

# THE POTENTIAL OF FAMILIAL AND SCHOOL CURRICULUM-MAKING WORLDS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT.** Diversity, equity, and justice are vital focuses in teacher education programs and research. Yet, studies show that as children and families interact with schools their lives are often ignored, silenced, or used to define them as deficit. This paper inquires into the interactions between early career teachers, children, and families. Using a semi-structured interview protocol, we explored the personal and professional situations 20 early career teachers described as shaping the knowledge they draw on in their interactions with families. Thinking narratively with the stories shared by one teacher, we explore the potential of familial and school curriculum-making worlds in teacher education and ways these understandings may open spaces and conversations that strengthen the interactions between early career teachers and families.

## LE POTENTIEL DE L'UNIVERS FAMILIAL ET SCOLAIRE DANS L'ÉLABORATION DE PROGRAMMES DE FORMATION DES MAITRES

**RÉSUMÉ.** Les concepts de diversité, d'équité et de justice sont au centre des programmes de formation des maîtres et de la recherche en éducation. Or, les recherches démontrent que lorsque les enfants et les familles interagissent avec le milieu scolaire, leur vie familiale est souvent ignorée, passée sous silence ou encore, utilisée pour expliquer leurs déficiences. Cet article s'attarde aux interactions entre les nouveaux enseignants, les enfants et leurs familles. En menant des entrevues semi-structurées auprès de vingt enseignants en début de carrière, nous avons analysé les descriptions des situations personnelles et professionnelles sur lesquelles se basent leurs relations avec les familles. En abordant les anecdotes partagées par un enseignant sous un angle narratif, nous avons exploré le potentiel des univers familial et scolaire dans le contexte d'élaboration d'un programme de formation des maîtres. Nous avons cherché des manières dont une compréhension de ce potentiel pourrait ouvrir de nouvelles possibilités et permettre des discussions afin de renforcer les interactions entre les enseignants en début de carrière et les familles.

Jason is in his third year of teaching at Pine Grove Elementary, a school situated in one of the oldest neighbourhoods in a western Canadian city. In his first field experience Jason was in a suburban school, a context where he interacted often with parents. At Pine Grove, however, the school where Jason completed his second field experience and continues to teach, “parents are non-existent.” Storying situations in children’s lives that “weigh” on him and “break your heart,” Jason’s voice shifted as he began to tell of meeting parents at after-school community-based soccer activities, where he is a coach. As he storied these experiences, Jason noted that in this out-of-school situation he “feels different in a good way.” In this situation, he is able to “get away from the structure and the strictness of being...[a] teacher” so that he can “have a little bit more fun with [the children].” In particular, Jason feels able to “joke around a little bit more” and the children, too, “have a little bit more fun and show their personality a little bit more and it’s nice.” It is also in this situation that Jason has “met parents...[who] have never been at the school.” (Interim research text from interview with Jason on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

We first met Jason when he participated in an interview as part of a study inquiring into interactions between early career teachers and families.<sup>1</sup> Since his interview, we have been drawn into Jason’s experiences as a coach in an after-school community-based soccer program. This program, situated in the same neighbourhood as Pine Grove Elementary, shaped differing interactions between Jason and the children; it also shaped possibility for interaction between Jason and families whom he had not met or interacted with at the school. As Jason shared stories of these experiences, it was obvious they mattered to him. Attending to these experiences and to the emphasis Jason placed on them is important alongside the question that shapes this special issue: “what constitutes learning, knowledge, and understanding in professional teacher education programs?”<sup>2</sup> Thinking with Jason’s stories of experience alongside this question drew us toward wonders around curriculum-making in teacher education, particularly puzzles of the curriculum-making potential shaped in the interactions among early career teachers, children, and families in community-based and family-oriented situations.

## SITUATING OUR INQUIRY

We came to these inquiry puzzles carrying diverse experiences. We are each, for example, mothers and teachers. For many years, one of us was a principal. Two of us are grandmothers. Some of us have long been focused on practice and research puzzles around the experiences of children, youth, families, teachers, and principals as their lives meet in classroom, school, home, and community places. Each of us carries passions, tensions, and wonders around practices in, and research for, teacher education and development.

