

My Curriculum Cookbook: An Autobiographical Study on Understanding
Curriculum from a Cross-cultural Educator's Perspective

by

Nicole Ye Nie

B.Ed., Tianjin Normal University, 2002

B.A., Tianjin Normal University, 2002

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the area of Curriculum Studies
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

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University of Victoria

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Supervisory Committee

Dr. Wanda Hurren, Supervisor
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Jennifer Thom, Departmental Member
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Wanda Hurren, Supervisor

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Jennifer Thom, Departmental Member

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

ABSTRACT

This autobiographical study relates my personal experiences as an international student in Canada to curriculum theory and issues in multicultural education. The study takes a creative, cookbook journal format, using a selection of recipes for exploring cross-cultural experiences and making connections between self and the multicultural environment, and between curricular theories and educational practice. While sometimes recipes refer to simple instructions, the curriculum recipes in this study do not provide simple solutions but rather creative ways of thinking about curriculum. The research question guiding this study is how we can understand multicultural curriculum so that majority groups (the host people in Canada) and minority groups (the people from other cultures) acknowledge a space of shared responsibility for intercultural adaptation, and so that there are not two sides or positions for people when crossing cultures, but *a space in between* where people dwell together.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the three members of my supervisory committee who provide tremendous support and help for my research. I thank Dr. Jennifer Thom for leading me to the complexity theory world, encouraging me to apply it to curriculum studies and to elaborate my thinking to a different level. I appreciate Dr. Timothy Hopper for his careful reading and valuable suggestions. I would especially like to thank Dr. Wanda Hurren for being a mentor for the duration of my entire graduate study: for her continuous inspiration on changing perspectives to look at the academic and practical world, her great encouragement of relating food, culture and autobiography to curriculum studies, and her solid appreciation on the uniqueness and creativity of my research.

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Mr. Xiangsheng Nie, for the lifetime education that I gained from him. During the time I was writing this thesis, my father had cancer and passed away. His love, consideration and support enabled me to stay in Canada and complete my study. I also thank my family, my mother, Ms. Huiqin, Zheng, my Fiancé, Mr. Rian Bowden, and my grandfather, Mr. Yutian, Zheng, for their generous support and encouragement on my study.

Preface

My name is Nicole Ye Nie. In 2007, I came to Canada from China to study for my Master's degree in Curriculum Studies. Like many international students and immigrants, I came here with certain assumptions about Western culture. Initially, I struggled with culture shock, dealing with the differences between Canadian and Chinese societies. Now, as I continue to explore this new culture, I am gradually changing my cultural perspectives and emerging more fully into a culturally diverse environment. Over time, I have become attuned to many different aspects of Canadian culture. I address and understand this culture through specific things that happen in my study and my personal life. I consciously compare the differences and similarities of the two cultures. I think deeply about how cultural identity influences people in their intercultural communication and interactions. I read resources about multiculturalism in Canada. I realize how complex and dynamic a culturally diverse environment is.

As a Master's student in curriculum studies, I relate multiculturalism to curriculum. I am interested in *multicultural education* (See Appendix 1) for its tremendous possibilities to acknowledge and understand cultural diversity in curriculum. I use my past experience in China as a rich source for my adventure in Canadian education. Before moving here I worked as a teacher, an assistant to the Dean, a director of teaching, a curriculum designer and a tutoring centre owner. These various experiences deeply influence my perspectives on Canadian culture and education and my curriculum studies. Meanwhile, I constantly think about how I can apply what I learn in Canada to my teaching in China if I go back. There is always a cross-culture movement going on in my mind—a recursive way of thinking about my educational experiences in China and in Canada.

Food, as a major element in cultural identity and awareness, has become a medium for me to process this cross-culture movement. When I first came to study here, I immediately noticed the differences between the food here and that in China. I began exploring the different aspects of food culture, such as cooking methods, materials

and ingredients, and eating habits, as a way to understand and move between two cultures. Over time, I found myself relating food to curriculum studies and multiculturalism in education, realizing how the differences between foods in Canada and China represent for me, differences between the two educational systems.

In the summer of 2008, I took a graduate course titled *Curriculum mapwork: Place, identity, and food* with Dr. Wanda Hurren. In that course, I explored the notions of place, cultural identity, and curriculum with food as a link. I realized that food can also be a medium to “bring curriculum down to earth” (Hurren & Erika Hasebe-Ludt, 2009).

In this thesis, I relate my personal cross-cultural stories and food experiences throughout my first year in Canada to curriculum theory and issues in multicultural education. I use the medium of food to identify and explore my cross-cultural experiences and, in doing so, make connections with curricular issues. This thesis involves looking at the inquiries into theory from different theoretical perspectives. I use narrative inquiry to link my personal narratives with theories in order to make sense of my study. The research question guiding my study is how we can understand multicultural curriculum so that majority groups and minority groups acknowledge a space of shared responsibility for intercultural adaptation, and so that there are not two sides or positions for people when crossing cultures, but *a space in between* where people dwell together. The goal of this research is to offer personal insights that may help educators understand these issues more deeply within a multicultural context. Beyond that, using my experience as an educator in China and then in Canada, I examine curricular issues with a recursive vision by comparing and contrasting the cultural differences between the two countries in the field of education.

I choose to use a special format for this thesis: a cookbook journal. The cookbook consists of twelve chapters that correspond to the first twelve months that I lived in

Canada. During this time, I wrote in a journal in order to reflect on my experience and help me make sense of their cultural components. Each chapter includes my journal reflections and begins with an anecdote and recipe for a particular food. Each food then acts as an entry point to discuss my cross-cultural experiences and my understandings of curriculum and multicultural education. Each chapter is titled with a curriculum recipe and discusses the particular curricular issue. With this approach, I place food within curriculum studies.

Hurren and Hasebe-Ludt (2009) state that “we have come to realize that there are curricular implications regarding ‘how we eat and use the world’ (Berry, p.149, 1990)”. This cookbook journal provides a creative approach for making connections between self and world, academic and daily life, and curricular theories and educational practice, all within a context of multiculturalism.

Using complexity theory, I reflect on the dynamic relationships and situations in curriculum. According to complexity theory, the components of “living systems as self-organizing networks” are all “interconnected and interdependent” (Capra, 1996, p.112). Conceived as systems nested within systems, I have come to see organic connections among my personal cross-culture experiences and food with that of curriculum, culture, and multiple cultures. I do not define myself as a cross-cultural educator, an autobiographer, a complexity theorist, or a food studier. Instead, I apply components in all these fields as ingredients for my cookbook. I mix them (curriculum, complexity theory, multiculturalism, food, and autobiography) with their internal and dynamic connections from my understandings. All of the chapters are written from the different perspectives of my different identities: a theoretical perspective in the curriculum area, a personal perspective as an international student in Canada, and most importantly, a cross-cultural educator’s perspective.

I hope this study provides readers, particularly those who dwell in the space in between multiple cultures, with an opportunity to think more deeply and critically

about multiculturalism and curriculum. Canadian readers are offered a new perspective, the personal and authentic perspective of an individual living the cross-cultural experience, from which to enrich their understanding of curriculum. International readers are offered insight into multicultural education in Canada and be encouraged to make their own contributions to a global multiculturalism. International students are offered a critical examination of a topic of personal relevance: the struggle to adjust their thoughts and behaviour to fit in to the new cultural environment. Finally, this research offers both students and educators an opportunity to reconsider their ideas of cross-cultural adaptation, to envision adaptation that comes not just from the minority but from both sides. With this notion, they may position themselves in a place in between cultures and come to realize that intercultural adaptation should not be the job of only the people from other cultures (minorities), but also the responsibility of the host people in Canada (majority).

The final product of this study is an autobiographical curriculum cookbook. I hope that through this unique method of understanding curriculum I may inspire other scholars to reflect on their own experiences, experiment with ingredients in theory and practice, and ultimately prepare truly multicultural curriculum recipes of their own.

Many of the terms I use in this study can be defined in multiple ways. The definitions I offer here are my personal interpretation of other scholars' work. Some of these terms, such as "majorities" and "minorities," are points of tension in the education field, in society, and within my own research. I want to advocate for dwelling between majorities and minorities, yet I must still use the terms to explore some of the issues in this thesis. In my research and my definitions, "I am coming to see the value of experiencing tension instead of ignoring or even resolving it" (Oberg, Blades & Thom, 2007, p. 133). I explore the definitions of the following terms throughout my thesis and list them in Appendix 1, *collective learning*, *complexity theory*, *curriculum-as-live(d)*, *cross-cultural*, *cross-cultural adaptation*, *cross cultures*,

crossing cultures, culture, cultural diversity, culture shock, intercultural, intercultural adaptation, international students, majority group/majorities/host people, minority group/minorities/guest people, multiculturalism, multicultural education, and recursion. I invite readers look into them in Appendix 1 while reading this thesis.

Implications of the literature

All of the individuals and their theories noted below are useful in my study. Their work has provided me with great insight, theoretical perspectives, philosophies, ideas and methodology. There are many ideas I borrow and adapt to support my research. While they are introduced in this section, their work will be interspersed and interpreted throughout my curriculum cookbook.

Pinar (1995)'s book [*Understanding curriculum: An introduction to the study of historical and contemporary curriculum discourses*] has left a deep impression on me and has, therefore, strongly influenced me throughout my curriculum studies. Many of my ideas about curriculum come from my personal understanding of his work. Bill Doll (1993/2008) and Brent Davis (2000/2006)'s work leads me to the world of *complexity theory* (See Appendix 1). Ted Aoki (1995)'s work introduced the idea of curriculum-as-lived to me. Meanwhile, his ideas about Interculturalism and cross-culturalism inspired me to rethink about “community as diversity” (p. 308). Aoki is not a complexity theorist, but some of his ideas correspond with complexity theory. He focuses on the relationships between culture and curriculum, self and other, curriculum-as-plan and *curriculum-as-live(d)* (See Appendix 1). These ideas relate to the core concepts of complexity theory, interconnection and interdependence. I have built on these connections in my study. The studies of Barer-Stein (1979), Counihan and Van Esterik (1997), and Wanda Hurren and Erika Hasebe-Ludt (2009) provide me with a great example of relating food to culture, place and identity. Guo (2007)'s work helps me to think deeply about cultural diversity through a similar cross cultural perspective. Clandinin (1985)'s work on narrative encourages me to apply these theories into my research and teaching practice. She expresses that “teachers’ classroom images embody” not only “her professional experiences” but also “her personal experiences”

(p. 361). I also make an effort to find connections of curriculum and complexity theory with my personal experience.

According to Kim and Gudykunst (1988), *cross-cultural adaptation* (See Appendix 1) takes individuals' adaptive potentials and individuals should focus on increasing their own ability to adapt to a new culture. However, I would like to take a closer look at cross-cultural adaptation and raise the question as to whether this adaptation should come mostly from the guest people or from both sides. The *intercultural adaptation* (See Appendix 1) is a shared responsibility, in which both the majorities (the host people in Canada) and the minorities (the people from other cultures) must participate.

Understanding curriculum as a cultural text

William Pinar

- Pinar (1995) is an important figure in the curriculum field. In his work he focuses on understanding curriculum as racial text, autobiographical/biographical text and international text. His works collect together various schools of thought in curriculum, especially postmodernists.

Ted Aoki

- Ted Aoki (1993) interprets the differences between curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived. His work presents an idea that curriculum is not just a traditional document but a natural and integrated learning process and environment.

Multicultural education

Shibao Guo

- Guo (2007) is a Chinese-Canadian who has a shared experience with me: experience in higher education in both countries. He focuses his research on

cultural diversity in Canadian universities and offers strategies for educators in both countries for embracing cultural diversity.

Ted Aoki

- Ted Aoki (1991), as a Japanese-Canadian educator, pays close attention to multicultural issues in education. In his work he relates his unique perspectives of both east and west cultures to curriculum and discusses a notion of crossculturalism and interculturalism in curriculum. He advocates a notion of “dwelling in” (p. 385) the space between cultures, which is an inspiration to many curricular scholars including myself.

Complexity theory

William Doll Jr.

- William Doll Jr. (1993) develops his educational ideas based on complexity theory. The “4R”s of Richness, *Recursion* (See Appendix 1), Relations, and Rigor is a unique complexity-based approach to curriculum. Recursion is a main idea in my study. According to his work, “recursion is the way one produces a sense of self, through reflective interaction with the environment, with others, with a culture” (p. 178). It is “a key feature of all non-linear equations” (Doll, 2008, p. 8) because “the act of recursion destroys linear cause-effect sequencing” (p. 8).

Brent Davis

- Davis (2000) is another important curriculum theorist who draws from complexity theory. He and his colleagues introduce a notion of *collective learning* (See Appendix 1) that is central to my study. This notion is that learning is a participation and a collaborative event because learning interacts with oneself, others, and its environment. One “keeps pace with one’s evolving circumstances” (p.78). Also, “Individual knowing, collective knowledge and culture” are interrelated and become “three nested,

self-similar levels of one phenomenon” (p.70).

Autobiographical study

Jean Clandinin

- Clandinin (1985) focuses on teachers’ “Personal practical knowledge”. She states that “a teacher’s special knowledge is composed of both kinds of knowledge, blended by the personal background and characteristics of the teacher and expressed by her in particular situations” (1985, p. 361). Her study explores how a teacher’s personal knowledge and experience plays an essential role in their teaching and other educational activities.

Cathy Coulter, Charles Michael, & Leslie Poynor

- Coulter, Michael, & Poynor (2007) did their study on storytelling as pedagogy. They believe that “teachers question, rethink, clarify, or even change their beliefs and understandings about teaching and learning, particularly focusing on change over time” (p. 110) by participating in autobiographical research.

Cross-cultural adaptation

Young Yun Kim and William B Gudykunst

- Kim and Gudykunst (1988) have identified some factors that influence cross-cultural adaptation such as cultural and racial background and personal circumstances.

Dale O’Neill and Cedric Cullingford

- O’Neill and Cullingford (2005) did a specific research on the cross-cultural experiences of *international students* (See Appendix 1). According to their findings, *culture shock* (See Appendix 1) can also be a method of cultural acquisition.

Food, Culture and Curriculum

Carol Counihan & Penny Van Esterik

- Counihan and Van Esterik (1997) pay close attention to the relationship between food and culture. They mention that “food is a prism that absorbs and reflects a host of cultural phenomena” (p. 6).

Thelma Barer-Stein

- Barer-Stein (1979) also asserts that “cultural heritage helps to determine and identify people’s values, behavior, and subsequently their life-style. In a very real sense, then, culture helps [people] to select what [they] eat” (p. viii). According to Barer-Stein, food manifests people’s cultural identities.

Wanda Hurren & Erika Hasebe-Ludt

- Wanda Hurren and Erika Hasebe-Ludt (2009) use food for curricular thoughts and focus on “the notion of *terroir*”, a term that refers to the relationship between wine, foods and the places that they were grown, as a valuable approach to “bringing curriculum down to earth”. They place food issues within curriculum studies and explore how food is linked to places and people’s identities.

Overall, my study includes these six theoretical perspectives: understanding curriculum as a cultural text, multicultural education, complexity theory, autobiographical study, cross-cultural adaptation and food, culture and curriculum as well. The theories of the scholars I mentioned are interspersed throughout my curriculum cookbook.

Chapter 1
Learn by Experience

Chocolate Chip Cookies



(2008, Retrieved from http://www.chocolaterewards.com/img/chocolate-chip-cookie_01.jpg)

Ingredients:

Brown sugar: 1 cup
White sugar: 1/4 cup
Eggs: 2
Vanilla extract: 2tsp
All purpose flour: 2 cups
Baking soda: 1tsp
Salt: 1/2 tsp
Chocolate chips: 8 oz

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Mix butter and sugars until smooth. Add egg and vanilla.
3. Stir in flour, baking soda and salt and then stir in chocolate chips.
4. Drop by tablespoon onto a greased baking sheet and bake for 8-10 minutes.

September, 01, 2007

Finally the bus driver told me that we are arriving in Victoria. I travelled for fifteen hours all by myself. It is my first time going abroad. So stressful! Here is the bus terminal. As soon as we arrived, the other people were just gone. There is only me standing in the darkness. What should I do next? I am so hungry that I have to find something to eat first. Ok, let me buy something from this automatic machine. Oh, god! It is so expensive! \$1.25 for a cookie? With this price, I can buy a full bag of cookies in China. Well, it is still the best choice. Cookies can make me feel fuller than those potato chips. Ok, "E8", you are my dinner.

My Cookies Story Recipe:

- 1 cup of excitement
- 2 cups of stress
- 3 cups of sadness
- 4 cups of frustration
- Mix and cook for the whole night

My first night in Victoria was full of stress, frustration and sadness. Overall, it was an unexpected mess. After ten phone calls, I finally found accommodation at a hostel. The owner told me I have to hurry because there were only three beds left. When I saw the room, I almost burst out in tears. It was a dirty, dim and crowded ten square-foot room. I had to share this unpleasant space with seven other strangers, both females and males. Is there supposed to be a place like this in a developed country? I didn't know that I had to book a hotel or rent a place ahead of time, because in China there are a lot of walk-in rental services and hotels on the main streets. I assumed that with ten phone numbers in-hand, I wouldn't have a problem finding a place to stay. In hindsight, I shouldn't have assumed anything and, instead, should've spent more time researching my options. I should have asked my university contacts more questions about accommodations and, despite being told initially that there was no vacancy for the residence on campus, I should've checked back regularly. I can safely assume here, however, that it would've made for a much more pleasant 'first night'.

Assumptions are everywhere. People cannot help assuming, because it is an easy way of thinking. For the people who *cross cultures* (See Appendix 1), it is impossible for us to know everything about our new culture. Our previous knowledge, experience and cultural background shape our thinking. Making assumptions about other cultures is quite common. According to Remer (2007), “unconscious values structure cross-cultural interactions” (p. 93). It is not only particularly happening between western and Chinese culture, but any other intercultural activities. For example, there

is an assumption that the French are open and casual, Germans are technical and Asians are shy. We give a group of people a common notion or “character” even before we meet them. Likewise, we assume the characteristics of things without testing. For instance, some western people think that Chinese food is “weird.” With this assumption, one of my friends went to China, afraid to eat the local cuisine. He ate so much fast food, including McDonalds and KFC, that he soon became sick of it.

