then, but she shared language and tools yet needing to be formulated in my mind, heart, and soul. I read through the night with flashlight and all. I wrote and

wrote, chapter by chapter responding to each, by hand (which Shirley said was fine). So no typewritten copy, no copy at all. This will be pertinent to our relationship so stay tuned. I finally finished it and turned it in. A few days passed and Shirley returned everyone's work, except mine. I approached her after class and said, "Hi, I didn't get my response journal back". I don't exactly recall what happened next, how she conveyed she didn't have it or couldn't find it or how I popped my eyes back in my head after realizing she didn't know what happened to it, but the next scene in this mini episode of my life takes me down the stairs in the CASA building at FIU where she said tell me about your paper. I went through chapter by chapter briefly as my heart leapt from my chest (remember there's no copy) and I worried about what this meant for my work and grade. That paper was more than a paper, it was the outcome of a moment, a transformative one where I became a reader, a thinker, a writer, where my opinions gained form/language and a theory. I saw theory as a portal. I remember Shirley commenting on what I was saying, she commented it was powerful and she elaborated on some concepts. That walk in my memory defied time, yet in reality it was probably just a few minutes tops. She remembers reading the paper and thought it was pretty great! She said, "you need to meet Joe". I wasn't quite sure who Joe was at that time or what that would mean in my life, but she HAD read my paper and thought it was cool! Shirley promised to look again for it. She found it and indeed it had "GREAT!" written at the top in a bright color with some comments throughout. I held it in my prized possessions for years. Then I sadly lost it in a move. I would revisit it sometimes and could feel the varying pressure of my writing in each page and was transported back to reading non-stop that night. hooks was probably one of the first texts I came back to time and time again (I started this piece before the news of hooks's passing...so this memory is particularly poignant).

I had never been a reader, despite books being everywhere at home, nor a writer (especially according to my 11<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher). This experience changed that; it changed my relationship with words/ideas/possibilities. Shirley inspired a new way to think/see the world and enthusiastically opened a door that led to many doors and into a world I never imagined, yet felt a weird sense of belonging

to. Without Shirley (and Joe) I'm pretty sure my intellectual growth would have been stunted, not to mention the magnitude of my soul/imagination's reach. Not too long after the course, Shirley and Joe took a group of us to Bergamo where I heard Britzman, Pinar, Grumet, Slattery, and Schubert for the first time. Their works introduced me to many more curriculum studies scholars.

As I went on to complete my masters and then my doctorate with Joe and Shirley, I lived in my head far too much as to how I would create pedagogical spaces for students and how to inspire them through whom I met, read, and learned from while opening spaces for whom they might meet/read along the way (like Shirley did for me). By the time I arrived at UNCG, I had taught at Penn State, Adelphi, and DePaul universities. I felt I had my legs under me. The department wanted me to teach all the things I was passionate about, curriculum studies, feminist theories, visual/creative studies, and critical pedagogy. It was like being a kid at a candy store. I developed a series of courses to teach in rotation across these areas.

Fast forward to a Foundations of Curriculum class I was teaching which centers curriculum studies. I include an assignment called reading analysis where we read Deborah Britzman's "Is There A Queer Pedagogy: Or, Stop Reading Straight" and respond/analyze our own reading practices. One semester, a student (Jay Poole) brings in another article by G.D. Shlasko, "Queer (v.) Pedagogy" that takes up Britzman, Morris, and many others. Marla's work spoke directly to how students may engage queer studies, (she made so much sense). It captured in greater depths what we needed to know/consider not only about queer pedagogy, but curriculum studies as a whole. Amid this one of our students, Dan, approached me about advising him, he shared his previous amazing work with documentaries and as we chatted longer, we both thought it would be cool to do one for his dissertation. I loved the idea! We didn't quite know how it would work as it hadn't been done in the department previously, but we forged ahead and figured it out and around a few institutional barriers. Since then, many other creative dissertations have been completed. Dan applied for a position where Marla teaches and guess who calls me for a reference! Marla! I was chatting with Marla (I played it cool and stayed on

task, haha). Dan was hired along with Sabrina Ross and together with Marla and other professors they developed the Curriculum Studies Summer Collaborative.