Our experiences as teachers, principals, and teacher educators alongside our resonant tensions in relation with the interactions among children, families, and teachers shaped the study with Jason and 19 additional “early career”

Kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers (less than five years of experience). With a view to understanding the personal and professional situations that early career teachers describe as shaping the knowledge they draw on in their interactions with families, we carefully designed a semi-structured interview protocol to foreground their experiences across time, place(s), and situations. Each of the 20 teacher participants was involved in one interview, which occurred at a time and in a place of their choosing. No interview was longer than two hours. A transcript of the interview was returned to each teacher so that s/he could check it for resonance. Research ethics and cooperative activities approvals were obtained through the University of Alberta. Jason and Pine Grove Elementary are pseudonyms. While Jason was not the only teacher who shared stories of highly valuing his interactions with children and families in community-based and family-oriented situations, this paper draws only on his interview as a way to show his experiences in some depth.

In designing our interview protocol we noted that early career teachers in Alberta are entering the profession at a time of increased emphasis on healthy and reciprocal interactions with and among children, youth, and families. For example, a priority identified in a recently released plan for promoting healthy relationships and preventing bullying in families, communities, school, and work places is to “enhance the capacity of Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools and school authorities to create welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments that promote school connectedness, mental health and healthy relationships” (Alberta Government, 2014, p. 20). Linked with Alberta’s new Education Act (Alberta Government, 2015), which sought to ensure that families experience healthy interactions with their children’s teachers and feel that their contributions to school learning environments are valued, the plan highlights the need for “practicing teachers...[to] have the knowledge and skills to create learning environments that promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying” (p. 21).<sup>3</sup>

In designing the interview protocol, we were also attentive to the diversity of families in Canada. For example, many families include common-law, single, and same-sex parents and care-providers (Statistics Canada, 2012). Just over 80% of families live in urban contexts, where more than 200 differing ethnic origins are represented (Statistics Canada, 2011a; 2011b). Close to 5% of the overall population in Canada is of First Nation, Métis, or Inuit ancestry, of which 54% also live in urban communities (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010; Statistics Canada, 2011c). With mothers increasingly working away from home, more children are in non-parental care prior to beginning, and before and after school (Bushnik, 2006). Significant economic disparity exists among families in Canada. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO, 2010) report on the “social contexts of children’s lives” (p. iii) showed Canada as a country with “high poverty levels” (p. vii), a factor known “to undermine personal well-being and social mobility”

(p. viii). At present, 12% of children not of Indigenous or recent immigrant background live in poverty while the lives of 33% of immigrant children and 50% of status First Nation children are shaped by poverty (Macdonald & Wilson, 2013). Additionally, “female lone-parent families...experience a poverty rate of 37.2%” (Hunter, 2011, p. 4) while the “national poverty rate among all unattached elderly...[persons was] 26.1%” (Hunter, 2011, p. 4). These statistics are significant given that, in 2013, “approximately 62,500 children [were being] raised by kin in Canada. The majority of children raised by kin are with a grandmother or aunt who...has...very low income” (CANGRANDS National Kinship Support for Caregiver Families across Canada, n.d, para. 4).

### *Puzzles of curriculum-making*

Our inquiry into the personal and professional situations shaping the knowledge early career teachers draw on as they interact with families is significantly influenced by Connelly and Clandinin’s (1988) conceptualization of curriculum as a person’s “life course of action. It can mean the paths we have followed and the paths we intend to follow. This broad sense of curriculum...[makes central] a person’s life experience” (p. 1). Drawing on Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience and Schwab’s (1969) curriculum commonplaces, this understanding focuses attention on the experiences shaped and reshaped in the interaction of teacher, learner, subject matter, and milieu.