Sometimes assumptions lead us to “a disoriented and/or disconcerted feeling”-“the sense of chaos” (Remer, 2007, p. 108). I felt it, ‘that first night.’ If you continue to read my story, it will become clear that my initial feelings did not go away, even after I achieved my goals, in my studies and in my everyday life (where things appear to be planned and organized). The confusion and frustration continue to exist. Like Remer (2007) said, “the sense of chaos: *feeling disoriented and/or disconcerted* is constantly attendant in the cultural mixing process” (p. 108). We cannot avoid the sense of chaos in the time of crossing culture. We also cannot avoid assumptions. What we can do, instead, is identify them. When we realize that some of our ideas and values about a particular culture are merely assumptions enforced by others, we can choose not to accept them as fact and, in doing so, open ourselves to a new outlook. “Identifying nuances and attendant assumptions are requisite first steps to dealing with multicultural interactions” (p. 109). With this in mind, we can become more culturally aware. Although the assumptions don’t disappear, they no longer represent our entire cultural perception but just a part of it. In this way, our cultural perspectives become enriched and more varied.

I still remember; I woke up at 2 o’clock in the morning and felt hungry, but I had trouble heating up water in the microwave. I needed the water to cook instant noodles that I had brought from China. In China, the microwave oven has a simple minute dial instead of buttons. Every time I pressed “one,” I assumed it meant one minute of cooking/heating power. Instead, it just shut off quickly. I think there must be something wrong with the microwave. I did not get to eat my noodles, so I was frustrated and

hungry. Luckily, I had half of a cookie leftover from dinner. Beverages were also a problem. I cannot heat up water for drinking either. Coffee was the only warm drink I can have, because it seemed the coffee machine was working fine.

Every time I tell this story to other people, I speak in a comical tone, even though it was not funny at all when I experienced it. Sometimes the differences between the two countries with regards to basic needs are only slight, but just those funny slight differences can cause troubles in our cross-culture experience. Microwaves, door locks, bus passes, public telephones, bill payments, etc, are a few of the ‘small things’ that local people take for granted. For locals, the seemingly simple, everyday experiences are assumed and understood. Interestingly enough, the things and ideas that local people get so accustomed to are likely the ones that cause much discomfort for people crossing cultures.

How could I predict that the microwave would cause such trouble for my first night in Canada? How could I prepare the questions about how to use the microwave before I came? Even universities, well-prepared for international students, fail to provide such information. Why not add a link on the university website titled, for example, “Beware of the Canadian Microwave Oven” on their FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) list. No doubt, it would be considered an odd addition. None of the references would be so finely detailed as to introduce every single matter of the life of a local. We cannot expect that everything will be ‘clearly written’ or fully prepared for us, such as our understanding about a new culture and a new place, our exams, our job interviews, and...our curriculum. What we can do is **learn by experience**.

An advocate of progressive education, John Dewey (1997), places experience at the root of education. He states that “a philosophy of education based on a philosophy of experience refers to the notion of “the organic connection between education and personal experience” (p. 12) as well as the “quality of experience”, and the “continuity of experience” (p. 26). Some of his ideas about experience are not out of

date even as time goes by. He advocates to “select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences” because “every experience lives on in further experiences” (p. 16). This indicates that he pays close attention to the relationship, interaction and subsequence of experience. The ideas of experience in complexity theory correspond with his ideas. “Past, present and future experiences are enfolded in and unfold from one another” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 73). The process of gaining experiences is a learning process: experiences “are not simply ‘taken in’ by a learner” (McMurtry, 2008, p. 3) but rather gained by “reaching-out” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 73) to the learning environment, which is constructed out of our previous and present experiences in a nonlinear manner. It is a great example of “reaching out” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 73) that when I am crossing cultures, I “render” (Dewey, 1997, p. 30) myself more sensitive and responsive to those cultural differences (the different cultural environment). For example, after my first night, I realized that I should make appointments in advance in Canada. I learned to become curious and discover for myself those basic survival skills needed for me to thrive in the new culture. I generalized that I should learn deeply about culture, rather than make assumptions that will only stall my learning and understanding of the new culture. Experience is a process of embedded and on-going learning. In light of the experiences of my first night, my cultural awareness is continuously growing, and, the growing cultural awareness becomes my further experiences.

Also, “experience does not go on simply inside a person.” (Dewey, 1997, p. 33). I can share my cross-culture experience with other international students and my experience may inspire them with their situations. I can also share it with people within the *majority group* (See Appendix 1). Some individuals in this group may also have an immigrant background or a different cultural background besides Canadian culture. They may have a parent from another country, for instance, or they may have studied another culture extensively. Their immigrant background or other cultural experiences beyond their Canadian culture and experience helps them develop an interest in and connection with multiculturalism. Their understandings about cultural diversity come,

mostly, from their practical life rather than textbooks or what they are being told by teachers. Some people have an overseas living experience. They may have faced difficulties in their intercultural experience and compared the differences between cultures. As a result of this sort of reflection, their perspectives may not be the same as before their cross-culture experience. However, for most of the host people, they don't have the opportunity to cross cultures. Thus, my experience may evoke their thinking on the cultures of minorities.

Sharing cross-cultural experiences with the majority group is not an attempt to gain sympathy for the sufferings that I have faced, but rather to promote a genuine respect for and celebration of the bravery and success in crossing cultures for the *minority group* (See Appendix 1), a curiosity and passion for understanding minority groups and a sense of humanity based on culture and race. It will also impact on minorities' knowledge of how their cultures co-develop and collaborate with the culture of majorities. This interaction will contribute to "a shared perspective" (Goodson, 1988b, p. 126) among the community and have an effect on the deconstructing and reconstructing of the multicultural environment.

As noted in Figure 1, individuals share their cross culture experiences with not only members from their own communities but also the individuals from the other group. The communities of majorities and minorities share information and understandings by the communication between these two groups of individuals. Social environment is also a major influence from an individual level and a group level in terms of "constructing 'a caring community'" (p. 126). From this sense, majorities, minorities and the social environment collaborate to create a dynamic system of sharing the cross-cultural experience. I use Figure 1 to illustrate how ideas are shared across different cultural groups. I use non-solid lines because in reality there are no solid boundaries and individuals and groups interact with each other.

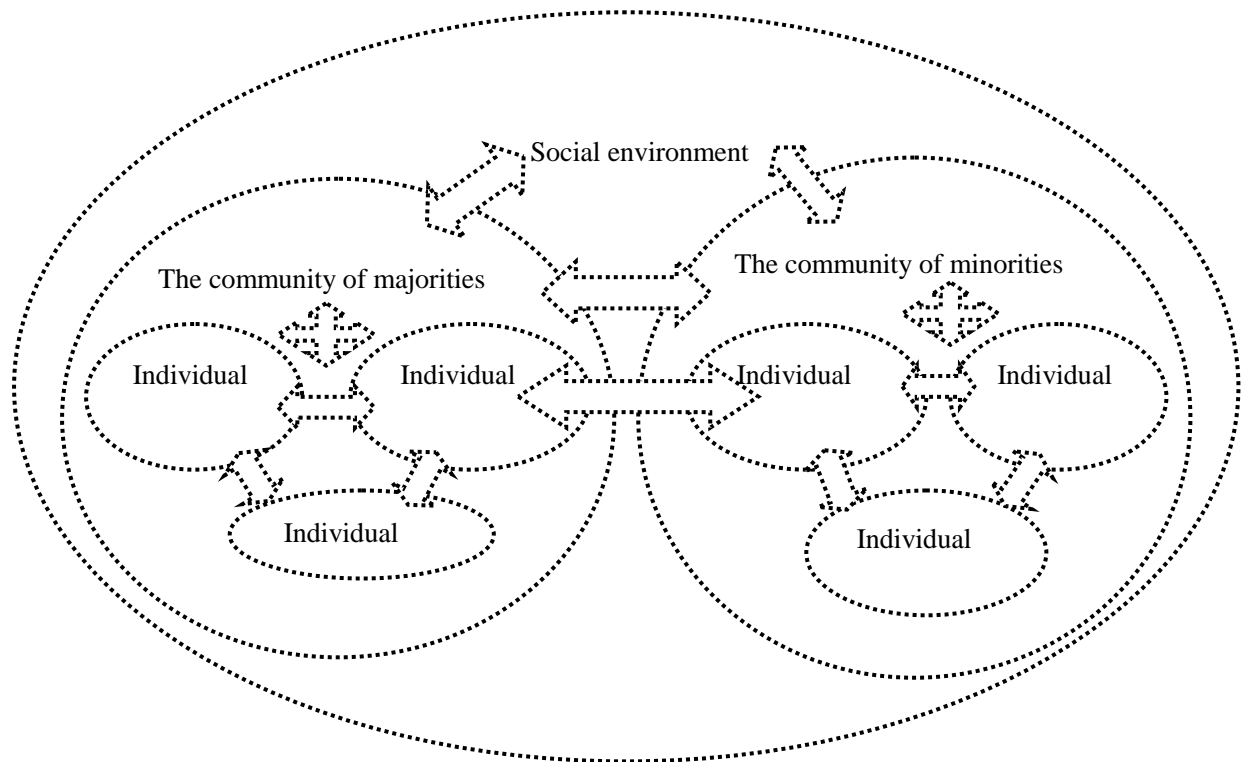


Figure 1

A chaotic/dynamic system of sharing cross cultural experience
 (Arrows represent the influence of cross culture experience.)

The multicultural proponents emphasize a notion of “cultural understanding” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 324). In their opinion, “promoting cultural understanding serves as a compilation of resources aimed at providing schools and students with the enriched information” (The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006, retrieved from www.ncela.gwu.edu/practice/tolerance). Obviously one’s cross-cultural experience, as a genuine and rich resource, builds a path to cultural understanding. So I cannot help asking, in schools, do we create opportunities for students to cross cultures?

Is multicultural education being planned or being experienced? In the past five decades, “certainly the public interest in and debate over multiculturalism has no doubt helped to support its growth in the curriculum field” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery

& Taubman, 1995, p. 317). “Multicultural education represents an effort to acknowledge cultural diversity in the curriculum (p. 323).” When we look at the language within the IRPs - British Columbia Instructional Resource Package, we repeatedly see the relative words and phrases such as *promoting cultural understanding* and *celebrating diversity*. Look into the classrooms and you will see teachers planning many activities, making crafts with their students, hosting guest speakers and celebrating ethnic festivals. I am so happy to see multicultural education so prevalent in the Canadian education system. I am disheartened, however, when a student showed me his beautiful craft of the Great Wall that he had made in his class, but cannot tell me anything about its history. I had a similar reaction after a teacher invited me to join her class to make dumplings for Chinese New Year and I later discovered that her recipe was downloaded from a western website and involved inauthentic preparations and materials. I was discouraged again while talking with some students. They responded to me by repeating the words I had spoken in a funny way, an attempt to mimic (or mock) my Chinese accent. When I explained that they shouldn't make fun of the way I speak, because everybody has an accent, they defended themselves by claiming that they have a proper accent. All of these examples make me question, is our multicultural education meaningful, and is it enough?

“When [non-Chinese] teachers teach [Chinese] culture, what they are teaching is not [Chinese] culture but [Chinese] culture from their perspective. The two aren't the same” (Oberg, Blades & Thom, 2007, p.128). We all have our own central cultures, Caucasians, Asians, Indians, etc. It is hard for us to step out of ours, because our culture is a part of our identity. Do we really care about other cultures? How can we realize that it is impossible to define “proper” and “improper” with regard to intercultural interactions? How can we make ourselves more empathetic toward and sensitive about other cultures? How can we feel as connected with other cultures as we do our own? These are complicated questions I don't dare to answer, but I dare to have a bold imagination: Imagine if our students place themselves or are placed in a

problematic cross culture situation. Imagine the difficulty they would face.

I was invited to be a guest speaker, to discuss Chinese culture at a few different schools. I feel that the focus most often tends to be on the greatness of my culture: marvelous festivals, delicious food, interesting customs, etc. It seems like the tension of cross-cultural and intercultural experiences will never be a part of the content. Those activities just end up introducing an interesting culture where students can feel that “well, it’s different and interesting”. That’s it. Nothing further. Is that all that we would like our students to feel about other cultures? Shouldn’t we expect more? Can students experience a mixed recipe of feeling like those people who cross cultures? Would a cross-cultural experience help to deepen their sensitivity? Can we make the cross-cultural experience real for the people who never cross cultures?

Multicultural education is creating a multicultural environment for everyone.

Regardless of whether it brings pain or conflict when cultures interact, or a harmonious mix, teachers and students need to experience a journey of crossing culture. This experience may exist in spirit or in reality. Crossing cultures goes far beyond the action of simply visiting another country. In order to fully experience and understand a new culture, we must uncover our cultural assumptions, step out of our comfort zone—our traditional cultural perspectives—and open ourselves to the new perspectives and authentic experiences of another culture. Like me on my first night in Victoria, eating cookies for dinner in a dingy hostel at midnight, only once we experience it, can we learn how shocked our spirits are at such moments and understand the essentiality of *multiculturalism* (See Appendix 1) from an individual level, a national level and even an international level. Without the experience or at least the sensitivities, cultural assumptions remain.

Chapter 2
Flow with Culture shock

Blueberry Muffins



(2009, Retrieved from <http://z.about.com/d/kidscooking/1/0/A/8/-/-/blueberrymuffins.jpg>).

Ingredients:

Flour: 2 cups
Baking soda: 1tbsp
Salt: 1/2 tsp
Butter: 1/4 cup (softened)
Sugar: 1/2 cup
Eggs: 1
Milk: 1 cup
Vanilla: 1tsp
Blueberries: 1 cup (fresh or frozen)

Directions:

1. Combine flour, baking soda and salt. Stir thoroughly.
2. Cream butter and sugar. Beat in egg until smooth. Mix in milk and vanilla. Stir to moisten.
3. Gently stir blueberries with flour. Fold into batter. Fill greased muffin cups 3/4 full.
4. Bake in 400°F oven for 25 minutes. Makes 16 muffins.

October 13, 2007

It has been a month since I came to Canada. Many things have happened in just a short time. I rented an apartment, found a job as a Research Assistant and have learned many new things in and out of school. I am quite passionate about my new life in Canada and eager to learn more about the new culture. I don't want to waste any time here. Besides attending classes at school, I welcome every opportunity to participate in social activities. I am enjoying this cross-cultural adventure, but in some situations, I feel rather uncomfortable. For example, I am currently taking part in a writing workshop. The atmosphere is quite casual. My main goal as an ESL student is to focus on and understand the instructor's presentation. Meanwhile, other students leave their seats to get a snack or beverage. I was surprised by this, at first. I also found it a bit disruptive. I have discovered, however, that snacks are provided for many student activities, including presentations and workshops. Eating muffins and drinking tea or coffee during academic activities is not common in my culture. In China, eating while being part of the listening audience would be considered disrespectful toward the presenter. I live in Canada now, so I get up and grab a coffee and a muffin.

Culture shock. Having grown up in a typical large city in China, I was deeply influenced by the local Chinese culture. I attended schools in my neighborhood, went to a university in my hometown and was employed in the local educational system. Thus, I lived as a local in China for more than 27 years. As a result of my upbringing, education and experience, I consider myself to be an educator with a stable typical Chinese pattern of thinking. I feel that I make good judgments and, therefore, act appropriately. I feel confident in my ability to separate right from wrong. Furthermore, I feel comfortable with my lifestyle and level of thinking. The cultural environment has changed since I came to Canada. I am dazzled with many new things, take food for example: a welcome BBQ host by Dean for new students on campus, coffee and muffins provided during a presentation and workshop, and various ethnic food other than Chinese food in cafeterias and grocery stores.

My life in Canada is an ongoing adventure. I am curious and keen on learning new things. I have to put aside the confusion and, at times, frustration that occurs during the process of adaptation to the new culture. Despite the ever-present feeling of being 'lost,' the goal is to have a positive experience. The food that I 'know' is nowhere to be found here, despite the fact that the so called Chinese food is everywhere. It doesn't taste like home. It tastes funny. Beyond that, I have to tolerate cheese-flavored stuff and uncooked vegetables. I also find it difficult to bargain-shop for my groceries. It seems to me that the regular price of everything here is tripled, compared to the price of the same thing in China. And even more questionable to me is the fact that I now have to pay taxes on my food purchases. Paying taxes on groceries does not make sense to me. When I spend my money, I contribute to the consumer market of society. Why should I have to pay for my contribution to the government?

The changes in my life and ways of thinking that I have listed above make me feel confused. It influences my opinions about the world and perspectives on culture. When I have an idea or desire to do something, I first have to consider whether the action or behavior is appropriate or acceptable in Canada. Naturally, I am

continuously making the comparison between the two countries.

The above experience and thoughts are not only my own. People who have two cultural perspectives have similar experiences and thoughts. Oberg, K. (1960) defined it as “culture shock.” Culture shock is a term to describe “the physical and emotional discomfort one suffers” when coming to live in a different cultural environment or “a place different from the place of origin” (Guanipa, 1998, retrieved from [Guanipa,C.http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/cultshok.htm](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/cultshok.htm)). Oberg (1960) even states that “culture shock tends to be an occupational disease of people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad (p. 142).

People hear about culture shock before their cross-culture experience. For many people, culture shock is interpreted as problematic, like a gray zone between the two cultures. In order to cross cultures, people need to deal with and work on the problematic elements. In Oberg (1960)’s work, he suggests that individuals make adjustments to the cultural environment, in an effort to recover from culture shock - “an occupational disease” (p. 1). He states that “In short, the environment does not change. What has changed is your attitudes toward it” (p. 3) to “set things right” (p. 5). This sort of idea still takes up quite a few spaces in the academic field and practical life. On the internet, there are thousands of sources about efficient ways to deal with culture shock: make friends with local people, eat comfort foods, and take a time off from the new culture if you feel too stressed, etc.