A few years after, I saw a call for papers for the CSSC (which most likely sent me) and submitted a work in progress where I discuss how I design curricular experiences, using text and image to push student thinking. I hadn't been able to travel and present for a couple of years. My mom had been recently diagnosed with cancer and I was a first-time parent. The idea of getting back into the swing of conferences was not exactly something I was looking forward to. And there I was in an empty room waiting for my re-entry, I see Shirley come in, some of my past students, some of their students, Marla and Mary Doll in the audience, interested and asking questions. Dan was a discussant in another session, but we saw each other after. I've been a consistent presenter ever since and huge supporter of this important curricular space. It's fitting that all of us would come together to collaborate on this new curricular path, one that marks the relevance of many voices in the future direction of curriculum studies!

## LINKS IN CHAINS

### DANIEL CHAPMAN

Coincidentally, right now, I am teaching a course where I am using books written by the three women participating in this writing project. It is a Contemporary Curriculum Theorists course where I try to present a broad swath of the work that is going on since the turn of the century. I am using Leila's *Feminist Theories and Education*, Shirley's *Media Literacy: A Reader*, and Marla's *Curriculum Guidebooks*. Clearly, they have all influenced my thinking in ways that I hope will impact my students, as well.

I met Leila first. She was my dissertation director. Her intellect and mode of expression I continue to find astonishing. She was the first scholar I met that was able to *speak* postmodernism as though it was her native tongue. I certainly don't mean the jargon, but rather, she uses language in a way that avoids the trappings of rigid boundaries



and essentializing identities. She conveys a sense that our ideas must be fluid in order to move and shift with changing social environments. On top of that, it does not come out as disjointed academic speak... her points are poignant and affirm the dignity of all life in its varied forms with the possibility of transformation through education. When I was a new student in the foundations of education, I found her way of thinking to be equally exhilarating and intimidating. By the end of the program, I was drawn to working with her because of her depth of theoretical knowledge and her commitment to justice aided by research. To this day, when I encounter a moment of frustration or a limit-situation, I hear her prodding me to raise my level of analysis and to think more creatively in order to see solutions. She also taught me to be patient with theory. It is not meant to be immediately accessible, but rather it takes re-reading and reading more broadly to understand the references and the language and the new way of thinking that is being communicated through the specific text. People often blame the theory for being too opaque as opposed to looking at themselves for not rising up to the challenge. I've always respected the way she embodied the commitment to education (not schooling or credentializing) as a practice of liberation.

Leila was Shirley's undergraduate student and later Joe Kinche-  
loe's graduate student at Penn State. I first encountered Shirley's work through reading *Kinderculture* in Glenn Hudak's class. It was the article where she collected all the Barbie Dolls and I was thrilled to see her exposing her imperfect self - the life behind the writing. She came to Georgia Southern early in my career. Of course, her ebullient personality demands attention, yet, I felt emboldened and freer than I normally do in the presence of her openness. Maybe the connection was our shared Jewish background or maybe it is her unique ability to create space for others while she claims space for herself. She really is a beautiful force to behold. Her publishing career reflects this, as well. Not only was she important to my early career, as she published several of my articles and an edited volume, but she has been vital in publishing works that would not otherwise be published. Shirley is a bridge, in my mind, from an older generation of critical scholars to the

contemporary generation. I so appreciate her voice, her passion, her ability to create space for many voices to be put into print.

I met Marla at the job interview for Georgia Southern. The first stop on the itinerary was to give a guest lecture to a doctoral class where she was in the audience.. Afterwards, she extended her hand out and said, “Welcome. Congratulations, I hope you’ll join us next year.” I was floored. I had been on many job interviews and I knew that one professor couldn’t make that decision after one lecture demonstration. But, that is Marla. She speaks out of turn and can’t be bothered with bureaucratic propriety. Looking back, I see that she understood the internal dynamics of the search to understand that I was going to be offered the job. Remembering this scene highlights her outspokenness and willingness to say things that others will not. These traits make her a powerful pedagogue and important scholar. She has fiercely defended her independence to be the kind of person, scholar, and pedagogue that she wants to be. Creative work pours out of Marla and she listens to her muse in multiple aspects of life. She cannot be put in a box. I have seen her walk into a faculty meeting covered in protective motorcycle gear and walk onto a stage in a tux with tails. She is a chaplain at a hospital, a philosophy student, and we also co-host a podcast together on the genealogy of Curriculum Studies. So, no boxes allowed here.

It’s been rewarding to reflect on how these three scholars have influenced my life and my career. It is no wonder that I still want my students to engage with their thoughts. It reminds me of how we are all connected: front-to-back and side-to-side. And that the work we do now extends beyond our time and space.