As Connelly and Clandinin’s (1988) conceptualization of curriculum-making continued to grow through understandings of teachers’ knowledge (Clandinin, 1985; Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), contexts (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), and identities (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), attention gradually turned toward the meeting of the lives of teachers, principals, children, and families and ways that the curriculum made in their interactions both shaped and was shaped by each person’s knowledge, contexts, and identities (Clandinin et al., 2006; Huber, Keats Whelan, & Clandinin, 2003; Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2003; Murphy, 2004). Numerous multiperspectival narrative inquiries alongside teachers, children, youth, and families shaped the further conceptualization of not only school curriculum-making worlds, but also familial (home and community) curriculum-making worlds (Clandinin, Murphy, & Huber, 2011; Huber, Murphy, & Clandinin, 2011; Murphy, Huber, & Clandinin, 2012). What became foregrounded were “ways children negotiate and navigate their unfolding understandings of themselves in their homes, communities, and schools and, as well, their experiences as they move within the spaces between these three, sometimes quite different contexts” (Huber et al., 2011, p. 2). Made visible in these, and subsequent, studies were tensions experienced by children, youth, families, and teachers as they compose their lives in these often differing worlds (Houle, 2012, 2015; Lessard, 2013, 2015; Lessard, Caine, & Clandinin, 2014; Swanson 2013a, 2013b).

Bringing these understandings into an imagined conversation with teacher educators, Huber et al. (2011) noted:

it is important to work with teacher education students and teachers in ways in which they know there are familial curriculum-making worlds as well as school curriculum-making worlds. Pre-service teachers and teachers in graduate studies also live in familial and school curriculum-making worlds. In *Composing Diverse Identities* (Clandinin et al., 2006), while we attended mostly to the diverse lives of children in schools, we now recognize the diverse lives pre-service and practicing teachers in graduate studies bring to teacher education classrooms. Understanding teacher education students in these ways also necessitates attention to their familial, school, and university curriculum-making worlds. A curriculum of lives is as necessary in teacher education classrooms as in grade school classrooms. (p. 150)

### *Thinking narratively*

Understandings of school and familial curriculum-making worlds were shaped within a tradition of narrative inquiry described by Connelly and Clandinin (2006), in which people are understood as shaping “their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories” (p. 477). In this way, a person’s story

is a portal through which their experience of the world enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Viewed this way, narrative is the phenomenon studied in inquiry. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomena under study. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

Working from this definition, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) wrote that

experience is what is studied in narrative inquiry and we argued for a Deweyan view of experience. This shared commitment to the study of experience is central to narrative inquiry. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) identified three further commonplaces of narrative inquiry – attention to temporality, sociality, and place – which specify dimensions of narrative inquiry spaces and mark out the landscape space of narrative inquiry. (p. 69)

Thinking narratively means to think with experience by attending to temporality, sociality, and place(s), and requires an understanding of “teachers, children, families, and community members, individually and socially, as composing storied lives, inside and outside of schools” (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013, p. 227).

In the upcoming section, we show our thinking narratively with Jason’s stories of experience across time, place, and diverse relationships and situations. We continue to think narratively as we wonder about experiences in Jason’s pre-service teacher education that supported his knowledge of familial and school

curriculum-making worlds. In what ways, we wonder, were Jason's familial, school, and university curriculum-making worlds attended to as an aspect of this knowledge-making in his teacher education? What does Jason's experience of interacting with families foreground as important in relation with the potential for inquiry into familial and school curriculum-making worlds in pre-service and continuing teacher education?

## RETURNING TO JASON'S STORIES OF EXPERIENCE

As a way to highlight aspects of, and interactions between, Jason's personal and professional situations that shaped the knowledge he draws on as he interacts with families at Pine Grove Elementary, we share a found poem composed from the many stories he shared during his interview. Butler-Kisber (2002) defines a found poem as composed, in part, from the words spoken by participants during, for example, research conversations or interviews. The found poem helps to show something of the wholeness of Jason's life in the making across time, place, relationships, and situations.

### *Jason*

The school I'm living in  
Family doesn't necessarily mean blood  
At all  
It means the people that support each other  
I'm very careful with that in my classroom

I came from a suburban  
Fairly affluent area  
Family was Mom, Dad, and brothers and sisters  
That's family  
But when I stepped into the professional  
I started seeing a different definition of family  
That's changed my whole perspective

Elementary experience  
Certain teachers I really connected with  
Other teachers, there was a disconnect  
Looking back now  
As a teacher  
I know  
I'm not going to catch all of my students  
But hopefully  
Most of them  
Will be comfortable  
Enough  
To do their best

I had an English degree  
What can I do with an English degree?  
Teaching, I always kind of pushed away from it

I was international for a while  
Teaching English  
There was family interaction there  
The way I grew up with my family  
I respected my parents  
That respect for adults  
Transferred to any adult