These are great suggestions. There is no doubt that when an individual feels uncomfortable, human nature kicks in to figure out possible ways of overcoming that feeling. Many people choose to fit into the new culture. They try very hard to imitate the local accent, pick up habits and get over culture shock as quickly as possible. Eating muffins is not part of my culture. I can choose not to adapt this particular habit, but I choose to do the same thing as everybody else. Just like O’Neill and Cullingford (2005) mention in their research, “They (Foreigners) might not like English food but

most adapt or submit or even grow to appreciate it, however grudgingly”(p. 113). It is true for immigrants and international students that we do not want to be left out in our new community. We want to be a part of it, even though we feel a little awkward at times. However, **is the only goal when we enter another culture to simply “fit in?”**

In the dictionary, “fit into” means “to be suitable for something.” It seems a rather subjective term. A fitting into B means that A makes the changes for B and adapts to B. To fit into a foreign environment, individuals must make changes in themselves. However, do we have to get over culture shock as quickly as possible? How can we adapt to a new cultural environment “without losing [our] own essential sense of self” (O’Neill and Cullingford, 2005, p. 109)?

Complexity theory pays great attention to the dynamic relationships between a phenomenon and its environment. Culture shock, as a psychological reaction to an unfamiliar cultural environment, certainly can be viewed from this perspective. As a disoriented and discomforted feeling, it can be seen as a chaotic phenomenon. It exists with its non-organized order. If we view culture shock as a dynamic and complex system, like any other system, both negative and positive sides may be perceived. When people think about suffering from culture shock and how to decrease its disadvantages, are there any people who think about culture shock in a positive way? With this in mind, how can an individual use culture shock to his/her advantage? Does culture shock not have the power to teach invaluable lessons about the new world and new identities?

For people who cross cultures- “getting across one culture to another” (Aoki, 1996, p. 316), having culture shock is not always a bad thing. It is also a great opportunity for them to reconsider their life objectives and gain new cultural perspectives. Like Adler (1975) says, “although culture shock is most often associated with negative consequences, it can be an important aspect of cultural learning, self-development, and personal growth” (p. 14). Take me as an example. Having experienced culture

shock firsthand; I have become more and more confident, a person with fresh multicultural perspectives and a wider scope on life in general. I am making a balance between the effects of both cultures. I am learning a new way of thinking, which is thinking without prejudice toward either culture. I even suggest people should experience culture shock. Truly understanding a culture is not only from other people's opinions, books and mass media, what you really experience helps you understand it deeply even if your experience is what you don't like or you feel compromised. If everywhere else is just like home, there is no point in going to or learning about other places.

Culture shock does not exist forever. "The feeling of culture shock generally sets in after the first few weeks of coming to a new place" (Guanipa, 1998, retrieved from [Guanipa,C.http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/cultshok.htm](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/cultshok.htm)). On one hand, people who have culture shock adjust their thinking and behavior. On the other hand, new culture exerts a subtle influence on people. People do not feel their change strongly, but they are naturally influenced by the new culture. These two aspects are combined. No matter whether the change is active or passive, change does happen.

According to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania (2009), there are two negative trends after people experience culture shock. "Some people will give up on assimilating into the newer culture and return to their own culture, and some will become so magnetized to the foreign culture that they feel they must permanently move there to relieve the stress" (Retrieved from http://www.edinboro.edu/departments/international/shock.dot?host_id=1). I have witnessed both of these trends. I have two Chinese friends; one has adopted almost all the western habits such as music, food and language preference. The other maintains minimal social contact with Canadians.

I wonder, then, how can we find a balance between being open and armed with regard to the new culture? When entering a new culture, especially a culturally diverse

environment like Canada, one could feel a sense of being lost amidst the unfamiliar: loss of place and loss of self. Since culture shock is a psychological process that we cannot just skip, why not *flow* with it? If individuals were given the time and opportunity to flow into the new culture naturally, without being forced or rushed, wouldn't it be a little less scary? I am certain the sense of being lost would be lessened and the experience, overall, would be a little less overwhelming.

At the same time, flow has its challenges within systems thinking, such as a danger of flowing without reflection and into a cultural "melting pot." How can we maintain a steady flow, full of energy? It "depends on our ability to bring two perspectives [traditional cultural perspective and new cultural perspective] into complementary harmony" (Doll, 1993, p.181). This harmony does not come from "one unified whole" (Oberg, Blades & Thom, 2007, p. 125) but two or more perspectives that exist simultaneously, sometimes meeting together in collective interactions. They sometimes "switch" (p.125) from one to another according to the current situations. Looking back at my story, it is actually good to make comparisons between the two cultures and think about what is appropriate depending on current situations. When we make these connections, cultural perspectives work collectively.

Flow with culture shock in curriculum: I have read the IRPs - British Columbia Instructional Resource Package, for ESL students. This document notes that "ESL does not have a specific curriculum" because "students are in the process of learning the language of instruction and, in many cases, the content matter of subjects appropriate to their grade level" (p. 62). Many ESL students are placed in subject-area classes primarily for the purpose of contact with English-speaking peers and experience with the subject and language. They seem to be integrated into the subject area and a new educational circumstance as soon as they come to Canada. Some students only come because their parents are immigrants. It is not their will to cross cultures. For these individuals, it is like being thrown into the water of cultural diversity. They have to learn to *swim to survive*- swim as soon as they can, so that

they will be able to communicate with their English speaking teachers and classmates and achieve academic success. They do not have time to feel and *flow* or float in the water. Differentiated learning for ESL students becomes a responsibility for subject teachers who might not have an ESL teaching specialty. Should we give those students some time to discover their new world before subject-based learning and assessment? Should we learn more about their pasts? Should we see them beyond their language weakness? Should we discover their strengths? Most importantly, can education, particularly curriculum, transfer a notion of *flow*?

Some people may worry that *flow* is too slow. It might not be as efficient as “jumping right in.” However, please allow me to give a personal example. When I learned how to swim, I discovered the secret to mastering the skill. It doesn’t depend on how hard you kick your feet or the power in your arms. It depends on how relaxed you are in the water. The more you relax, the better you float. If you panic, you may drown. The same thing happened to me when I learned to communicate with people in English. In the beginning, I felt embarrassed when my English was not fluent or accurate. The more I struggled to correct my accent and grammar mistakes, the less I dared to open my mouth at all. Only once I began to relax and allow myself to talk in “my own way,” in imperfect, cross-cultural English, was I actually able to speak more fluently. If international students expect and are expected to learn to *swim* in their new culture, they have to learn to relax and float freely in the water of cultural diversity.

Chapter 3
Find a Space In Between for
Intercultural adaptation

Chicken curry



(Nie, 2008)

Ingredients:

Chicken breasts: 250grams
Olive oil: 2tbsp
Coconut milk: 2 cups
Milk: 2 cups
Water: 1 cup
Eggplants: 200 grams
Curry paste: 2tbsp
Salt: 2tbsp

Directions:

1. Chop the chicken breasts and the eggplants into cubes.
2. Fry the curry paste with olive oil under medium heat for 30 seconds.
3. Add the coconut milk, milk and water and boil the mix.
4. Add chicken, eggplants and salt and boil them slowly for 20 minutes.
5. Serve with white rice.

November 11, 2007

Today I moved in with a family. I was so lucky to find them online. In exchange for cooking dinner for them, I get a room to stay in. It will save me hundreds of dollars in rent every month. It is a great option for an international student, like me, struggling with money issues.

Looking around the kitchen, I saw a lot of ingredients and materials that I have never used before. I know that they are typical for a French-Canadian family, their daily diet consisting of typical western food. I was initially concerned. I wondered, will they like the food that I cook, since it consists mostly of Asian dishes? Will I enjoy sharing a meal with them? I know I need to figure out how to make my food appropriate for two different tastes, eastern and western.

...

Finally, I was able to find some common ground. Chicken curry; we all love it. My chicken curry is not the original Asian recipe. The authentic version is far spicier. Here, I put less curry paste and a lot of coconut milk. Also, I leave out the peppers and add eggplant instead. The reason I adapt the original recipe is to make it more suitable for western people, while maintaining a taste that I enjoy.

I have adapted my original chicken curry recipe to satisfy the tastes of Canadian people. **Cross-cultural adaptation** is a requisite skill for immigrants and international students, essential for 'survival' in a foreign culture. In an attempt to be a part of the new community and make friends, they make adaptations and use methods that they may have never used in their home countries. Food, as a symbol of a social need, is often used as a medium for cross-cultural adaptation to connect people beyond language, race and culture and, thereby, create positive social relations.

Adaptation is natural. According to complexity theory, adaptation is one of the two essential characteristics of complexity systems "because the systems change their own structure in response to internal or external pressures" (Mcmurtry, 2008, p. 268). However, their structure remains stable because they are a "dissipative structure" (Capra, 1996, p. 75), which means they are self-organized but open and adaptable. If we see crossing culture as a system, the pressures that influence people who cross cultures to make adjustments on their thinking and behavior come from both themselves and the community. For example their struggle to survive and succeed is an internal pressure. Their need to meet social needs is an external pressure.

However, one thing that needs to be mentioned here: "complexivists do not hold the conventional assumption that the environment is something that is given or static, or that organisms and other complex systems can move towards some "optimum" fitness that perfectly matches their environment" (Mamurtry, 2008, p. 268). For instance, the Canadian cultural environment is not a given and fixed condition. It also changes because of the guest people and the culture that they bring with them. It has been mentioned that "a complex system and its environment (which can be seen as a larger scale complex system) are involved in mutual and recurrent interactions that change them both" (p. 269).

Therefore, if we view cross-cultural or intercultural adaptation from this sense, it is not a one-way street. Intercultural adaptation is "the fit between individuals and their

environment” (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988, p. 111) but not the case of one fitting into another. The relationship and interactions between me and my landlady is a vivid example of intercultural adaptation. Her family’s eating conditions changed since I have joined them. I’ve had to adjust my cooking styles to suit their needs, but she didn’t push me to learn to cook western food. Instead, she let me discover it on my own. During this time of curiosity and discovery, I thought about not only her family’s tastes, but also my own likes and capabilities. I made a balance between the west and the east or simply interpreted western and eastern styles of cooking and eating. On one hand, I adapted my cooking ways to their needs. On the other hand, they adjusted their tastes to accommodate my cultural cuisine. Our “mutual interactions” have changed our traditional dining environment to a mixed cultural experience, rather than an environment that one must *fit into*. Together, we contribute to this adapted dining environment and experience.

Let me make myself clear on my understanding of complexity theory with regards to multiculturalism. Guest people enter a new cultural environment and adapt to fit into it. The cultural environment also changes because of them and for them. Host people, sharing the multicultural environment with guest people, are influenced by the change of the environment and make adaptations too. This mutual adaptation leads both guest people and host people to a collective understanding towards their co-existence in the multicultural environment.

However, I still have questions and confusions about this notion. According to Kim and Gudykunst (1988), cross-cultural adaptation takes individuals’ adaptive potentials and individuals should focus on increasing their ability to adapt to a new culture. For immigrants and international students, we focus on improving these types of abilities such as communicating with local people, respecting other cultures and fitting into a new community. For example, like many people who come to Canada and naturally give themselves a new English name. I chose the common English name Nicole for myself. The reason I ask people to call me Nicole instead of my official name Ye is

because I don't want to them to feel uncomfortable trying to pronounce a name they are not familiar with. I believe that a name is a major part of an individual's sense of identity. Being respectful to one's name is being respectful to his or her identity. I feel bad if I cannot remember or incorrectly pronounce a name. For this reason, every time I meet a person, I try my best to remember it and practice the pronunciation, before I call them by name. It can be difficult for a second language speaker to pronounce a name as accurately as a native speaker, but there are ways that can help us to pronounce names correctly and with more confidence. For example, write the pronunciation down and practice it a few times. Of course, I cannot change my last name. I have heard people call me Ms. Ni or Ms. Nine instead of Ms. Nie. When I am asked what my last name is, I tell them. It probably only takes one minute to learn and another to remember a new name. I try to be clear, but sometimes wonder if I am being heard. Do host people try hard to learn and remember? It is their home. If they are comfortable in their home environment, they do not even think to change or adapt. Is it necessary too for host people to improve their ability to adapt to a changing multicultural environment?

Why do host people have to adapt? I have mentioned the relationships between people, their cultures and the cultural environment earlier in this chapter. Adaptation is almost "a compromise, a vector in the internal structure of culture and the external pressure of environment" (Sahlins, 1964, p. 136). No community can be found in the world which has only one single culture. New cultures that guest people bring "is not simply added to prior internal conditions" (Kim, 2002, p. 261). It is not lined or layered, but the minorities' cultures interplay and emerge with the majority's culture. The emerged, complex cultural environment doesn't allow any of us to pick only ONE cultural element, just like one can not stick to only ONE kind of food. Also, this multicultural environment erases the limits of being a host or guest. Like a party, it runs not only with the host's preparation but guests' reaction. Guests bring food and drinks. Guests hold games for hosts. Hosts experience something unexpected in their home. People's identities are constantly being shaped by their adaptations to those around them. From

this sense, everybody adapts and should adapt.

Ted Aoki (1995) mentions the concept of space in his work many times. As a scholar who cares deeply about community and cultural diversity, he advocates a space for the “community as diversity” instead of “community as difference”. He sees “inscribed in the word ‘community’ the words ‘common’ and ‘unity’” (p. 306). In this community, diversity collaborates. Corresponding with his ideas, I strongly ask: is there a space in between, not only “a space between East and West” (p. 316), or a space between guest and host people, but also an “interspace where the otherness of others can not be buried as is done with the imaginary of community as diversity” (p. 308)? It would be ideal for guest people to have the space to make their adaptations to the new cultural environment “without losing [our] own essential sense of self” (O’Neill and Cullingford, 2005, p. 109). That is, a space for both groups-majorities and minorities, to make their intercultural adaptations with a unique sense of self and a full respect for others. Can we have that space? **How can/does our curriculum transfer the idea of this space?**

Chapter 4
Look for the “Familiar” and the “Similar”

Perogies



(2009, Retrieved from <http://andrew.infinitepigeons.org/pics/food/perogies%20in%20wildmushroom%20veloute%20sauce.jpg>).

Ingredients:

Frozen perogies: 500g
Chopped onions: 1 cup
Bacon: 4 slice
Sour cream: 1/2 cup

Directions:

1. Fry the frozen perogies in medium heat
2. Cut the bacon slices into pieces
3. Add chopped onions and bacon pieces to the perogies and fry them till cooked
4. Serve with sour cream

December 08, 2007

I met a Canadian guy and started an interracial /intercultural relationship. So far I have found that we have a lot of common interests although we have different cultural backgrounds.

Today, he decided to cook perogies- a typical Canadian food for me. When he picked up a bag of them in the grocery store, I got excited because they look quite similar to dumplings.

Dumplings are a traditional Chinese food. Chinese people believe that they represent Chinese food culture. People eat dumplings for important occasions such as festivals and family reunions.

I feel happy that people here eat dumplings although they call them by a different name. Perogies and dumplings are both made of flour and fillings. Also they are in the same shape. I miss dumplings because I miss home. Seeing something familiar makes me transform my emotions. I became very excited about those Western dumplings even though I have never eaten them before.

My experience of eating perogies helped me to understand the importance of finding a sense of both the “familiar” and the “similar” in a new cultural context for students from other cultures. To me, the “familiar” describes things in the new culture that replicate in some way what students already know from home, such as food from students’ original cultures or greetings in their own languages. A sense of familiarity is based not as much on the thing itself as on the process of recognition it sets off; it is a feeling that one has about something which is perceived to stand out in the new culture precisely because it does not stand out within one’s first cultural context. The “similar” refers to a connection made as a result of comparing cultures. It is a way of relating the two cultures--of finding ways in which they meet without modifying them—a way of seeing overlaps. For example, common eating habits and educational activities can be seen as the “similar”.

Look for a sense of the “familiar”: People crossing cultures sometimes do some interesting things. They look for familiar things. They probably never do that in their home country or see themselves as people who particularly enjoy familiarity. In certain situations, during the period of their culture-crossing, they choose familiar things “not because they are deemed superior or inferior but because that was what they had become most accustomed to” (O’Neill & Cullingford, 2005, p. 121). For instance, when I was in China, I did not like watching TV, especially TV news. I would rather check the news online, due to efficiency. Now I find myself waiting in front of the TV in my room for the Mandarin edition of the local news everyday. I find it appealing to hear the different contents and perspectives in a familiar language.

Most people experience “the absence of the familiar” (O’Neill & Cullingford, 2005, p. 113) when they cross cultures. Finding a sense of the familiar can provide emotional support and a sense of second-language competence. In a multicultural learning environment, international students feel more comfortable participating in educational activities familiar and similar to the ones they have done before in their home country. A simple example is that, when making holiday crafts for St. Patrick's Day, a child

from China may have a hard time understanding what a paper leprechaun marionette is, but they will start to make a paper rainbow right away because they did it before and feel confident.

Within a classroom, finding a sense of the “familiar” can be used as a method for teachers to approach students from other cultures. International students are often sensitive to the differences and the similarities between cultures. “Going to another country reminds the individual of the power of the social self, the very domesticity of the home environment and what familiarity means” (O’Neill & Cullingford, 2005, p. 113). Taking advantage of their senses of familiarity, teachers can create a culturally welcoming environment in the classroom simply by preparing the activities similar to what they have known. Even just asking them how to say “hello” in their language or commenting on their ethnic food can be a step to involve those students into the new learning circumstance. Mentioning what you have learned from them in front of other students and showing your respect for their customs and culture will make them feel warm and welcome. It can help them reduce the fear of “otherness” while building confidence in themselves.

Finding similarity is also important. A well-prepared learning environment with some similar cultural contexts can help the students who cross cultures build confidence, comfort, and motivation. I often wonder: Why does the voice of cultural differences seem to speak louder than the voice of similarity? When people find out that I came from China, they often ask me, isn’t it different here? Or some people just state that it must be very different. This is tricky because no matter what I say, they already have the answer: yes, it is different. Why do we hear the louder voice of cultural differences than of similarities? Indeed, “it is far easier to describe cultural differences, in terms of symbols like food and dress, than it is to uncover cultural similarities or distinctions in terms of ideas or assumptions” (O’Neill & Cullingford, 2005, p. 107). I do not deny there are differences, but do we make enough of an effort to dig for similarities?

