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ABSTRACT

The Curriculum Matrix developed by A. W. Foshay (1991) is a broad, comprehensive conception of curriculum, incorporating a range of perspectives and meanings often overlooked. This paper situates Foshay's matrix in the field of curriculum studies. By focusing on Foshay's interpretation of five curricular purposes (aesthetic, physical, transcendent, emotional, and social), the ways in which his matrix relates to and departs from current trends in curricular theory and theorizing are highlighted. Foshay's conceptualization of each of these areas is discussed in relation to some leading curricular theorists, including M. Foucault and P. Freire. Although Foshay's matrix is fully intended to be general, critical theorists would argue that there is no generic child, no decontextualized school. Gender, race, class, disability, culture, language, sexual orientation, ethnicity, family background, and many other factors intersect in students' educational lives and shape their experiences. Curriculum does not exist in a vacuum. Foshay's matrix may not give enough attention to these issues, but it offers a theoretical model for the study of curriculum. (Contains 35 references.) (SLD)

Echoes and Departures: Foshay's Curriculum Matrix and Trends in the Field of Curriculum Theory

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A.W. Foshay's Curriculum Matrix (1991) is a broad, comprehensive conception of curriculum, incorporating a range of perspectives and meanings too frequently overlooked. Not since Franklin Bobbitt (1924) has a curriculum theorist endeavored to represent the curriculum in such a thorough, clear, and wide-reaching manner. In its desire to bring order to an increasingly unruly field, and in its belief that this complex set of processes and experiences can be known, organized, and delineated, Foshay's matrix echoes the technical-rationalist perspective of Tyler's Rationale (1949) and Bloom's taxonomies (1956).

My role in this panel is to situate Foshay's matrix in the field of curriculum studies. In order to do so, I will briefly discuss in turn each of the five purposes addressed by Dr. Foshay in the series of articles he has written for *The Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* that explicate the dimensions and interactions within his matrix. By focusing on Foshay's interpretation of curricular purposes in each of these articles—the aesthetic (1995), the physical (1996), the transcendent (1991), the emotional (1997b), and the social (1997a)— I hope to highlight the ways in which the matrix relates to and departs from current trends in curriculum theory and theorizing.

Considering the Aesthetic Purpose

Foshay's work warrants comparisons with some of curriculum theory's most gifted writers; notably Elliot Eisner (1991) and Maxine Greene (1978). Like Eisner and Greene, Foshay writes beautifully, in language that is rich, clear, and evocative. Foshay's facility as a writer is particularly powerful in this article, "Aesthetics and history" (Foshay 1995), for in this particular case he not only writes *about* aesthetics, but does so in language that, in and of itself, offers the reader an opportunity for an aesthetic experience. Foshay's ability to draw supporting evidence and examples from a range of fields outside of education strengthens the comparison to Eisner and Greene, both masters at weaving the arts and humanities into their work.

The emphasis on and commitment to the humane, human aspects of education that emerges in this piece and throughout Foshay's work is another area of overlap with the writings of both Eisner and Greene. However, there are several apparent contradictions in Foshay's work that are brought to light by this comparison with the fundamental philosophical values of these two theorists.

In his piece "Curriculum development and humane qualities" Foshay writes that curriculum development must proceed by perceiving that human beings "act as wholes in an endlessly complex fashion" (Foshay 1970, p. 50), yet the six purposes in his matrix separate human existence into discrete parts. And rather than being endlessly complex, the matrix exhibits linear simplicity, providing a neat sum total of 145,800 possible curricular interactions. The matrix fractures the human self, and a holistic, integrated sense of an individual's educational life is lost.

A similar contradiction emerges elsewhere in "Aesthetics and history." Foshay writes: "Croce and others warn us against the misuse of analysis. It is

tempting to believe that we have found the essence of something by taking it apart. This has led some critics to conduct useless dissections" (Foshay 1995, 194). It could be argued that Foshay's matrix itself is guilty of this exact transgression. In its drive for simplicity, clarity, and order, Foshay's matrix dissects and reifies the fluid, organic processes of education.