Teaching English  
I realized  
I really love this  
Seeing young ones  
Grow and learn  
I'm going to go back and get my degree

Started my BEd degree  
Wasn't thinking part of my work  
Would be interactions with families  
You always hear the stories of parents  
I was nervous  
It's always those horror stories of that one or two  
What am I going to do?  
How am I going to handle that?  
I had that impression going into my BEd degree

In one course  
There was one unit  
About dealing with parents  
We read ethical scenarios  
How would you handle it?  
Discuss as a group  
Then as a class  
Interesting to hear all the different perspectives  
I realized  
There was no right way to deal with these situations  
You just have to work your way uncomfortably through

First practicum experience  
Suburban school  
Parents very involved  
Wanted to know everything happening  
Wanted to volunteer  
Great teacher as a lead  
She let them in

Second field experience  
At Pine Grove  
It was the opposite  
Parents were non-existent  
Can't get them on the phone  
There's no answer  
Or the number's disconnected

Now  
Grade Six  
At Pine Grove  
Most of the time  
Not a lot of interaction  
If any

Some very hands on parents  
Can reach on a dime  
Other ones  
I've never met  
They've never come  
I don't even know  
Who they are

When they're non-existent  
I find it's harder  
Than an overbearing parent  
I need you to be supportive of me  
And what I'm doing for your child

Some students don't have internet  
Or computers  
Some  
Don't even have a phone number

There's a boy  
His grandmother's husband  
He's such a good support  
He's the one  
Walking this boy to the bus stop  
Or he's picking him up after school  
Or he's the one I'm calling  
To say  
It was a tough day today  
This happened  
It's fascinating to me  
This man  
Is doing the best he can  
This boy  
Is very lucky  
To have this man

You don't know  
How the relationships will work  
My perception  
Has definitely changed  
To the reality  
From the first few months

I've got to also be careful  
Of not giving up  
Especially  
Being a new teacher  
I don't want  
To fall into  
Bad habits  
That will carry on  
With you  
For your career

I do coaching  
In a soccer program  
It's community run  
The parents don't have to be involved  
We go from school  
Straight to the venue  
Then from the venue  
We come back to school

It feels different  
In a good way  
You can get away from the structure  
And strictness  
Of being that teacher  
You can let loose  
A bit more  
Have a little bit  
More fun  
With the children  
Not having to be  
As serious  
You can joke around  
A little bit more  
They can have a little bit more fun  
And show their personality  
A little bit more  
It's nice

Some of the children's parents  
Do show up there  
Yet they don't show up  
At the school  
I have met parents there  
That have never been  
At the school

I don't know what it is  
That attracts them

There  
Yet they won't go near  
The school  
  
They still don't engage with me  
Unless I engage  
With them  
But if I engage  
They will  
  
It would be nice  
To have more interaction  
That's community-based  
I would look for that  
And I would try it  
If it existed

(Interim research text from interview with Jason on January 27th, 2016)

When Janice interviewed Jason in the early evening of January 27, 2016, they met in a large family-oriented restaurant. Although they knew people in common, Jason and Janice were strangers to one another. After ordering coffee and water, Jason's interview began, continuing for the next hour and a half. Even when the tape recorder was turned off, they stayed at the table as Jason continued to share stories of his life.

Given that our study focused on the interactions between early career teachers and families, Janice began Jason's interview by asking him to share how he defined families, as well as experiences he felt shaped his understanding of families. Jason immediately drew us into Pine Grove Elementary as he shared stories of ways particular aspects of the lives of children and families were reshaping his earlier lived and told stories. A story of family as Mom, Dad, and siblings shaped Jason's understandings until he "stepped into the professional" (interview with Jason on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016). Jason noted that it was early in his time at Pine Grove Elementary that he began to restory his understanding of family, which he now understands as not only formed by blood but by people who support one another. There was a sense that this shift was significant in Jason's knowledge as a teacher because of his desire to be inclusive of all the children.

While Jason did not talk at length about his experiences as a child in school curriculum-making worlds, he highlighted his feelings of connection and disconnection with teachers as a significant aspect of these experiences. Reflecting on ways his feelings of connection with particular teachers shaped him to try harder in those classes, Jason shifted forward to the interactions between himself and the children he is teaching, expressing his hopes that in their interactions with one another the children were experiencing feelings of connection.