In fact, different education systems share many similarities in both practical and theoretical contexts. Theoretically, John Dewey and Taylor's philosophies have both been applied in Western and Eastern education for years. Recently, complexity theories have contributed to cross-subject curricula in both China and Canada. Practically, children living at the opposite ends of the earth participate in similar educational activities. For example, children in both Canada and China make crafts and cards for festivals, although the festivals are different in these two countries.

Should we help our students, both in majority and minority groups, discover these cultural similarities? In my experience, finding such similarities is crucial. When I told the grade two students that I work with that Chinese people do not eat cheese like Canadians do, some of them asked me, with confused expressions, "Why not?" Some of them used the word "weird". I realized that moment was a great opportunity for multicultural education. My goal was not to just tell them Chinese people do not like cheese or leave an impression that Chinese people are a group of weird people. Then I started to tell them what Chinese people's main diets are and what food we do eat that are similar to what Canadians eat. At the end of the conversation, they did not say "weird" any more. Instead, I heard "they are just like us".

On a cultural level, to appreciate and celebrate diversity, we need not only to understand differences among cultures, but also to appreciate how cultures are alike. In complexity theory, cultures can be similar according to the notion of self-similarity. "Self-similarity is a quality of many natural forms" such as "the structure of trees, cauliflowers, and clouds" (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p. 72). "Their parts, at any scale, are similar in shape to the whole" (Capra, 1996, p. 138). The culture in a country and the whole cultural environment in the world are both characterized, for example, by shared learning and beliefs. From a certain level, the global culture can be seen to echo in each culture of the world, and in this way culture is self-similar. Two cultures, such as China and Canada, are two parts of the whole global cultural

system and each culture shares the shape of the whole environment in some way.

“Children need to understand that they are unique in themselves but share many similar feelings and concerns with other children” (National Council for the Social Studies Task Force on Early Childhood/Elementary Social Studies, 1988, p. 3).

Helping them discover cultural similarities is to help them develop “their sensitivity, understanding, and compassion for all cultures” (Fry, Mckinney, & Phillips, 1994, p. 14) and an ability to work together with other cultural groups harmoniously.

At the curricular level, we have a requisite to see the big picture, which is global education. As mentioned, there are similar contexts in different educational systems ON both practical and academic levels. Whether people believe there are gaps between the educational systems in different countries depends on the way we look at the concepts of “local” and “global”. Education grows in a local environment but “local interactions lead to global problem solving” (Johnson, 2001, p. 94) and “create a global order” (p. 78). Every education system shares the global order upon which they collaborate. If educators include the global vision in their local teaching and education, they may realize that “curricular differences between developing and developed countries are not as great as one might expect” (Raymond, 1991, quoted in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 800) and every local educational system constitutes the bigger system: global education. Further, the global educational system is moving increasingly in the direction that Pinar (1995) describes: an interconnected system in which “ecological, economic, political, technological, religious, cultural, and educational” are intertwined (p. 800). Curriculum is becoming more and more borderless. It crosses the borders of countries, cultures, and subjects. However, this does not mean it is becoming more and more the same. Each education system contains both local characteristics and global orders, which creates a multiplicity of identities in the midst of both.

Altogether, a sense of the familiar and the similar is important for both majority and

minority groups on a classroom level, a cultural level, and a curricular level.

Identifying the similarities and differences is finding both self and otherness. Through comparing ourselves and others, we “reassess those habits of thought long taken for granted” (O’Neill & Cullingford 2005, p. 122) and realize that an individual “is constituted by both self and other” (Aoki, 1993, p. 289). By realizing cultural similarities, we broaden our global vision and heighten the humanity of curriculum towards all the nations in the world.

Chapter 5
Learn Collectively

Wontons with cheese



(2009, Retrieved from http://comps.fotosearch.com/comp/corbis/DGT385/fried-wontons -chili _~TOA0044.jpg).

Ingredients:

Ground beef: 500g
Shredded Cheese: 1 cup
Chopped onion: 1/2 cup
Wonton wraps: 20 pieces
Chili sauce: 1/2 cup

Directions:

1. Mix the ground beef, onion and cheese. Season with salt and pepper.
2. Wrap the fillings with wonton wraps.
3. Deep fry them in heated cooking oil until brown.
4. Serve with chili sauce.

January 21, 2008

I am attending a party hosted by my Canadian friend. This is a typical Canadian-style party: people are standing, drinking and chatting. Appetizers are served. My friend offers up a plate full of golden fried wontons. Fried wontons? Interesting... we never fry wontons in China. I try one, curious to see how a simple breakfast food on the streets of China became a creative appetizer at a fancy Western party. To my surprise, I don't hate it, even if the fillings are cheese flavored. It is tasty and goes well with wine.

If perogies are my own reflection of Chinese food, wontons with cheese are a real attempt to combine Chinese food with Western food. To me, this combination suggests the idea of collective intelligence: “the capacity of human communities to evolve towards higher order complexity and harmony, through such innovation mechanisms as differentiation and integration, competition and collaboration”. (Collective intelligence, 2008, Retrieved from <http://www.community-intelligence.com/blogs/public>). Eastern and Western food cultures are well differentiated, yet becoming increasingly integrated. Cheese is a common component in Western food culture, while wontons represent an essential cooking style in Eastern food culture. Combining them into a new and creative outcome reflects a true dialogue of the two food cultures: the competition and ultimately the collaboration of distinct tastes.

Before applying the idea of collective intelligence to the fields of multiculturalism and curriculum, I would like to rethink the notion of “different.” Just as I questioned assumptions of cultural similarities in the last chapter, I now question assumptions about cultural difference that prevent us from clearly seeing how collective intelligence can develop between cultures.

Question 1: Are people scared of “different”?

Many people fear unknown and unfamiliar things: places they have never been to, new jobs, the unpredictable future. Some people feel uncomfortable trying different ethnic food, hanging out with people from different cultures or sharing diverse opinions on politics or social justice. It really makes me wonder, are people scared of “different”? Would people rather stay in their own cultural groups simply because it is more comfortable?

Question 2: Does “different” have two meanings?

A Chinese-Canadian multiculturalist, Guo, wrote that “the notion of diversity is linked to the way in which difference is perceived” (2007, p. 14). How do people understand

the actual words “difference” or “different”? In my experience, people have two distinct understandings of these terms. On the one hand, “difference” is a valuable feature in human beings. I once saw an advertisement on the bus for a university program. It said, “Make a difference.” In this sense, making a difference meant making things better. On the other hand, “different” is the opposite of normal. “Different” can even mean “weird,” like we might describe an unfamiliar food or an unfamiliar culture.

It seems that our cognitive worlds include both a “good different” and “bad different.” When we think of ourselves, usually we use “good different” because we all want to see ourselves as unique. When we encounter something out of our comfort zone, we may think of it as “bad different,” meaning weird. How can we start to reconcile these two definitions, to use the same standards to think about ourselves and others?

Question 3: Do we teach our students to be culturally different? Which “different” is this?

I have found that the Canadian education system respects students’ uniqueness and creativity. In the classroom, teachers encourage students to speak in their own voices and create their own special work. Students want to be different and stand out from others. But culturally, do they want to be different than others too? When I am working with children in the classroom, I find that the Chinese students do not like to speak Chinese with me in front of their classmates. The interesting thing, though, is that they will speak French in public. Speaking a second language is not the issue. Then, what is? They do not want to be culturally different? French is an official language. Other students also learn it in class. Therefore, speaking French is not considered different. In contrast, there are no Chinese or other non-official language classes offered, even for optional courses. Chinese speaking students in this area usually do not even have peers to practice their mother tongue at school.

Even though I speak fluent Mandarin, I too find that there is no environment at school

to speak a non-official language. Talking in English seems to be a priority for everyone. I have to wonder, is it the case that “children are deculturalized if the dialect of their home and community is not acknowledged in the school” (Boateng, 1990, quoted in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 348)? Do we teach these students to be comfortable and proud of their cultural difference, or do we deculturalize them by prioritizing the mainstream culture above all else. I start to worry that they cannot be proud of their cultural identity if they do not appreciate their mother language or acknowledge being culturally different. I agree with Pinar (1995) when he states: “One cannot understand the identity of one without appreciating how it is implied by the other” (p. 330). However, “how it is implied by the other” reflects on how it is implied by oneself. The respect that others have towards one’s identity requires a full respect from one’s own.

I am left with many questions. How can we make a strong effort to support children’s cultural identities? How can we apply a standard definition of “different” in the curriculum area, without the emotional connotations of “good” or “bad”? Most importantly, how can we come to view diversity as “an opportunity to enhance learning by using the diverse strengths, experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of students from various cultural groups” (Guo, 2007, p. 14)? Can we “transform the curriculum to include multiple ways of knowing, centering previously marginalized knowledge” (p. 15)?

I ask these questions because I believe questioning cultural difference can help us see beyond it. Kilgore (1999) writes that “[u]nderstanding differences is central in understanding the interplay” among individuals and social groups (p. 200).

Is the notion of difference simply good or bad? Deleuze (1988) offers one possible response to this question. He states that “difference is neither good or bad” (quoted in Oberg, Blades, & Thom, 2007, p. 134). Cultural difference does not exist as “a problem to be solved” (Oberg, Blades, Thom, 2007, p. 134) but as a necessity of

multiplicity. Humanity “is constituted by self and other” (Aoki, 1993, p.289). Our multiple identities grow in the midst of self and other.

Question, again. What exists beyond the “different” of majority and minority groups? I believe that the answer is collaboration, a way to unite people in creating a multicultural educational environment without prejudice or discrimination.

One final question, then: should host and guest not learn collectively? Educators and students who cross cultures bring with them multiple intelligences and skills. They offer many things that majority groups can learn, from simple second language learning to new teaching methods and educational thoughts. I wonder, why not open up more optional language courses for elementary and high school students in our public education? It not only promotes a multicultural environment in school but also creates more job opportunities for immigrants with language teaching backgrounds. Furthermore, it helps children from minority groups gain a deeper understanding of who they are, which is essential from both individual and cultural levels.

Collective learning is a concept of group learning. It refers to a learning method that focuses on the learning “between dyads, teams, organizations, communities, and societies” and that emphasizes “relationships and shared vision and meanings” (Garavan, 2008, p. 465). Collective learning encompasses two key elements: participation and collaboration. According to Davis , Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2000), “learning is principally a matter of keeping pace with one’s evolving circumstances”(p. 78). In this sense, learning is not a passive acceptance of knowledge, but an active participation with the culture around us. Moreover, “individual knowing, collective knowledge and culture” (p.70) construct three levels of one phenomenon which interact with each other. We can see the internet as a collective learning space. On the internet, individuals have access to the sources of collective knowledge. What individuals may access is not just a great amount of data but also a culture created by the website they are visiting, the way users interact with

the information, and the on-line communities.

Since majority and minority cultures participate and collaborate during their communication and interactions, they can also be viewed as learning groups. In each learning group, individuals proceed with their individual learning. Meanwhile, they are influenced by members of their own group and other groups through personal sharing and mass media messages. According to Kilgore (1999) “all development is partially determined by the group’s collective actions in relation to other groups’ collective actions within a sociocultural context” (p. 197). In other words, neither the majority group nor the minority can step out of the influence of the other learning group: “No learning community is free of engagement with individuals and other groups” (p. 200).

According to complexity theory, collective intelligence comes from collective learning between systems. The two learning groups and all of the individuals within them can be seen as learning systems. All of the “actors, activities and institutions together add up to a whole-society [or whole-organization], institutionally-embedded form of collective intelligence far beyond the capacities of any individual, which individuals can access” (Collective intelligence, 2008, Retrieved from http://www.community-intelligence.com/blogs/public/2004/08/defining_collective_intelligen.html). In this understanding, the collaboration of the majority and minority groups is not $1+1=2$ but $1+1>2$. Take wontons with cheese as a simple example: it doesn’t just add a new flavor to wontons but opens a possibility to combine Eastern and Western cooking methods, to create foods which are enjoyed by both Eastern and Western people. Wontons with cheese are an outcome of creativity but also a symbol of the communication, competition and collaboration of the two food cultures.

Although Aoki (2000) is not a complexity theorist, his notions on “self and other”

correspond with the ideas of collective learning. He advocates moving away from "this or that" and thinking about the world as "this and that" because self is never separated from other. In terms of learning, learning is never individual but shared. Certainly so does the learning between east and west, majorities and minorities. The collective learning between East and West and between majorities and minorities give them not this or that, but this and that, plus more that could not be accessed by any single group on their own. I continue this discussion on combining East and West further in Chapter 7.

Kilgore (1999) tells us that "The potential for collective development is (only) limited when the diversity of individuals and interaction with other groups is limited" (p. 199). I hope that with a deeper understanding of collective learning, educators from both majority and minority groups can participate and collaborate more fully and build more shared learning into the curriculum.

Chapter 6
Engage with Complexity

Fried rice



(2009, Retrieved from http://enjoywithjoy.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/img_6162.jpg)

Ingredients:

Cooked white rice: 250g
Ground beef: 250g
Mushroom: 1/2 cup
Onion: 1 cup (chopped)
Curry powder: 2 tsp

Directions:

1. Fry the ground beef until cooked.
2. Add in mushroom, onion and curry powder and fry for 5 minutes.
3. Add rice and mix.
4. Season with salt and pepper.

February 12, 2008

Fried rice is a brilliant invention. Anything left in the fridge can provide its diverse flavours and textures: carrots, chicken and green beans; cabbages, eggs and tofu; corn, cucumber and ham. I never get tired of it. Like Gu (1997) says, “We have changed a lot since we came here, but one thing we could not change is how much rice we eat. Rice is a symbol of traditional Chinese culture, in which everything is related to nature” (p. 2). Many areas in China are perfect for planting rice thanks to the type and quality of soil. The abundance of rice makes it an everyday food. “The agricultural way of life, centered around rice, has had a strong influence on the social, economic, political and ideological developments of ancient China. In this sense, traditional Chinese culture may be considered a Rice Culture” (Rice culture of China, 2009, Retrieved from <http://yeschinatour.com/china-guides/chinese-culture/rice-culture-china>). Chinese people’s love and passion for rice represents a love of our land and nature.

Rice is where I find the energy to go about my business—and I don’t mean the business of studying, although of course that is part of what I do. Living in another country means being in a complex world. I cannot always see where I am going. Things change unexpectedly and the future is unpredictable. The only thing I can do is explore all the possibilities: part-time jobs, future career opportunities, scholarship and academic paths, immigration and settlement. Every day, after I chop and fry, I start the business of searching and exploring.

I like fried rice for many reasons: it tastes good; it represents my Chinese identity; it feeds me as a “poor student”; it makes me feel secure. It even helps me think about multiculturalism and curriculum. I see fried rice as a symbol of complexity. First, it has a “bottom-up emergent” and “nested structure” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5). A bowl of fried rice combines thousands of individual grains of rice, various ingredients and cooking materials into a non-organized order. These components do not have “a governing structure” but “a nested structure” (p. 5). We cannot say which one controls the flavour because everything collaborates together. Second, it has “short-range relationships” (p.5). Every component interacts with its neighbours, so a grain of rice takes on the flavour of the ground beef, which takes on the flavour of a mushroom. Third, it is “ambiguously bounded” (p.5). The flavours and materials of fried rice are open unpredictable because they vary from person to person, place to place and time to time. Two bowls of fried rice will never be exactly the same, even when made by the same cook.

For immigrants and international students, the world is like a bowl of fried rice: complicated and complex. They face not only all of the same social, financial, and career challenges of local students, but also deal with challenges with language, cultural identity, and now and often unpredictable perspectives of those around them. Without a job, they do not have money. Without money, they cannot pay tuition for local education. Without local certification, they are not qualified for higher level jobs. And so on.

According to Davis and Sumara (2000), the term complicated refers to a theoretical base that “aims to reduce phenomenon to elemental components, root causes, and fundamental laws. A full understanding of [an issue] would arise from a detailed knowledge of its parts” (p.62). Different from complicated theory, “a complex theory embraces complicated views, but also argues that an understanding of [an issue] demands an attention to the fact that it is embedded in social and natural environments” (p. 62). The authors use an example of clock to make their theories

more clear. To understand a clock, we have to take a look at every single part according to the complicated theory. However, with the complex theory, we also have to focus on the role a clock plays in “social lives and the effects of its use on the natural environment, and so on” (p. 63). Therefore, to understand international students and immigrants, one must not only take a look at the parts of their life: their study, daily life, and communications, etc, but also pay attention to the roles they play in their social and cultural environments.

Scholars such as Kim and Gudykunst (1988) talk about the importance of cross-cultural adaptability in overcoming these difficulties. But an individual's abilities are only part of the equation. Even the most adaptive person cannot change the environment and circumstances around them. For example, job opportunities depend not only on the applicant's abilities and experience, but also on the employer's needs, the community's help and other factors.

International students are both devoted to and often frustrated by the prospect of a future career. Finding a job is hard enough for any new graduate; the situation is even more challenging for those who are job hunting in a new country. First, non-native speaking can pose a serious problem, especially when so many job postings specify excellent English speaking and writing skills. I consider my English excellent for an ESL learner. How do other people judge my English? How do employers compare me with native speakers? Second, international work experiences are not always valued. I have many years of teaching experience in China. Is it considered on a par with local work experience? Third, immigrants may have to come to terms with a change in status—in my case, from being a college teacher to starting over at an entry level in my field. Finally, they may have ways of thinking and methods of working that are different from those around them.

Some people believe that more education can help them improve their competitive abilities and guarantee them decent jobs. According to Troyna (1984) and Blackburn

and Mann (1979), this is simply not true. Their findings suggest that there is no necessary relationship between education and economic advancement. “Troyna found that race and social networks, rather than educational accomplishment by itself, were linked with employment prospects” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 326).

In other words, the relationship between education and career is not a single track movement, as shown in Figure 2.