Once again shifting backward in his life to the years he taught English in an international context, Jason noted that it was in this situation where he experienced some of his first interactions with families. As he reflected on these interactions, Jason noted it was respect, something he learned within his early familial context, which was a shaping influence in how he tried to live these interactions.

Jason is not someone whose early life was shaped by a dream of being a teacher. It was in the midst of working as an English teacher outside of Canada, and the joy Jason experienced as he witnessed young children learning and growing, that drew him back to Canada and into teacher education.

What Jason remembered as he reflected on the beginning of his teacher education experiences is that even though he had positively interacted with the families of the children learning English, what he heard, instead, were “horror stories” of parents. These stories left Jason feeling “nervous” about what to do “when I have...whatever it is, an unruly parent or overbearing parent or helicopter parent or whatever type of parent is going to come at you who’s going to give you trouble and grief” (interview with Jason on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016).<sup>4</sup>

Important for Jason was a unit within one of his courses that included a focus on parents. Reading and discussing a range of ethical scenarios shaped Jason’s understanding that there were many differing perspectives and no one right way to interact with parents. In this process, Jason developed a sense that working through each situation, even if doing so felt uncertain and uncomfortable, was a way forward.

In Jason’s first field experience in a suburban school, he interacted with parents who were involved, engaged with what was happening in the classroom, and wanted to volunteer. Jason felt the ways his cooperating teacher interacted with parents, particularly her emphasis on letting parents in, was a shaping influence in his knowledge as a teacher.

It was during his second field experience, at Pine Grove Elementary, that Jason’s understandings of families began to shift, as did his interactions with them. Describing this school context, where he continues to teach, as shaped by situations where parents are “non-existent” in that he has never met them or they are hard to reach because they do not have access to a phone or computer, Jason noted that he finds these situations more challenging than if he needed to engage with parents whom he might find “overbearing.” What stood out in Jason’s storying was his desire for parental, familial support for the interactions he had with the children.

Particular interactions that Jason had with a man, who was the husband of the grandmother of a child whom he was currently teaching, shaped important learning for Jason. Reflecting on these interactions and the relationship he was developing with this child’s step-grandfather, Jason again noted his shifting

stories in relation to families and his interactions with them. What seemed to stand out as particularly important learning for Jason was being careful of not falling into a story of giving up. This was not a story he wanted to live out for the remainder of his career as a teacher.

As the interview continued, Janice asked Jason about situations where he had interacted with the children whom he was teaching, and their families, outside of school. It was at this point that Jason storied his coaching in the after-school community-based soccer program. Describing this situation as shaping different kinds of interactions that felt “good,” Jason reflected on ways these interactions may have been shaped because in this out-of-school place he felt less influenced by the structure and strictness of being a teacher; he saw that how he changed in his interactions with the children in this place opened possibilities for both him and the children to share more of their personalities with one another. Jason also shared that it was in this out of school context that he met parents who had never been at Pine Grove. Moreover, they engaged with him if he took the initiative to engage with them. What Jason experienced in this situation shaped his continuing desire for more of these community-based, family-oriented interactions with parents.

In part, it seems that Jason’s desires for more of these kinds of interactions with families are shaped as a result of the numerous barriers that he felt were interrupting the possibilities for in-school interactions with families. For example, during his interview, Jason shared:

There’s a social service worker  
In our building  
She’s definitely  
A bridge

As a teacher  
I wouldn’t even know  
Where to begin  
Because I can’t go to the families  
She has the connections  
She can go right to them  
She tells me information that’s not confidential  
So I can understand  
A little bit more  
It’s very helpful

Some of the parents  
Are working four jobs  
Just to make ends meet  
They’re just trying  
To get enough money  
To keep their family  
Alive

Transportation  
Is a big barrier  
Many families  
Can't come to me  
I'm told  
I should never go  
To a house

Some of the families cannot come  
To us  
I cannot  
Go to them  
So then what happens?