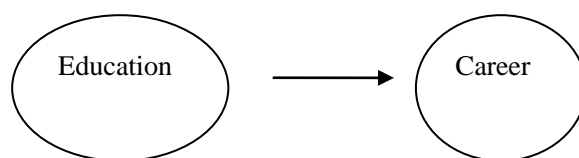


Figure 2

A single-track notion of education and career

Instead, their relationship is an interaction of complex unities, as shown in Figure 3. Education, career, and other factors that influence career all interact in a circle-like flow—an open, “dissipative structure” (Capra, 1996, p. 168) that allows energy and matter to circulate and interact. Inspired by Davis (2006)’s work, “the unities are composed not just of smaller components (circles), but also by the relationships among those components (arrows)” (p.6). Meanwhile, the unities are also influenced by the unities in “a larger scale complex system” (Mamurtry, 2008, p. 269), for example, the social and cultural environment. The lines of both circles and arrows are not solid because there is no solid boundary according to the emergence of living systems.

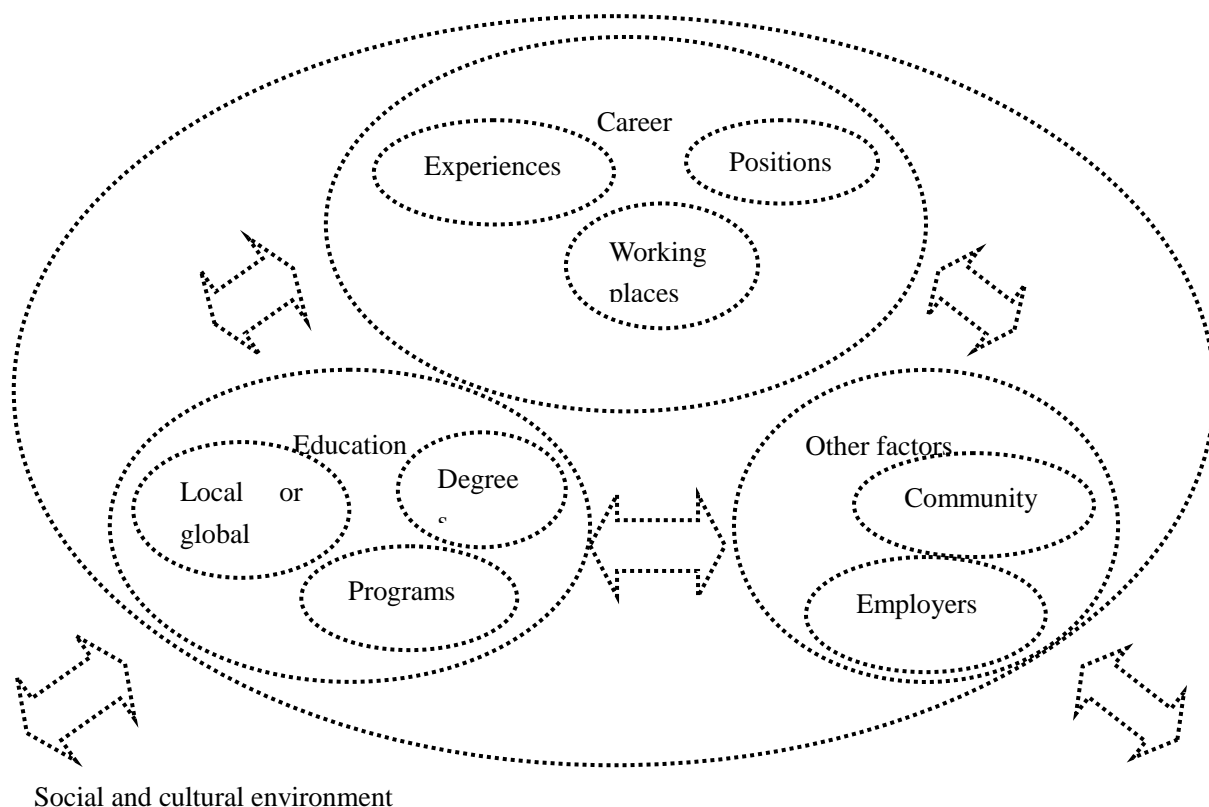


Figure 3

The complex relationship of education and career

Unfortunately, the misguided belief that academic achievement equals economic achievement continues to be “implicit in all models of multicultural education” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 325). As an industry, schools encourage students to take more education, for the individuals’ and the schools’ betterment. I do not deny the important role of academic education or of a multicultural curriculum. As McCarthy (1993) says, “a reformist multicultural curriculum can boost the school success and economic futures of minority youth” (p. 242). However, I believe that schools must offer a broader vision for multicultural education. The curriculum should be based on more than simply the promise that being better educated than local people will make international students more employable. Multicultural education should help students understand complexity itself.

We live in a world of complexity when we cross cultures, when we study abroad and

look for jobs. Complexity exists in every aspect of our lives. Many people see complexity as a problem, not a solution. As humans, we like to plan and organize, and we expect things to go our way. We think (or hope) that we have the power to make things organized and logical. Our ideal solution is to *control*. I propose that in a world of complexity, the answer is not to control but to engage: to be interested in and participate in things. Engaging with complexity means not only thinking with complexity but also living with it in an active manner. This understanding can be applied to multicultural curriculum in a number of ways.

- Complexity is more than ‘complicated’ and “more than simply the coming together of multiple entities or aspects” (James, 2007, retrieved from [http://journal .media -clture.org.au/0706/07-james.php](http://journal.media-clture.org.au/0706/07-james.php)).
- Therefore, adding up is a misinterpretation. In multicultural curriculum, more is not necessarily better. More educators and more activities from different cultures are not equal to more multicultural.
- “Complexity breaks down any connection between cause and effect” (Urry, 2005, p. 237). There is no direct track between cause and effect but a dynamic frame, like that shown in Figure 3. In our curriculum, how can we illustrate “a disjuncture between cause and effect” (James, 2007, retrieved from <http://journal .media -clture.org.au/0706/07-james.php>)—for example, a disjuncture between academic achievement and career development?
- According to Urry (2005), complexity tells us of the unknowability of things. Like Dwyer and Limb (2001) mentions, “Things are not easily analyzed, not simply quantifiable or knowable” (p. 18). From this perspective, even well planned curriculum is not complete but an ongoing work.

These are just examples of the ways in which we can begin to engage with complexity. According to James (2007), engagement with complexity theories cannot only “illustrate the already present” but also “open a space for wonder, for possibility, and for change” (Retrieved from [http://journal .media – clture.org.au/0706/07-james](http://journal .media - clture.org.au/0706/07-james)

.php). It is time to see multicultural education in this light, as full of never-ending questions and wonders, numerous possibilities and change.

Back to my story, I realize that by living in Canada my life is not becoming any simpler, but in fact, perhaps more complex. Will there come a day when I no longer have to search and explore? I don't know. In the meantime, it is a *good* thing that I have this wonder, that I am open to the possibilities and to change and to a different bowl of fried rice every day.

Chapter 7
Combine East and West

Spring Rolls



(Nie, 2008)

Ingredients:

Spring roll or egg roll wraps: 12 pieces
Jam (Strawberry, raspberry, etc): 250g
Butter: 1/2 cup
White sugar: 2 tsp
Vegetable Oil: 1/4 cup

Directions:

1. Mix jam, butter and sugar.
2. Place 2 tablespoons of filling on each wrap.
3. Fold the wrap and roll the package up to enclose the filling securely.
4. Paint the vegetable oil on the spring rolls.
5. Put them into the oven and bake at 500 degree for 5 minutes.
6. Turn them around and bake them for another 5 minutes.

March, 04, 2008

Good news! I got a job as a guest speaker in a high school. I gave a presentation on spring rolls and their traditional role in the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year). I was so happy to demonstrate how to make spring rolls and to share my roots. The students seemed to truly enjoy not only making and eating food from China but also learning about Chinese culture.

And yet I did something a little different with my spring rolls: I used jams as fillings. Since I came here, I have become a creative cook. I think a lot about how to combine Chinese food and Western food. I love to create new tastes with the common materials Canadian people use.

According to Anderson (2005), “humans have a genuine biological need to feel in some control of their situation” (p. 66). This control is part of what allows them to feel “safe and secure” in the sense of both physical safety and of feeling “accepted, approved and socially grounded” (p. 66). Immigrants often struggle to feel safe and secure because they lack a sense of control over the many changes in their lives. Food, however, can offer this control. As Anderson points out, “Food is conspicuously important in demonstrating both types of security”. Guest people not only have a clear understanding of what foods and cooking methods they like but also are considered by other people to be authorities on their particular ethnic food. In China, I would not be considered an expert at making spring rolls, but I became one in those students’ eyes. They believe what I spread is the ONE Chinese culture, just as I might believe a taco to define and be defined as Mexican. It is common for people to understand cultural foods and objects in this way, as standing in for an entire, homogenous culture. I have come to know that the so-called ONE cultural presentation actually is the cultural representation from ONE perspective. The spring rolls I made are the spring rolls from my perspective and my understanding about Chinese food culture. Nonetheless, the students’ trust makes me feel proud and respected. My cultural identity makes me feel respected and gives me the control of being an “expert,” a representative of Chinese culture from my perspective.

When we think about identity, it is hard not to think about cultural identity because we all have our own cultural background. To think about our cultural identity, we try to answer the question of who we are from a cultural point of view.

Cultural identity refers to one’s sense of belonging to a particular culture or ethnic group. People consciously identify themselves with a group that has a shared system of symbols and meanings as well as norms for conduct. Cultural identity is formed in a process that results from membership in a particular culture, and involves learning about and accepting the traditions, heritage, language, religion, ancestry, aesthetics thinking pattern, and social structures of

a culture. That is, people internalize the beliefs, values, and norms of their culture and identify with that culture as part of their self-concept (Yu, 2007, retrieved from <http://english.northeast.cn>).

People naturally identify themselves with their own culture. For both Chinese and Canadians, we naturally agree on addressing ourselves as Easterners and Westerners. “East” and “West” have stronger cultural meanings than geographical ones. Just like Aoki (1996) mentions, “the labels ‘East’ and ‘West’ suggest two distinct cultural wholes, ‘Eastern culture’ and ‘Western culture,’ each identifiable, standing distinctly and separately from each other” (p. 315).

What does this mean for people who cross cultures? How are they identified by themselves and others? Three examples come to my mind. One is Ted Aoki, a Japanese-Canadian curriculum scholar who emphasizes multiculturalism in education. He takes “leadership in the effort to understand curriculum” (Pinar, 2004, p. xv) as a poststructuralist. He says, “In Japan I felt that as a Japanese Canadian, I was both Japanese and non-Japanese. I felt I was both insider and outsider, ‘in’ yet not fully in, ‘out’ yet not fully out” (Aoki, 1979, p. 335). The second is my classmate, Lee. She came to Canada with her parents when she was three. On the one hand, she states she is Chinese and talks about how being Chinese influences her teaching. On the other hand, she has an entirely Canadian lifestyle. To me, she is Canadian, but in my other Canadian classmates’ opinions, she is Chinese. The last example is me. I have a long history in China, but I can only share my past with Chinese people in China. I could share my present and a bit of my future, but they are “irrelevant to their daily existence” (Aoki, 1979, p. 334).

For Ted, Lee and myself, are our cultural identities more complicated or complex? Do we have two cultural identities? Are two cultural identities heavier than one? As the Social Report (2008), an authoritative document that provides “information on the overall social health and well-being of New Zealand society” (Retrieved from

<http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/>) points out, people “may also identify [themselves] with more than one culture” (p. 78). So, if we three identify with two cultures, Japanese/Chinese and Canadian, how can we label ourselves with “East” or “West”? The Social Report also tells us that “identifying with a particular culture makes people feel they belong and gives them a sense of security” (p. 78). Do we feel less belonging and security because of our two cultural identities?

Ted Aoki (1996) explains that he tries to “move always from the identity-centered ‘East and West’ and into the space between East and West” (p. 314). He sees it as an *in-between space*, where ‘identity’ is no mere depiction of the vertical but more so ‘identification,’ a becoming in the space of difference (p. 318). It is “a generative space of possibilities,” a space “wherein the traditions of Western modernist epistemology can meet the Eastern traditions of wisdom” (p. 319) and “a space where in tensioned ambiguity newness emerges” (p. 316). Within that space, people like me, Lee and Ted Aoki don’t have to label ourselves with “East” and “West.” We don’t have to jump in and out of East and West perspectives. We don’t have to feel belonging and not belonging. That is the newness: a cultural identity that is a *combination* of East and West. We can finally make sense of the location of our cultural identity, arising in between East and West.

I am not becoming a Canadian. In fact, I am being a Chinese in Canada. I recognized and got accustomed to this identity gradually. Chinese in Canada are different from both sides, the Chinese people in China and the majority people in Canada, in many aspects such as food preference, living habits, perspectives and beliefs. We don’t have to feel confused or hold any negative feelings. We are just in a unique group, where we belong and we (should) find our sense of belonging.

As a curricular thinker, of course, I automatically tie this realization to questions of curriculum. Does our curriculum give enough attention to this issue of cultural identity and to this particular group? Is our curriculum helping the students in this

group find a feeling of belonging? Also, does our curriculum centralize or decentralize cultural identities in the context of East and West?

Complexity theorists pay great attention to the notion of decentralized control. They define this as “changing the classroom dynamic from one in which the teacher manages information and students in a ‘top-down’ manner, to one in which the teacher and students participate together...in the emergence of powerful, collective learning experiences that cannot be precisely controlled or predicted” (Mcmurtry, 2008, p. 277). We hear “East and West,” “Eastern countries and Western countries,” “Easterner and Westerner” a lot in school and out of school. I wonder, in terms of cultural identities, whether our students have choices, or must accept a common definition about East and West, which teachers give out. I work with children in Grade One. In their classroom, there is a puzzle of the world map. The countries are categorized by colours according to the continents. Adults would probably take advantage of the colours to sort the pieces. To my surprise, I have found that my students do not. They categorize the pieces in their own ways. Some pieces may have similar shapes. Some pieces may have similar names. Some pieces may interest them in a similar way. They try pieces in a wrong continent for minutes but enjoy it so much. I never tell them they should do it by colours for efficiency. They are developing their own geographical and cultural concepts about the world. Shouldn't we let them try?

East and West: they are two directions in geography, nothing more. But we change them, give them deeper meanings, culturally and linguistically. In these two words, we are seeking for our identities and our belonging. We are also continuously seeking for “the meaning of education in an East-West context” (Aoki, 1996, p. 314). It is time to seek the space between East and West. I realize now that it is not the spring rolls that fill me with pride, but the spring roll with jam, a combination of East and West.

Chapter 8
Take advantage of Recursion

Spaghetti



(Nie, 2008)

Ingredients:

Ground beef: 250g
Mushroom: 1/2 cup
Onion: 1 medium
Tomato: 1/2 cup (chopped)
Pasta sauce: 2 cup
Spaghetti: 250g

Directions:

1. Fry the ground beef until cooked.
2. Add in pasta sauce, onion, mushroom and tomato and slowly cook the mix for 20 minutes.
3. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Boil the spaghetti noodles as desired.
5. Serve the spaghetti with the sauce.

April 21, 2008

Tonight's dinner is spaghetti, the meal I feel most proud of. You see, spaghetti is a Western dish, but I make it based on a traditional Chinese concept: balance. There is a balance of Yin and Yang, in this case, of vegetable and meat ingredients. "Yin yang" means the two sides of the mountain, the dark side and the sunny side. It can be understood as two opposite forms of energy. My spaghetti also seeks to balance the five "phases" (or elements): earth, metal, fire, wood and water. For example, the meat could be regarded as the "fire," the tomato as the "water" and the mushroom as the "wood." Chinese people consider this balance of ingredients to be healthy; I also consider it to be delicious.

My special spaghetti is just one example of a thought process that happens whenever I cook. There is always an image of two houses in my mind. One is in China, my homeland. One is in Canada, where I am. I am constantly moving my belongings back and forth. In the same way, I continually bring Chinese culture into my kitchen in Canada. I improve my dishes by relating my Chinese cultural identity to Western food. Meanwhile, I move what I have learned about Western cooking styles to my house in China and apply it to Chinese food. It is the same thing when I think about my teaching and learning. I think about how I can one day apply what I am learning in Canada to my teaching in China if I go back. To me, it is a form of recursion.

Many people know the term recursion as a computer programming technique or a concept in science. It involves “the use of a procedure, subroutine, function, or algorithm that calls itself in a step having a termination condition so that successive repetitions are processed up to the critical step where the condition is met at which time the rest of each repetition is processed from the last one called to the first” (Recursion, 2008, Retrieved from <http://www.sparknotes.com/cs/recursion/whatisrecursion/section1.html>).

Actually, recursion is a dynamic and complex way to think. As Doll (1993) points out, recursion is “the capacity of having thoughts loop back on themselves. Such looping, thoughts on thoughts, distinguishes human consciousness; it is the way we make meaning” (p. 177). Indeed, “conditions, situations, relations (in our world) are always changing, the present does not recreate the past nor does the present determine the future” (p. 179). All the more reason that looping back makes it possible to think about the issue of time in a transformative manner. There are a few key elements of recursion that I would like to explore in relation to my own teaching and learning experience.

Recursion is not repetition. In China, I was a professional teacher for six years. When I moved to Canada, I became a student again. I see this as not a repetition but a recursion. Yes, I now experience the common things that international students experience. But I have also experienced something new: the changing perspective from a teacher to a student. I do not regard myself as only a student. I still observe the classroom from a teacher’s point of view. I learn from each class not only the content that the teacher teaches but also the methods that he or she uses. After the class is over, I continue to think about how I would teach this class or apply the teaching methods in another context—something I never did when I was a student the first time.

Similarly, if I go back to teaching after graduation, I will have a different point of view than when I was teaching in China because my thoughts about teaching and

learning loop back. Going back to being a teacher is not going back to who I was in the past. I will never be the same teacher. My view will never be the same. So being a student again is not a repetition, and neither is going back to being a teacher. Just like Doll (1993) says, "Recursion and repetition differ in that neither one, in any way, reflects the other." Repetition refers to fixed situations and "keeps the same process going," whereas "recursion aims at developing competence—the ability to organize, combine, inquire, use something heuristically" (p. 178). In recursion, situations are never fixed, only similar, and the process is open to reflection. With reflection—"thoughts leap back on themselves" (p. 178), thinking recursively allows us to think not only back-and-forth, but from "a different, qualitative dimension" (p.179) where we make sense of the complexity of time. "Time has no definite beginning or end point" (Oberg, Blades & Thom, 2007, p. 125). The three time periods, past, present and future, are not linear, but are in "nested levels" (Davis & Sumara, 2000, p. 828). Thinking in a recursive manner makes it possible to make sense of how the future influences the present and the present influence the past.

"The new input is the output from the previous level" (Davis & Sumara, 2000, p. 82).

I got a job in a Montessori school after being in Canada for seven months. I work as a teacher's assistant. My job is to watch children play outside, to keep them safe and to make sure they behave. Although I am not in a teacher's position, I still feel happy to work in a school setting. My first day on the job, I was struck by the difference from my previous jobs in China. There I worked with college and high school students; here I work with younger kids in Grades One to Three. There I taught in a classroom; here I supervise on a playground. But soon I started to see some similarities between the two jobs. The essence of education is the same, regardless of the country or the age of students. Education everywhere is about cultivation and students everywhere share some similar features. I notice myself using my experience in China to help me solve similar situations here.

For example, in both contexts, students expect and thrive under positive attention.

Especially when they think they have done something well, they hope to get praised or encouraged. My tutoring students in China showed a great need for the teacher's positive attention when they answered correctly or improved their performance. The situation is the same with the younger children. They expect me to say, "You are doing great. I am so proud of you." This encouragement is important for their growth. When I see these similarities, it is hard for me not to think of my previous experience and use that as the starting point for my responses. Thinking about the past has become natural to me. It is a recursive process of my mind. "A recursive process is a repetitive one in which, at any particular level of computation, the new input is the output from the previous level" (Davis & Sumara, 2000, p. 82). My various teaching experiences are the previous level. They are the input for my work here and they produce the output, my attitudes, reactions and solutions which help me perform better in my current job.

Recursion requires reflection. "In recursion, reflection plays a positive role, for thoughts to leap back on themselves" (Doll, 1993, p. 178). This reflection is not as simple as looking in the mirror. As teachers, we have to process the information through the lens of our social and cultural perspectives and teaching philosophies to produce our reflection. In my case, I have to know how to examine, clarify and select my teaching experiences. I think of it like furnishing a house. I have a house full of furniture in China: great communication skills, rich experience working with students, deep exploration in the education field. How much of this furniture fits the needs of my educational "house" in Canada? How can I choose the most relevant things to bring along to my Canadian house? For example, in China teachers have to maintain a so-called "teacher's manner": strict and serious. Will my students in Canada feel uncomfortable with this? Will my teaching methods for high school students still work for elementary school students?

Recursion is free of time limits. I always think about how I can apply what I learn in Canada to my teaching in China if I go back. There are definitely a lot of great things

I will bring with me if I move back. “Montessori classrooms provide a prepared environment where children are free to respond to their natural drive to work and learn. The children's inherent love of learning is encouraged by giving them opportunities to engage in spontaneous, meaningful activities under the guidance of a trained adult. Through their work, the children develop concentration, motivation, persistence, and discipline. Within this framework of order, the children progress at their own pace and rhythm, according to their individual capabilities, during the crucial years of development” (The Montessori approach, 2009, Retrieved from <http://www.montessori-intl.org/approach.html>).

These ideas can be practiced in China too. My tutoring students were struggling with following teachers' directions all the time. They got stuck with the large amount of homework the school teacher left to them and were not able to think and rethink their study by themselves. They didn't have the opportunity to tell teachers what they would like to do. If I go back to China, I can open a door for these students to learn actively and meet their real learning needs.

Thinking with recursion means not only thinking about how the past (in my case, my experience in China) influences the present (my current study and work in Canada). Recursion is embedded in complexity and is not limited by time. The past, present or future, as a part of time, “is not simply a fragment of the whole, it is a fractal out of which the whole unfolds and in which the whole is enfolded” (Davis & Sumara, 2000, p. 828). Thus the past, present and future all influence each other in endless, looping configurations. To reflect and understand things with a recursive view in any of the three time periods, we have to “look across such nested levels” (p. 828). For example, our previous experience influences our current practice. Our current practice makes us rethink the things we did before and gain a new understanding of these actions. Our present experience simultaneously helps us think about and plan the future. Most interesting of all, the future can even affect our perspectives on the past because the future may be closely relevant and similar to the past. In a sense, the future could be a

new past and the past could be a new future.

Recursion turns the past into the future. People often think about going back to the past, although they know it is not possible. When I feel frustrated with some situations here, such as language, losing "power" in my work or getting lost in cultural diversity, the first thing that comes to my mind is going back to China. I keep thinking how wonderful it would be if I went back. I could be happy to be around my tutoring students. I could be happy to regain that power to administrate other students and teachers. However, going back is just a dream. Even if I go back, I will never go back to the past I have had. Instead, I will start a new life in China with a new perspective. In that case, my past will become my future: "There is no fixed beginning or ending. Every ending is a new beginning. Every beginning emerges from a prior ending" (Doll, 1993, p. 178).

I don't see recursion only as a changing process. Of course there is change in the recursive process, but there is also something that remains. I came here to explore a new life. I changed many things in my life such as the language I speak, my eating habits and my jobs, but I know there is one thing that will never change: my enthusiasm towards teaching. No matter which environment I am in, I know I am trying very hard to work in education, to be a teacher, professional and real, like I was before. From that sense, my past will become my future.

Recursion is "the way one produces a sense of self" (Doll, 1993, p. 178). It is interesting that people will think more about their home when they are abroad than when they were at home. I am an example. I often compare Chinese and Canadian education. It is different but it has some similarities. People in China have a solid assumption that Western is better or Western is more advanced. I am changing my ideas about this since I came here. Both systems have their own features and identities. There is no good or bad, and right or wrong between them.

I think about the impression Chinese education leaves on the rest of the world: Strict? Stiff? Teacher-centered? Top down? Even scary? Are these descriptions the true features of Chinese education? What does Chinese education bring to the world? Do other countries misunderstand Chinese education? Chinese education collaborates with the global education system too. It brings a unique perspective to the world. For Western people, it is different and even remote. But for Chinese people, maybe it is familiar, relevant and respected. In both cultures, Chinese and Canadian, it is important to think recursively, to question our assumptions and build our knowledge of other cultural perspectives. By doing this, we can develop a deeper understanding of our own education systems and identities, past, present and future. For as Doll (1993) says, recursion "is also the way one produces a sense of self, through reflective interaction with the environment, with others, with a culture" (p. 178)

My personal life experience and the recursive movement of my mind contribute a lot to my teaching. As Clandinin (1985) says, "An individual's life is seen as a central construct for understanding teacher's knowledge" (p. 363). The whole reason I am writing about my stories is to create a space to reflect and to invite the response of others, for "[i]n recursion it is a necessity to have others – peer, teachers – look at, critique, respond to what one has done" (Doll, 1993, p. 178). I am hoping my teacher colleagues in China and in Canada can take the time to reflect as well, both on my stories and on their own.

Whether as a cook, a teacher or a student, I cannot think without a recursive view. There is always an image in my mind: two houses. One is in China, my homeland. One is in Canada, where I am. I am constantly moving my "stuff" back and forth; there is never the same stuff left in the two houses. This metaphor is quite important for my teaching. Although I would like to settle down, I realize I will have my two houses forever and I will always be a mover, moving back to my past and finding my future.

Chapter 9
Dwell in Curriculum-as-live(d)

Chocolate bar



(2008, Retrieved from <http://z.about.com/d/homecooking/1/0/M/C/1/blcookie118.jpg>)

Ingredients:

All-purpose flour: 2 cups
White Sugar: 1 cup
Cocoa: 1/2 cup
Baking soda: 1 tsp
Brown Sugar: 1 cup
Salt: 1/2 tsp
Margarine: 1 cup
Eggs: 2
Vanilla: 2 tsp
Chocolate chips and peanuts mix: 1/2 cup

Directions:

1. Mix flour, sugar, cocoa, baking soda, and salt in a mixer bowl.
2. Add margarine, eggs, vanilla and water, and mix to blend well.
3. Spread batter evenly in a baking pan that has been greased with margarine.
4. Bake at 325°F for 20 to 25 minutes
5. Place on chocolate chips and peanuts evenly over the top of the hot bars. Cool until chocolate hardened.

May 05, 2008

“Miss Nie, if I finish cleaning my table first, will you buy me a chocolate bar?”

I am a little surprised to hear this question from a student at the Montessori school where I work. In China, children normally don't ask their teachers to buy them prizes. Should I agree to this reward? Is chocolate a proper motivator? If I do it once, will they ask me again and again? Once I stop, will the students be less motivated than before? Finally, I announce my decision: “If you guys do a great job, clean your tables spotless and be quiet the whole time, tomorrow you will get a chocolate bar as a prize. The first one who finishes the job nicely will get a bigger one.”

The class is not quiet, as I expected. Many questions, discussions and comments follow.

“What kind of chocolate bars?”

“Sally shouldn't get one because she is not quiet.”

“I don't like chocolate bars. Can I give mine to Eve?”

I smile to myself... a pedagogical moment.

I am in a tricky position in the Montessori school where I work. I am a supervisor, not a teacher. I watch the children have lunch and play on the playground; according to most people, I do not *teach* them anything. In the children's eyes, however, I am the same as a teacher. They call me the same title as they call their classroom teachers. I believe that what I do is a form of teaching, even if it is not in an official sense. There are pedagogical moments in my interactions with the students every day. I communicate with them deeply, transmitting problem-solving skills, communication skills, and even cultural knowledge. For example, introducing Chinese eating habits and teaching students how to use chopsticks is an educational activity. I act as a role-model with my behaviour and morality. I organize outdoor activities and games that allow students to learn from their play and interplay with teachers and other students. To see the pedagogical value of the work I do means realizing that teaching and learning are not limited to the classroom; they can happen anywhere.

Many people see curriculum and education from a very technical view, as a world of guidelines, documents and planned activities. The responsibility of curriculum planners is to tell teachers how to teach; the responsibility of teachers is to follow these plans. Aoki (1986/1991) defines this conventional understanding as “curriculum-as-plan...understood as mandated school subjects like mathematics, social studies, science, and so on. In British Columbia, teachers know curriculum-as-plan as IRPs (Integrated Resource Packages), prescribed for implementation. So framed, teaching becomes linearized as instruction, and assessment becomes measuring of learnings with standards set in the prescription” (Aoki, 2000, p. 322). In contrast, he identifies another understanding of curriculum: curriculum-as-live(d). He describes this as “the curriculum experienced by students and teachers as they live through school life. Much of this curriculum is unplanned and unplannable...” (p. 322).

My own curriculum-as-live(d) experience has helped me to see and question many assumptions about education. In doing so, I am better able to see pedagogy as “the

vibrant space in the fold between curriculum-as-plan and live(d) curricula, at times a site of both difficulty and ambiguity and also a site of generative possibilities and hope” (Aoki, 2000, p. 322).

Assumption 1: Teaching and learning happen only in the classroom.

Believe it or not, my students gain rich knowledge from their experience playing on the playground, without any instruction at all. They build physical skills by running, skipping rope and playing tag. They learn social skills from sharing spaces and toys in the sandbox and taking turnings on the slide. They learn problem-solving abilities from making teams for soccer and stopping arguments. They make friends by asking others to play with them and telling stories to each other. They improve their creativity by planning and organizing their own games. They learn rules and discipline from following my directions. They also learn Chinese language and culture from conversations with me. This type of learning is essential for children’s growth. It is an important supplement to their classroom learning.

I also learn a lot from this “simple” job of looking after children. I learn to plan and organize educational activities that are suitable for the students’ age group and interests. I get to know young children by having conversations with them. I develop new skills by developing their skills. These are things I never learned from universities and textbooks.

In this curriculum-as-live(d) situation, teaching and learning happen naturally, with no one in a dominant role. When pedagogical moments arise, I contribute my knowledge and suggestions. For example, when the students have a problem sharing toys, they take my suggestions and negotiate with their methods. When I use improper English sentence structures or mispronounce words, they try to understand and correct me. We collaborate in the process of collective learning. The learning contains rich content such as social studies, cultural studies, language and literature—subjects that are highly valued in formal curriculum. However, my students and I never plan or predict

this learning ahead of time. We experience and collaborate on the teaching and learning together, in the moment.

Assumption 2: Post-secondary education has little connection to early childhood education.

I used to think it would be frustrating to work with young children. After all, they fight and cry and do not understand adult language. I could never talk to them as friends, like I did with my college students. Early childhood education seemed not for me.

My perspective has changed since I started to actually work with young children. It turns out that children are better communicators than I expected. They understand me not only with language but with actions and expressions. I do not have to change my language to theirs. In fact, speaking seriously and telling them the reason why we do things is more helpful. When we communicate, we build a relationship based on trust, common understanding and the needs of both sides.

According to many early childhood education philosophies, my experience makes perfect sense. The Reggio Emilia Approach argues that adults should communicate sincerely and seriously so that children learn “a sense of what adults care about” (Katz, 1993, p. 30). Teachers should “collaborate and be equally involved with children on their project work” (p. 28) and “treat children’s work seriously” (p. 25), as they would an adult’s work. When I look at both the Reggio Emilia Approach and the Montessori philosophy, I find many ideas that can be applied to all learners, not just young children:

- teacher-learner relationships based on trust, common understanding and the needs of both sides
- collaborative learning and teaching
- “teaching based on observation ” (Gordon, 1999, p. 19)
- “practical life experiences” (p. 10)

- “self-correcting and sequential materials” (p. 19)
- “the environment as the ‘third teacher’”

(Reggio Emilia Approach, 2009, Retrieved from

<http://www.brainy-child.com/article/reggioemilia.html>)

These principles are applicable to curriculum at any level. In many ways, early childhood education has a close connection with—and many ideas to offer—post-secondary education.

Assumption 3: Multicultural education benefits only the minorities.

Many people believe that “multicultural education is only relevant in classes with students who are members of the cultural or racial groups to be studied” (Gomez, 1991, retrieved from <http://ericdigests.org/1992-5/perspective.htm>). It is interesting that activities for international students, such as international pot-lucks or Chinese New Year celebrations, are rarely attended by members of the majority culture. Indeed, international students have little expectation that the majority people will come. They get used to making *international* friends. In the same sense, we get used to the idea of multicultural education benefiting only minorities. How can we get past this misconception to recognize the equally important advantages brought to the majorities and the entire community? Schools create those opportunities for making connections between the two groups; why do people, both majorities and minorities, just let them go?

An important way to bridge this gap is through the notion of curriculum-as-live(d). According to Dimidjian (1989), “the purpose of multicultural curriculum is to attach positive feelings to multicultural experiences so that each child will feel included and valued, and will feel friendly and respectful toward people from other ethnic and cultural groups”(p. 72). In my experience, this often happens more easily *outside* of the classroom. For instance, I have seen some ESL students who were not paid attention by their peers in class, but when these students shared stories after class

about missing their families, their peers showed great curiosity and emotional support. Students' multicultural experiences out of the classroom can be a necessary supplement for students to develop multicultural perspectives. In this sense, curriculum-as-live(d) is an essential approach to deeper and more humane multicultural education.

Education is about pushing the limits of our thinking. Chocolate bars are a snack loved by kids but they are not only a kid's snack; adults also enjoy them. I am a playground supervisor but I am not only a playground supervisor; I am also a teacher and a learner. Curriculum is planned documents but it is not only planned documents; it is also lived experiences that encourage teachers and students to explore their school life and be open to more choices. As Aoki (1986/1991) states, "curriculum planning should have as its central interest, a way of contributing to the aliveness of school life as lived by teachers and students" (p. 165). Dwelling in curriculum-as-live(d) creates more creative and effective pedagogical approaches. It offers the chance for broader, deeper and more humane multicultural perspectives. It also provides unbiased community-based multicultural education. And especially, it allows for "a playful singing in the midst of life" (Pinar, 2004, p. 46) for both minority and majority groups.

Chapter 10
Develop Network Power

Smoked salmon steak



(2009, Retrieved from http://msnbcmedia2.msn.com/j/msnbc/Components/Photos/061231/061231_salmon_hmed_1p.widec.jpg)

Ingredients:

Salmon fillets: 2
Lemon juice: 1 cup
Thyme leaves: 1 tsp
Black pepper: 1 tsp
Salt: 4 tsp
Sea salt: 1 tsp
Olive oil: 2 tsp
Lime: 1

Directions:

1. Place the salmon fillets in salt water (2 cups) for 20 minutes and then air dry for 2 hours.
2. Place it on an electric smoker at 200°F for 10 minutes.
3. Take it out and rub the lemon juice, thyme leaves, sea salt and pepper, and olive oil on it.
4. Place it back in the electric smoker at 140°F until cooked.

June 30, 2008

When I ask Canadian people what local products I should buy as gifts for my friends and family in China, 8 out of 10 will say smoked salmon. Smoked salmon steak is not an everyday food. It is an up-scale gift or an elegant and expensive dish in fancy Canadian restaurants. In the world of food, it is a symbol of power.

There are three key elements of power, as I understand it: control, authority and change. First, power means control. It is broadly defined as “the possession of controlling influence” (Power, 2009, Retrieved from <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=power>). Second, power requires authority. Having authority makes people feel more important in social and work situations. Third, power involves "the capacity to bring about change," regardless of what the change is or how exactly it is brought about (Retrieved from http://www.beyondintractability.org/user_guides/thirdside/equalizerswhat-is-power.jsp).

The desire for power comes from a human instinct, a biological need to feel control. People want to survive, live a predictable life and achieve their goals. They believe that power is the way to make these things happen. In an educational context, power is a pervasive and contentious issue. I could list many examples from my own experience.