It's hard to know  
Why some of the families  
Aren't connecting  
It could be  
Their own schooling experiences

We also put on  
Twice a year  
A family dinner  
They might take  
That taxi ride  
Getting a beautiful dinner  
There's incentive  
Instead of  
A demonstration of learning  
Or a parent-teacher [interview]  
I'm too busy  
It's going to cost money  
I have to take time off work  
I have to get a babysitter

There's been nothing like a PD  
About this  
We do have early Thursdays  
But every [Thursday] afternoon  
We're full  
There's a focus  
We're doing something  
Whether it's IPPs  
Or report cards  
Or whatever

There is no time  
Set aside  
For this kind of stuff  
For hearing other teachers' stories

My upbringing  
Shapes how I interact with families  
My experience  
Of being in a family  
And respect for others  
I have respect for the families  
I give everyone  
The benefit of the doubt

Another aspect  
Is my experience  
Outside of Canada  
That cultural shift  
Being a minority  
I had to feel my way  
Through that

(Interim research text from interview with Jason on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

What Jason seemed to be coming to understand about interacting with families through situations and relationships at Pine Grove is that coming to the school or interacting with him may not be a choice for many of the families. Jason understood that this lack of choice may be shaped because of the cost of transportation, of work expectations, or not having a phone or computer. Jason wondered, too, about ways family members' earlier experiences in schools may also be a shaping influence. He additionally noted that

I'm told you should never go to a house or...if we are then I'm taking my principal or my assistant principal with me...or the social worker and we're going together. That has happened, not for me, but other teachers in the building have gone to help students in their home, but with the social worker or with other professionals. But they say that's not ideal and that's last resort.  
(interview with Jason on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Meeting and interacting with families in the after-school community-based soccer program shaped possibility for Jason as it was here that he met and interacted with families with whom he had never interacted at Pine Grove. Not only was Jason attentive to ways he and the children interacted differently in these situations, he was also drawn toward these situations because they created opportunities to meet and interact with families. During his time at Pine Grove, it was this situation, unlike a demonstration of learning or a parent-teacher interview that, for Jason, shaped opportunities for interacting with families in ways through which he began to feel movement toward connecting with them.

### *Familial and school curriculum-making worlds and teacher education*

As we continue to think narratively with Jason's storied experiences, we now turn back to our earlier wonders about familial and school curriculum-making worlds and teacher education. Lingering with Jason's storied experience shows

us the importance of understanding the interactions between early career teachers and families. We do not know if, or how little or how much, Jason drew on experiences he lived earlier in his familial context with his Mom, Dad, and siblings as he reflected, both inwardly and outwardly in small group and whole class situations, on the ethical scenarios explored in a unit in one of his courses. What we do know is that Jason saw the focus of these experiences as “dealing with parents.” We wonder about this sense of “dealing” with parents. Might such a focus invoke senses of parents and families as needing to be changed or fixed? Instead of the ongoingness, the ebb and flow, of what is experienced in the meeting of the lives of children, families, and teachers as they make sense of one another’s lives as an ongoing and unfinished exploration, might such a metaphor of “dealing” reduce these important interactions to a sense of a one-time event or discrete events that are, once and for all, concluded or finalized?<sup>5</sup>

Drawing on his experiences in the teacher education course he described, Jason seemed to carry forward both understandings of the vastness of perspectives in relation with each ethical scenario studied as well as the importance of staying in a process of trying to make sense, to make meaning, even when he felt uncomfortable. This is significant alongside puzzles and wonderings of familial and school curriculum-making worlds and teacher education. We see this knowledge as holding potential to support Jason to enter into the complexities often experienced in the meeting of these differing curriculum-making worlds.

In his field experience alongside the cooperating teacher in the suburban classroom, Jason learned the importance of involving and sharing knowledge of what was happening in the classroom with the parents of the children. We sense this is a story Jason continues to live by as he seeks ways to connect with families at Pine Grove Elementary. At the time of our interview, Jason expressed his sense of finding it harder to live in the midst of “non-existent” parents than “overbearing” parents. We imagine Jason’s sense of needing families to “be supportive” of him and his interactions with their children as maybe also potentially shaped by these earlier experiences in the suburban school. We wonder, though, if it may be these stories themselves, that is, of families *needing* to be involved and supportive of what is happening in the classroom and school that may be shaping some of the barriers Jason has experienced in meeting parents at Pine Grove Elementary. Might some of the families at Pine Grove Elementary feel differently about their need to be involved and supportive of the school curriculum-making world? We wonder about experiences in teacher education that support students’ wakefulness not only to school, but also, familial curriculum-making worlds. For example, we wonder if there were spaces in Jason’s teacher education where he could share and inquire into the differences between his field experience in the suburban school and his field experience at Pine Grove. We see spaces for inquiry into