Situation 1: I strive to create a pleasant, friendly environment for the children I work with, talking to them like friends. Soon, the students ignore my directions and start to do whatever they want. I try to persuade them with kind words to improve their behaviour, but they do not listen to me. Eventually I go back to a traditional “teacher’s manner.” Speaking seriously and strictly, I tell them that they have to be quiet; otherwise I will send them to the principal. I find that the problem suddenly becomes resolved.

Situation 2: In the students’ classroom, there is a couch. Some students ask me if they can sit on the couch after lunch. I let them. The next day I am told by another student that I can’t give them permission to sit on the couch; only their classroom teacher has that power.

Situation 3: In a group discussion with other graduate students, I am participating

with smiles, nods and quiet listening but not with words. Sometimes I can't follow up because my peers speak too quickly or their language is too complex. I didn't act as a "listener" in my social life in China; I always contributed my ideas. Finally I talk about something that I assume fits into the topic and makes sense, but people respond simply with "That's interesting" and then quickly return to their own thoughts. I feel no control of the conversation. I might as well not be in the group at all.

Crossing cultures can lead to a loss of power—or a *feeling* of losing power. I wonder why I felt that I had power in my original culture and how the two cultural environments are different. In China, teaching is a respected position with a high social status. My students listened and followed instructions better because they are less critical of teachers' instructions. Other Chinese people appreciated my ideas as an intellectual. They also understood my ideas more clearly because of our common culture, and knowing this, I felt decisive and confident in voicing my thoughts.

I keep thinking, if I do not have the power in the classroom where I work, who has it then? The school principal? The classroom teacher? Even if they are not present? If I feel like I am losing power in this diverse cultural environment, but who I am losing it to? The people in the majority culture? My experiences are typical of the complexity of these issues. It is time for us to think deeply about questions of power in the context of multicultural education. How do we view power- as something negative or something positive? What experiences do we have with power? What is the relationship between complexity and power?

One hundred years ago, teachers had the power to decide what and how students learned because the resources of knowledge were limited only to school education. Today, in the Information Age, teachers are forced to share this power with the Internet, with social and communication media, and with the vast resources for information and knowledge that exist around us. Students now have greater access to knowledge than teachers. Students' self-learning and the collaboration between

teachers and students have become not only possible but highly promoted. As Davis (2006) explains, “learning is understood more in terms of ongoing renegotiations of the perceived boundary between personal knowing and collective knowledge” (p. 27). This decentralization of knowledge—and power—is a key element of education reform in recent years.

Decentralizing power in schools can be understood through the notion of *network power*. From complexity thinking, we know that everything is interconnected and lies in a *connectionist network*. “Connectionist networks are self-organizing systems capable of adapting to environmental stress or change and evolving to greater levels of performance without central guidance.” (Booher & Innes, 2002, p. 225). According to Booher and Innes (2002), network power “emerges as diverse participants in a network focus on a common task and develop shared meanings and common heuristics that guide their action.” It “emerges from communication and collaboration among individuals” (p. 225), groups, and communities in a society. From this point of view, schools can be seen as connectionist networks, with administrators, teachers, students, parents and different department in school acting at different levels. Each level produces different values, perspectives and experiences. These levels are interrelated and interdependent. From this sense, we cannot say which group is at the top or at the bottom. Teachers have to understand students’ needs; administrators have to listen to parents’ feedback and suggestions; and so on. Decisions do not always come from administrators or teachers; the power goes not from the top-down but back and forth in a network. The levels share various goals in this system, creating a great learning environment and gaining excellent learning outcomes. As they collaborate on these goals, the network of power emerges.

In the complexitist opinion, power is “a dynamic, contestable relation – rather than a thing” (Mcmurtry, 2008, p. 277). In contrast to individual power, the key concepts of network power are *diversity* and *interdependence*, *dialogue*, *collaboration*,

cooperation and shared meanings and shared heuristics and norms as shown in Figure 4 *network power model*. (Booher & Innes, 2002, p. 232).

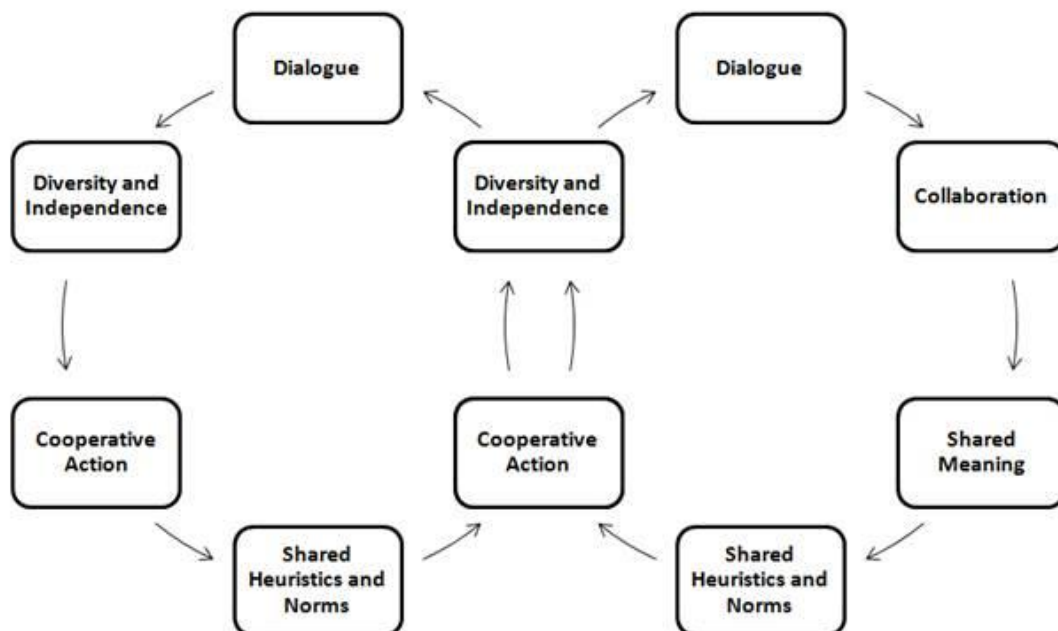


Figure 4

Network power model (Booher & Innes, 2002, p. 232)

Network power requires decentralized control from one level to all the levels. Sharing power is an approach to transfer intrinsic values to all the levels. It provides more motivation. Students will gain more opportunities to achieve *self-actualization* (Maslow, 1943) by feeling more control of their own learning. Teachers can choose more creative and flexible methods for their teaching. School principals will have more resources to develop their schools.

If these are the benefits of network power, is individual power the opposite? Should individual power be taken over? Although it is tempting to think of individual power as “bad,” it is not a case of “good vs. bad” or even “better vs. worse.” Even if we wanted to, eliminating individual power would be impossible. The two types of power will always co-exist. We can’t imagine a school without a principal or a team without

a team leader. Proper administration and centralized power have to balance with decentralized network power.

This balance of power is significant to multicultural education. For the emergence of network power, we must include “diversity of values, resources, experience, and information” (Booher & Innes, 2002, p. 226). This means giving power to *all* students, including minorities. Minorities as a group have unique and diverse values, perspectives and resources that can offer a great deal to the network. For example, in a group discussion, the perspectives from international students contribute to the final outcomes. Their perspective can also be a central topic. Not giving them opportunities to share their opinions or paying attention to their ideas could push those international students to a social margin. Like Edgerton (1993a) points out, “marginality is created by centrality (and vice-versa). Others so marginalized may internalize their social invisibility, may suppress their interior life, indeed their humanity” and become like Ellison’s *Invisible Man*: “You’re hidden right out in the open... They wouldn’t see you because they don’t expect you to know anything, since they believe they’ve taken care of that” (quoted in Edgerton, 1993a, p. 64).

Being a minority should never mean being invisible, a person who is scared to speak his or her opinions in a group discussion, who always follows and is afraid to make decisions, who can eat salmon steak only when it is a gift from someone else rather than buying it for himself. Being a member of the majority should not mean getting used to a minority member listening to you quietly. Sharing authority and perspectives in project work benefits everyone involved. As educators, our responsibility is to “both affirm diversity and find ways to articulate shared goals and values” (Stevens, 2002, quoted in Guo, 2007, p. 21). Network power, as a way to share goals and values, powers up multicultural education for both majorities and minorities.

“The word *power* is almost taboo in some curricula” (Booher and Innes, 2002, p. 232). I barely see the power issue mentioned in curriculum documents. Power is nowhere

yet it is everywhere. How can we as curricular scholars avoid such a serious ongoing issue? Why don't we face it and take advantage of it? In this "informational, networked age, when the effective processes are collaborative rather than hierarchical" (Booher and Innes, 2002, p. 232), why don't we make the effort to develop an improved understanding of the complexity of power and leadership?

In ancient Chinese, the character power "權" means measuring the weight of gold on a balance scale. The character also conveys an idea of balance. It is composed of woods, grass (representing earth), two mouths (representing communication), persons, and animals. It suggests that power originates not only from humans, but from the communication, collaboration, and interaction of various elements in nature and the world around us. To measure gold, one could put the wood, dirt, or animals on the other side of the scale. Inspired by Chinese traditional philosophies, I imagine the network power in an educational system should be a balance between not only people (teachers, students, administrators, and parents, or majorities and minorities), but also other elements, such as culture. Surprisingly western complexity theorist Capra(1996)'s ideas on ecology move in a similar way to this Chinese traditional philosophy. Capra states that "deep ecological awareness recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical processes of nature" (p.6). Based on these two relevant philosophies, I would argue that to develop a more natural and harmonious educational ecology requires recognizing all of the embedded elements, including minorities, minority cultures, and without a doubt, this ecological character of power as well.

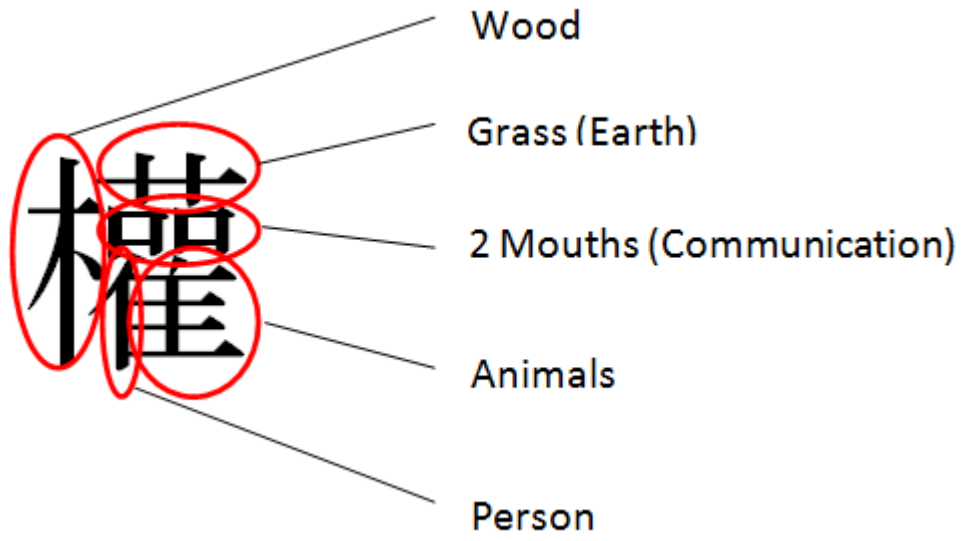


Figure 5
Chinese character of “power”

Chapter 11
Mix Theory and Practice

Lemonade



(2009, Retrieved from http://blogs.phillyburbs.com/news/bct/wp-content/blogs.dir/3/files/2008/07/wk_of_07.13/Lemonade.jpg)

Ingredients:

White sugar: ½ cup
Cold water: 4 cups
Lemon juice: 1 cup
Lemon: 2 slice
Ice cubes: 5

Directions:

In a large pitcher, combine lemon juice and sugar. Add water, lemon slices, and ice cubes; stir until well blended. Serve in tall glasses over ice.

June, 24, 2008

Summer is a great season in Victoria—warm, sunny and lovely. People lie on the beach, enjoying the sunshine. I can't join them because I am taking two summer courses. My study is very intense. Readings, papers, presentations and group discussions take up my life.

Lemonade is a break from academic work. This cool and juicy drink not only cools me down from the hot weather but also refreshes my thinking after profound readings. While I am enjoying my tasty drink, I ponder an interesting paradox: lemons are high in sugar, yet they taste extremely sour. In fact, one pound of lemons has more sugar than a pound of strawberries. If sweet and sour are opposite flavours, how can one be a component in the other? It seems I didn't take a break from academic work after all: I am still drawn into critical thinking.

In this chapter, I would like to explore some questions about the relationship between theory and practice. I have grappled with these questions and confusions in my study and work for a long time. Deep thinking about this relationship helps me not only address who I am and what I do but also helps me to understand curriculum in both an academic and a practical context.

Academic and/or practical? Where do I fit between these two words? (Or should I say, two worlds?) As a graduate student who studies curriculum, I am a curriculum scholar. I read academic texts, learn curriculum theories, discuss these theories with my colleagues and write academic papers. In most people's opinions, I am in an academic world.

Outside of university, though, the biggest part of my life is being a caregiver. I cook and babysit for the family I live with. I look after the children at the Montessori school. This kind of life has nothing to do with curriculum books or academic papers. People may think of this as a practical life.

My life is both academic and practical. How do people describe me with these two words? How do people address me in these two worlds?

Theory and/or practice? There is a common notion that I have learned from my education: *theory guides practice*. It is also the way my learning and teaching has gone. When I was in high school mathematics, the teacher introduced a theory and then students practiced it by answering questions and solving problems. We proceeded to learn the theory at an advanced level, and then we practiced some more. When I was in university, I took courses and learned teaching theories, and then I did a practicum to gain practical experience. After that I took advanced courses, and then did an advanced practicum. When I became a teacher, I used theory to plan a class ahead, and then I worked through my plan: instruction, homework, and exam. And then I planned the next class...

I repeat this pattern mechanically: learn from theory and apply theory into practice. My thinking becomes structuralized by this notion. Am I the only one like this? Can theory and practice be separated? Are theoretical perspectives and practical perspectives distinctively constructed?

Theory → Academic and/or Practice → Practical? Where do people learn theories? In the academic world of schools and universities? Where do people practice? In a practical world? What are the differences between theory and practice and between academic and practical? I have witnessed a common scenario: teachers learn a new and modern educational theory. They feel excited and ready for change. They go back to their classrooms. They quickly fall back to their everyday routine. Things do not change much. Think of the schools that promote healthy eating habits but continue to have a baking club for students, with recipes still containing two cups of sugar. Think of the schools that promote environmental education but students continue to dry their hands with a foot of paper towel. Think of how teachers know that multicultural education requires intercultural communication and yet the international high school students continue to make friends with other international students. If people understand it theoretically, why do they not do it in practice? I wonder, are theory and practice two words or two worlds?

Thinker and/or doer? I hear classroom teachers complain that scholars can not possibly understand the real situations in schools. Theories are generalized notions. They are teachable, but there are many exceptions in practice. The situations are never ideal. Ideally we would like to promote multiculturalism with diverse food, but in reality many students won't try foods they are not familiar with. Ideally we want majority students and minority students to communicate frequently, but in reality they prefer to talk with their friends in their own groups. Theorists can come up with a lot of great thinking, but not all thinking is doable. Are there two groups of people in education, thinkers and doers?

Theory and practice and/or practice and theory? When I search online, even when I try to put practice ahead of theory, I still get the same results: “theory and practice,” and “from theory to practice” and so on. When I read books on multicultural education, I find the same thing every time: the first chapters must talk about theoretical perspective and rationales before turning to practical strategies. Is there an intrinsic order of theory and then practice? Where does the theory come from?

Construct and/or deconstruct? All of my questions come to this final question. Construction is a core idea of structuralism; deconstruction is subsumed with postmodernism and poststructuralism “as theoretical and cognitive modes consistent with the cultural logic of the postmodern” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 451). These are the two trends in the curriculum field today. “Structuralism has sought to identify ‘the system’ that creates meaning; poststructuralism has sought to repudiate, dismantle, and reveal the variance and contingency of the system” (p. 453). In contrast to structuralism’s attempt to establish reality and find meaning in/by “invariant structures” (p. 457), poststructuralism is “characterized by open systems, indeterminacy, and a focus on process” (p. 499). This offers two possibilities: do we construct a structure for theory and practice? Or do we focus on the dismantlement, the variance and contingency, and the process from which theory and practice emerge?

Practice, as a main and rich source where theory comes from, is an open system. As teachers know, it has many exceptions. These exceptions are the variance and contingency that Pinar points out. There is no denying that, at this point, there are major gaps between theory and practice. According to Daignault, this gap is occupied by curriculum. Pedagogy “operates in the space between practice and theory, and between what is and what ought to be” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 483). Multicultural curriculum, then, occurs not only in the gap between practice and theory, but also in the gap between two cultures (students’ original culture and Canadian majority culture) and two perspectives (minority perspective and majority

perspective). It has more (and more complex) gaps, and as a result requires more (and more complex) curriculums.

I am still attached to the words: theory as practice, theory in practice, practical theories, etc. These words bring me hope, a hope for new relations between theory and practice and “a new sense of educational order” (Doll, 1993, p. 3). Between the words I am looking for a jointing where theory and practice emerge, and where curriculum happens.

In the poststructuralist view, “the teaching moment seems to take form in the interplay between order and chaos, closure and openness, form and freedom” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995, p. 501). Corresponding to it, the understanding of theory and practice makes sense in the interplay between constructing and deconstructing. With construction, we build theories and make them teachable. With deconstruction, we realize variance. From this perspective, there are many in-between spaces: we do not have to set an extreme dividing line between theory and practice, academic and practical. Here, in the curriculum field, it is possible to be both a thinker and a doer, to bridge the gap between theory and practice. My curriculum cookbook is itself an attempt to bridge this gap from the minority side, using autobiographical stories, personal experiences and perspectives from my practice as a research approach and doorway into curriculum theories. Meanwhile, more and more majorities in the curriculum field make an effort to access cultural diversity. They do not hesitate to include ideas and issues from minority cultures in to their studies. They are not afraid to think out of the box and do their research outside the academic world. For instance, some professors focus their studies on daily conversations between people in different ethnic groups in Canada to help students become aware of the various ways English is spoken. The boundary of theory and practice can be pushed, elaborated, even erased, just like there is not an absolute clear line between majorities and minorities.