these differing experiences as important in developing knowledge of school and familial curriculum-making worlds. Important within this inquiry is the potential for opening up puzzles and understandings in relation with the privileging of school curriculum-making worlds. Given that this privileging has shaped profoundly miseducative “intergenerational narrative reverberations” (Young, 2005a, 2005b; Young et al., 2012) in the lives of many children, youth, families, and communities in Canada and elsewhere, this learning in teacher education seems vitally important.<sup>6</sup>

We also wonder about a shift that we sense took shape during Jason’s teacher education experiences. A thread that seemed to grow stronger as Jason told stories of his life-making, drawing initially on his familial and school curriculum-making experiences, followed by experiences as a teacher of English outside Canada, teacher education, including field experiences, as well as his present teaching, is a shift from an initial focus on families to a focus on parents and more presently, back to families. We wonder what might shift and change in this differing emphasis of families *or* parents. Might, for example, an emphasis solely on parents shape miseducative experiences in the lives of children who are not living with (a) parent(s) but, as earlier noted, with grandparents or aunts or as Jason noted, with adults whom they consider family?

At the close of his interview, Jason circled back to experiences he shared at the outset of his interview, that is, that experience in his familial curriculum-making world shapes how he interacts with families. It was here that he again highlighted the importance of respect that he learned in this world and the interactions he experienced there. As Jason shared stories of his experience of the family dinner hosted by the school to the more common ways in which families interact with teachers (such as through a demonstration of learning or parent-teacher interviews), he reflected again on his desires to find more community-based and family-oriented ways to connect with families. In this way, Jason made visible another aspect vital in pre-service and continuing teacher education, that is, that knowledge of familial and school curriculum-making worlds may contribute in significant ways to the kinds of caring, healthy, and respectful relationships noted earlier. In addition, in the midst of sharing and thinking with his stories, Jason noted that his opportunities for professional learning have not yet included a focus on interactions with families. Professional learning focuses, instead, have been about individual program plans (IPPs) and report cards. While he does not cast these professional learning focuses as unimportant, Jason hangs on to his desire for opportunities to learn and understand more about interacting with families. As part of this, Jason imagined that opportunities to hear other teachers’ stories of interacting with families in community-based and family-oriented situations would benefit his growth.

Within all of this, we are left with new wonders about the potential of understanding professional learning as the kinds of interactions Jason experienced

with the children and families in the after-school community-based soccer activities. What might happen, what might Jason learn and understand, and how might his knowledge as a teacher shift and change if, for example, some “early Thursdays” each month, Jason interacted with the children and families in community-based and family-oriented activities? We see this kind of professional learning as shaping significant potential reverberations. We imagine course-long inquiry-focused experiences in teacher education, in which BEd students connect with children and families in out-of-school contexts, as shaping rich openings for developing understandings of the complex worlds of familial and school curriculum-making, as well as new stories of the kinds of possibilities that professional learning may entail. We additionally imagine that these inquiries may shape openings for BEd students to understand themselves as learners in new ways. One of these ways might include respect for families, as Jason noted.

#### **WHAT CONSTITUTES LEARNING, KNOWLEDGE, AND UNDERSTANDING IN PROFESSIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS: IMAGINING FORWARD**

In the previous section, thinking narratively with Jason’s stories of experience across time, place, situations, and relationships made visible a narrative conceptualization of curriculum-making encompassing not only the school but also the familial curriculum-making worlds of children, families, and teachers as their lives meet in schools. In this way, we showed that what constitutes learning, knowledge, and understanding in professional teacher education programs necessarily entails attention to and inquiry into the wholeness and ongoingness of teachers’ life-making, in and outside of classrooms and schools. Who Jason was as he entered into teacher education was shaped by his experience to that time in his life. Jason’s experience in teacher education continued to shape his becoming as a teacher, as did his more present experience alongside children and families at Pine Grove Elementary.