I got inspired by the paradox of lemonade. Lemons taste sour but there is sugar in them. In the same way, theory tastes abstract and removed but there is practice in it.

Theory and practice, academic and practical, even construction and deconstruction, are interconnected and can be components of each other. Sweet and sour are two extreme flavors. If you eat a whole lemon or a half cup of sugar, you will make a face; but mix them up and you get lemonade. In an educational sense, that would be the refreshing taste of curriculum, emerging from the mixture of theory and practice. Borrowing Aoki (1996)'s idea on the *space in between*—"a tensioned space of both 'and' and 'not-and'" (p.318), I call it an *in-between taste*: a taste of both conjunction and disjunction of theoretical and practical perspectives. It is a taste that brings great possibilities for both an academic and a practical level.

Chapter 12
A Well-blended Outcome

Tianjin Pancake



(2009, Retrieved from http://yeschinatour.com/static/photologue/photos/cache/tianjin-snacks-04_leading.jpg)

Ingredients:

Eggs: 2
All purpose flour: 50g
Chili sauce: 1tbsp
Black bean sauce: 1 tbsp
Chinese Youtiao: 1-2
Spring onions: 2 tbsp (Chopped)
Sesame seeds: 1tsp
Vegetable oil: 2 tsp

Directions:

1. Mix together flour, one egg and water until well-combined.
2. Heat up a skillet, and brush with a bit of vegetable oil.
3. Scoop 3-4 tablespoons of the mixture over. Tilt the pan with a circular motion.
4. Pour one egg on the pan and sprinkle chopped spring onions and sesame seeds.
5. Cook the batter for 1-2 minutes. Turn and cook the pancake until golden brown. Place it on a serving plate and brush with the sauces.
6. Center one or two Chinese Youtiao and wrap it up.

August 01, 2008

I am on a flight from Vancouver to Beijing. After a year studying in Canada, I finally have a chance to go back to China for summer vacation. I am too excited to sleep, like everyone else on the flight is doing. Many thoughts go through my mind. I remember the girl I was one year ago, first time abroad, full of stress, confusion and dreams; getting off the plane and having a cookie as her first dinner in Canada; suffering from culture shock; always comparing the new culture with her home culture; trying hard to learn and adapt; looking for belonging in a new community...

I think of how many things have happened in just one year. I finished my coursework for my Master's program. I moved out from my homestay family and into my own apartment with my boyfriend, a place where I can finally call home in Canada. I found a job in a Montessori school. My cultural perspective changed. I rethought a lot of assumptions that I used to have before I crossed culture. I learned to communicate with different cultural groups. I have come to understand both cultures more clearly and deeply. My thinking about education and curriculum has broadened and deepened. With all of these changes, have I become a new me?

I think of my family, waiting for me at the airport with my favourite breakfast, Tianjin Pancake. I asked my mom to bring this particular food to the airport so that I could taste it the first moment I came back. I miss it so much. It is unique because it can be found only in Tianjin, my hometown. When people in Canada ask me which part of China I come from, they look confused when I only say "Tianjin." I have to explain that it is a big city close to Beijing, and then, in their eyes, I become a girl from the Beijing area. But I never want my Tianjin identity to disappear. I still speak a pure Tianjin dialect and enjoy all the Tianjin food flavours even though I have lived in Canada for a year. With this strong sense of identity, am I still the past me?

Am I changed or not? Is my life new or not? I wonder if I am the person I am today because of *who* I am, or because of *where* I am and my experiences in this place. Do I develop my own cultural identity, different than either a Chinese one or a Canadian one? Do I “adapt to different [cultural] circumstances without losing [my] own essential sense of self” (O’Neil & Cullingford, 2005, p. 109)? Then, what is “self” to me? My Tianjin identity? My Chinese perspective? Or my Canadian experience? I cannot pick one above the others. During the time of cross culture, these influences mix and become my unique identity. This unique identity is my essential sense of self now. It contains complexity.

Whether I am cooking Eastern or Western food, wontons, spaghetti, fried rice, cookies or lemonade, there is no dish having only one material or only one ingredient. Mixing is a main component of cooking. What will happen if we blend the curriculum recipes? What outcomes we will get?

Both majorities and minorities **learn by experience**. Through cross culture experience in spirit and/or in reality, our thinking is evoked by genuine and authentic experience. We gain new perspectives about other cultures, increase our sensitivity and respect towards minority cultures and races, and challenge assumptions we might make about these cultures.

Choosing to **flow with culture shock** can be a new lifestyle and learning style when people cross culture. Instead of trying so hard to fit into the new culture, imitating the local accent and habits, and getting over culture shock as quickly as possible, we use culture shock to our advantage, to provoke our “cultural learning, self-development and personal growth” (Alder, 1975, p. 14). We take our time to learn the new culture naturally, without being forced or rushed.

Cross-cultural adaptation or intercultural adaptation is a requisite skill for guest people to survive socially and become a part of the new community. However, it is

not a one-way street. Adaptation is “the fit between individuals (guest people) and their environment” (Gudykunst & Hummer, 1988, p. 111) but not the fitting of one into the other. Host people share the multicultural environment with guest people and are influenced by the change of the environment; as a result, they make adaptations too. A community-based curriculum and educational system is required to create *a space in between*, where majority and minority groups alike can make intercultural adaptations harmoniously.

In chapter 4, I mentioned my experience of eating perogies to emphasize the importance of **finding a sense of both the “familiar” and the “similar”** in the time of crossing culture. the “familiar” describes things in the new culture that replicate in some way what students already know from home. The “similar” refers to a close connection and comparison between the two cultures and a way of seeing overlaps. These two senses not only help international students build confidence, comfort and motivation in their study, but also offer a way for teachers to approach those students and create a culturally welcoming classroom environment. It is crucial for both majority and minority groups to discover cultural similarities because “children need to understand that they are unique in themselves but share many similar feelings and concerns with other children” (National council for the Social Studies Task Force on Early Childhood/Elementary Social Studies, 1988, p. 3).

Unlike the strictly Western perogies, wontons with cheese are a real attempt to combine Chinese food with Western food. This combination suggests the idea of **collective learning**. According to Kilgore (1999), “no learning community is free of engagement with individuals and other groups” (p. 200). Majority and minority groups build shared learning through communication, competition and collaboration. The power of this collaboration is far beyond that which any individual or single group can access. Learning collectively benefits both groups.

Fried rice is a symbol of complexity to me. For immigrants and international students,

the world is like a bowl of fried rice: complicated and complex. These groups of people are often devoted to, but frustrated by, the prospect of a future career. Multicultural education must help them understand that the relationship between education and career is not a single track but an interaction of complex unities. Multicultural curriculum must include the understanding of complexity and **engage with complexity**-not only think with it but also live with it in an active manner.

Spring rolls with jam is **a combination of East and West**. People give “east” and “west” deeper meanings culturally and linguistically than simply two directions. In these two words, we are seeking our identities and our belonging and “the meaning of education in an East-West context” (Aoki, 1996, p. 314). It is time to seek, instead, the space *between* East and West—the particular group of people with both Eastern and Western cultural background addresses their cultural identities and finds their feelings of belonging naturally.

Recursion is not only a dynamic and complex way to think about curriculum but also “the way one produces a sense of self” (Doll, 1993). By thinking recursively as educators, we can develop a deeper understanding of our own education systems and identities, past, present and future. Also, we create a space to reflect and to invite the response of other educators, in other cultures and with other perspectives.

Chapter 9 is a reflection on chocolate bars. It is a symbol of pushing the limits of our thinking on curriculum. Chocolate bars are not only a kid’s snack; curriculum is not only planned documents but lived experiences that encourage teachers and students to explore their school life and be open to more choices. Applying **curriculum-as-live(d)** to multicultural education allows for more unbiased, community-based education for both minority and majority groups.

Cross-cultural learners may experience a feeling of losing power. Decentralizing power from an individual level to a network can help students gain a sense of intrinsic

value and feel more control over their own learning. As a way of sharing goals and values among people with diverse culture and race, **network power** contributes to the collaboration of majorities and minorities. The relative balanced power in educational system would be helpful to develop a more natural and harmonious educational ecology.

I got inspired by the paradox of lemonade. It makes me rethink the relationship between theory and practice. Theory tastes abstract and removed but there is practice in it. They are interconnected and can be components of each other. **The mixture of theory and practice** is where curriculum occurs. Multicultural curriculum occurs in a more complex mixture, not only between theory and practice, but also between two cultures and between two perspectives. Both educators from the majority and minority sides in curriculum should balance the two worlds of theory and practice.

After the mixing, what can be characterized as a multicultural curriculum blend? According to Butt (1985a), we may speculate that “it emphasizes experience, critical self reflection, and personal growth through self education. It will emphasize peer learning and cooperation using media that stimulate all the senses, feelings, and emotions” (p. 30). It is anti-biased and anti-stereotyping, avoiding any one-sided view of society. It focuses on building a community with shared perspectives and learning for both majorities and minorities. It promotes understanding the complexity of cultural diversity. It also helps children develop “their thoughts and feelings about ‘self’ and about one’s own and others’ cultures” (Swartz, 1992, p. 85). It encourages children to not only acknowledge and “respect the uniqueness of their own culture,” but also to understand “the idea that there are many lifestyles, languages, cultures, and points of view” and respect and value “the uniqueness of the cultures of others” (Gomez, 1991, retrieved from <http://ericdigests.org/1992-5/perspective.htm>).

Cross cultural and intercultural adaptations emphasizes the concept of “between” and a life in the midst of cultural differences. It is also a process of mixing—mixing the original cultural perspective and the new cultural perspective. How do we achieve this

mixing? Multicultural curriculum becomes the medium. Multicultural curriculum creates a space in between, the space between East and West, the space between majorities and minorities, the space between assumption and experience, the space between similar and different, between individuals and collaborations, between theory and practice, between past, present and future. That is the space where both the minorities and majorities make their intercultural adaptations with a unique sense of self and a full respect for others. That is the “interspace where the otherness of others can not be buried as is done with the imaginary of community as diversity” (Aoki, 1995, p. 308).

The ending of this cookbook is difficult. With complexity theory, “there is no fixed beginning or ending” (Doll, 1993, p. 178), and the same goes for this study. Fortunately, “every ending is a new beginning and every beginning emerges from a prior ending” (p. 178). I hope people read this cookbook journal and realize their responsibilities to think deeply about the question of how we can understand multicultural curriculum so that majority groups and minority groups acknowledge a space of shared responsibility for intercultural adaptation, and so that there are not two sides or positions for people when crossing cultures, but *a space in between* where people dwell together. I encourage everyone to position themselves in the *space in between*. Out of this experience emerges the newness: a new perspective on curriculum and a new, well-blended curriculum recipe, which is not a simple solution but a refreshing new way to think.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Definition of Terms

Collective learning: Collective learning encompasses two key elements: participation and collaboration. According to complexity learning theories, “learning is principally a matter of keeping pace with one’s evolving circumstances. In this sense, learning is more a reaching out than a taking in. It is a participation” (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000, p.78). Meanwhile, “individual knowing, collective knowledge and culture” are interrelated and become “three nested, self-similar levels of one phenomenon” (p. 70). From this perspective, learning is a collaborative event. In my study, collective learning serves as a concept of group learning that emphasizes the relationships and shared meaning of learning groups. Majorities and minorities can be viewed as learning groups.

Complexity theory: Complexity theory is a way of seeing in part, “the nonlinear interconnectedness characteristic of networks” of the world (Capra, 1996, p. 112). First developed as a scientific theory, complexity theory is now applied to “a broad range of phenomena” (Capra, 1996, p. 113) that occurs within “living systems as self-organizing networks” (p. 112). In fields such as the social science and education, complexity theory as a theoretical framework has broad applications: according to scholars in social sciences, it is a “way of seeing the world” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 18).

Curriculum-as-live(d): Aoki (1986/1991) describes a way of understanding curriculum as curriculum-as-live(d). It refers to “the curriculum experienced by students and teachers as they live through school life” (Aoki, 2000, p. 322). Different from “mandated school subjects”, “much of this curriculum is unplanned and unplannable...” (p. 322).

Cross-cultural: The term, cross-cultural is often used interchangeably with

intercultural in many academic works, but there are some distinctions between the two terms in my study. According to Aoki's (1991) idea, cross-culturalism is a concept that takes people to "the crossings over the between" (p. 382). It emphasizes the movement "getting across from one culture to another" (Aoki, 1996, p. 316). There are areas in between two cultures and two cultural perspectives. In my study, cross-cultural experience embraces a strong concept of changing people's traditional cultural perspectives and entering the space in between. It is not only leaving one country and living in a new culture, but also a movement where people get across one culture to the space in between cultures. It is both an intellectual and a physical positioning.

Cross-cultural Adaptation: Cross-cultural adaptation refers to "change in individuals that is stimulated by exposure to foreign cultures" (Owen, 1997, p. 12.). It emphasizes the subject as someone from the outside of a culture.

Cross cultures: In this phrase, cross can be used as a verb. It emphasizes a movement where people not only leave one cultural environment for another but also change their traditional cultural perspectives and enter a space in between two cultural perspectives in their minds. Cross cultures contains a notion of erasing cultural borders or acknowledge a space between borders.

Crossing cultures: In this phrase, crossing can be used as an adjective. It refers to the point where two cultures mix in the minds of people who cross cultures. To gain a deeper understanding of both cultures, Ted Aoki (2004) encourages teachers and students to focus on the crossings between cultures (p. 65).

Culture: According to Guo (2007), "Culture can be defined as a dynamic system of values, beliefs, and behaviors that influence how people experience and respond to the world around them (p. 13).

Cultural diversity: Marshall (2002) defines cultural diversity as “distinctions in the lived experience and the related perceptions of and reactions to those experiences that serve to differentiate the collective populations” (p. 7). For my study, one of the collective populations specifically refers to people who have an original cultural background different from Canadian culture. Compared with ethnic diversity, cultural diversity emphasizes the different cultural background rather than the difference of ethnicity.

Culture shock: Culture shock is a term to describe “the physical and emotional discomfort one suffers” when coming to live in a different cultural environment or “a place different from the place of origin” (Guanipa, 1998, retrieved from [Guanipa,C. http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/cultshok.htm](http://edweb.sdsu.edu/people/CGuanipa/cultshok.htm)).

Intercultural: Interculturalism emphasizes “a lived space of between- in the midst of many cultures” (Aoki, 1991, p. 383). Intercultural experience refers to a living in the midst of cultural differences. It exists not only between countries but also between different ethnic groups in one social and cultural environment. Individuals with more than one cultural background live in the intercultural spaces.

Intercultural adaptation: Intercultural adaptation refers to the change and adjustment that people make in their needs for intercultural communication and interaction. The subjects are not only people from the outside of a culture but also those from the inside.

International students: In this study, this term refers to students over 18 years old from countries outside of Canada, who are not permanent residents of Canada and who grew up in a cultural environment different from Canadian culture.

Majority group/ Majorities/ Host people: Majority group, majorities and host people can be interchanged in this study. These terms refer to the group of people who grew

up in a Canadian cultural environment and identify themselves mainly with a Canadian cultural background.

Minority group/ Minorities /Guest people: Minority group, minorities and guest people can be interchanged in this study. These terms refer to the group of people who come from countries outside of Canada and have an original cultural background different from Canadian culture.

Multiculturalism: According to the American Psychological Association (2002), Multiculturalism refers to “a broad scope of dimensions of race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, class status, education, religious/spiritual orientation and other cultural dimensions, which are critical aspects of an individual’s identity” (p. 3). In my study, multiculturalism narrows down to the dimensions of race, ethnicity, culture and language.

Multicultural education: Multicultural education is an educational system which “is based on the principles of cultural pluralism and on elimination of prejudice and discrimination” (Guo, 2007, p. 21). It focuses on “change at the individual, classroom, and institutional level, and can be achieved by transforming pedagogical practices, reforming the curriculum and encouraging multicultural competence” (Bennett, 2003, quoted in Guo, 2007, p. 21).

Recursion: In mathematics and computer science, the term recursion describes “a process of repeating objects in a self-similar way” (Recursion, 2008, Retrieved from <http://dictionary.babylon.com/recursion>). In other words, this means “a technique describing something partly in terms of itself” (Rohl, 1984, p. 2). Within curriculum studies, Doll (1993) uses this term to refer to “the human capacity of having thoughts loop back on themselves” (p. 177). It is “the way one produces a sense of self, through reflective interaction with the environment, with others, with a culture” (p. 178). Recursion is “a key feature of all non-linear equations” (Doll, 2008, p. 8), in

mathematics and in thought, because “the act of recursion destroys linear cause-effect sequencing” (p. 8). Different from linear recursive thinking, nonlinear recursive thinking is not a simple repeating of thoughts but requires reflections and it is free of time limits.

Appendix 2: Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval



University
of Victoria

Human Research Ethics Board
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University of Victoria
Administrative Services Building B202
Tel 250-472-4545 Fax 250-721-8960
Email ethics@uvic.ca Web www.research.uvic.ca

Human Research Ethics Board Certificate of Approval

<u>Principal Investigator</u>	<u>Department/School</u>	<u>Supervisor</u>	
Ye (Nicole) Nie Master's Student	EDCI	Dr. Wanda Hurren	
<u>Co-Investigator(s):</u>	Nov/09 - Duplicate Certificate issued.		
<u>Project Title:</u> My curriculum Cookbook: an autobiographical study on understanding curriculum from a cross-cultural educator's perspective			
<u>Protocol No.</u>	<u>Approval Date</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Expiry Date</u>
09-056	24-Feb-09	24-Feb-09	23-Feb-10
Certification			
This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Participants.			
<p>This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol. Extensions and/or amendments may be approved with the submission of a "Request for Annual Renewal or Modification" form.</p>			
<p>Dr. Afzal Suleman Associate Vice-President, Research</p>			

09-056 Nie, Ye (Nicole)