Our sense is that Jason, and every other teacher who participated in our study, did so because, like us, they are puzzling over and hoping to understand something more about their interactions with families. As we noted at the outset, policy in Alberta schools seems to be moving toward greater emphasis on caring, respectful, and reciprocal relationships among children, families, and teachers. At the same time, the lives of families in Canada are diverse and complex. Many families in Canada are also experiencing significant economic inequity. Each day as Jason enters into the landscape of Pine Grove Elementary he experiences these realities, situations that “weigh” on him and “break ... [his] heart” (interview with Jason on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

King (2003) and Sarris (1993) remind us that in coming to know of another’s stories, we carry responsibilities. Coming to know something of Jason’s stories of experience with families has called us to ask ourselves who we each are, and

who we are each becoming, alongside Jason and also the children and families with whom he interacts. Issues in relation with diversity, equity, and justice are common focuses in teacher education, teaching, and research. Studies, however, continue to show that as children and families interact in and with schools, their complex lives are often ignored, silenced, or used to define them as deficit and in need of being fixed or changed (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009; Dei, 2003; Delpit, 2006; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Guiney Yallop, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Lessard, Caine, & Clandinin, 2014; Liska Carger, 1996; Mickelson, 2000; Miller Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2009; St. Denis, 2011; Turner-Vorbeck & Miller Marsh, 2007; Steeves, 2006; Young, 2005a, 2005b; Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015).

During his interview, Jason storied that:

Some of the families cannot come  
To us  
I cannot  
Go to them  
So then what happens?

We wonder what might have happened had Jason not participated in the after-school community-based soccer program, as it was in these situations that he experienced openings for interacting with many of the families, people who had never yet been at Pine Grove and whom he had never before met. We suggest that a narrative conceptualization of curriculum as a person's life course of action, which necessarily draws attention to both school and familial curriculum-making worlds, situates interactions between teachers, children, and families as significant learning and understanding in pre-service and continuing teacher education. Such a focus shapes multiple openings for inquiring into ways that we, as teachers and teacher educators, privilege the school curriculum-making world. Fine and Weis (2003) remind us that the

future of public education, as an intellectual project of serious, critical engagement lies in the hands of educators, working with students, parents, community activists, policy makers, and others to re-imagine what could be, and what must be, in those spaces we call schools. (p. 1)

Shaping spaces in pre- and in-service teacher education where teachers and teacher educators can inquire into school and familial curriculum-making worlds, and what is or might be experienced in the meeting of these worlds, opens significant possibility for this kind of re-imagining.

NOTES

1. We are grateful for the funding this research received through the Support for the Advancement of Scholarship, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.
2. Quoted from the McGill *Journal of Education* Special Edition Call for Papers: What is Learning in a Professional Teacher Education Program?
3. While the plan does not delineate the particular ways teachers and principals will learn about promoting healthy relationships and preventing bullying in schools, nor does it pre-determine programs to support these kinds of interactions, a current framework in Alberta for professional learning makes central in-service education and staff development (The Alberta Teachers' Association, n.d.).
4. A number of participants shared that they carried "horror stories" of parents into teacher education or learned these during teacher education. If not horror stories, many participants shared cautionary stories of interactions with particular "kinds" of parents. Participants who shared these horror or cautionary stories of parents, all expressed the emotionally charged nature of these experiences.
5. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) show metaphor as a significant aspect in understanding our actions and interactions: "The way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor" (p. 3).
6. A reviewer asked for an example. We imagine, as one possibility, the term-long autobiographical narrative inquiries into familial and school curriculum-making worlds that Janice (Huber) invited BEd and graduate students into in early childhood courses at the University of Regina, Canada. As Huber (2013, 2014) shared (with permission) the experiences of Daelynnne, she highlighted Daelynnne's sense that through her autobiographical narrative inquiry in a winter 2013 course, she grew to understand curriculum as much broader than just an aspect of schooling and subject matter – that it was also her and the children's active and ongoing composing of their lives in and outside of school and university. Highlighted, additionally, was Grant's sense, based on his autobiographical narrative inquiry in a fall 2012 graduate course, of the importance of attending to tensions between familial and school curriculum-making worlds. Lastly, it was further noted that through this process of learning to attend to experience, lives in motion, relationships, and tensions, significant potential is opened for cultivating wakefulness to the kinds of forward-looking stories being shaped in school, university, home, family, and community places.

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