In their work, both Eisner and Greene have explored their belief that human life is complex beyond our comprehension. So too is life in schools. The process and the experience of education are endlessly fascinating to us as researchers because they cannot ever be fully known—our understanding cannot be fixed, certainty always evades our grasp. The connections, the interactions, the transactions, the opportunities are limitless. Curriculum is a field of never-ending possibilities and potentialities. Once you begin to list and to delineate, however, you simultaneously limit and eliminate. As Eisner asserts (1991), any decision that reveals also conceals. Surely Foshay's matrix reveals, but we would be wise also to consider what it conceals.

Considering the Physical Purpose

In his 1996 article "The physical self and literature, " Foshay considers the school curriculum's treatment of the body. Looking beyond the scope of physical education classes, Foshay explores the ways that the physical self might be acknowledged and made present in the curriculum as a whole.

Foshay shares his interest in the physical self with those scholars exploring issues of the body and schooling from a postmodern perspective. The postmodern interest in the body is rooted in the work of Michel Foucault, specifically *Discipline and Punish* (1975). In this book, Foucault described and analyzed the development of the prison as an institution aimed

at monitoring, controlling, and disciplining the body and the physical desire the body suggests.

Education scholars have extended Foucault's observations about prisons to the consideration of schooling. Schools employ "pervasive observational practices, meticulous partitioning of space and time, examination, and documentation" (Ryan 1991, 112) creating a climate of constant surveillance and evaluation which, in turn, produces docile and productive students and teachers (Wirth 1988). Commonplace pedagogical strategies such as seating students in a circle, journal writing, and circulating among small groups during a discussion session are seen as practices intended to observe, inspect, and control the students' minds and bodies (Bleekman & Tegan 1995).

Though Foucault is certainly a prominent figure in postmodern philosophy, the postmodern perspective encompasses a wide range of ideas and understandings of education and schooling. In a postmodern view, the norm for curriculum is conflict and instability (Cherryholmes 1988; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 1995). As Bill Doll (1993) asserts, curriculum is not simple, orderly or observable; instead, it is characterized by indeterminacy, anomaly, chaos, disequilibrium, disturbance, transformation. Doll observes that technical-rational explanations of curriculum—such as Bloom's taxonomy, Tyler's rationale, and, I would add, Foshay's matrix—

> have not dealt with the *ferment*, but rather have denied, bypassed or overlooked it. However, in this *ferment*--or in Schon's *messes*, Prigogine's *chaos*, Dewey's *problems*, Piaget's *disequilibrium* or Kuhn's *anomalies*--lie the seeds not only of development and transformation, but of life itself (1993, 148).

With its clear and exclusive categories, its suggestion of completeness, and its neat, precise, and orderly structure, Foshay's work is out of step with postmodern perspectives on curriculum. His work on the physical self shares an interest in the body and the curriculum with postmodern theorists, but the similarities stop there. In a similar fashion, Foshay's work on the transcendent nature of the curriculum shares some common ground with the work other curriculum theorists, but also departs from that body of work in significant ways.

Considering the Transcendent Purpose

In a small number of schools, such as Waldorf schools or those schools run by the Society of Friends, we can find curricula in which the spiritual is fully integrated in to all aspects of the educational experience. However, the transcendent aspects of human life are generally omitted from mainstream public school curricula. Foshay's matrix serves as a powerful reminder that omitting these concerns from the curriculum shortchanges students and weakens their educational experience.

Other education scholars have turned their attention to transcendent, spiritual concerns in the curriculum. Noted curriculum theorist James Macdonald, for example, went as far as to assert that "the act of theorizing is an act of faith, a religious act. . . . Curriculum theory is a prayerful act" (1981, 181). Macdonald's interest in what he called "transcendental thought" was inextricably linked to what he took to be the fundamental question of curriculum: how shall we live together (Pinar et al. 1995).

Similarly focused on issues of spirituality and community, David Purpel's work reminds us that the curriculum is both deeply human and deeply spiritual (Purpel 1989). Purpel asserts that the curriculum must seek

love, justice, commitment, advocacy, community, and joy. Likewise, Paolo Freire's liberation theology, as described in his well-known book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970), draws upon the spiritual, transcendent nature of human existence to transform education and society.

Macdonald, Purpel, and Freire look outward in their understanding of the transcendent nature of the curriculum: transcendence and spirituality are shared phenomena, integrating the personal and the social. Purpel, for example, encourages us to engage in "the cultivation, nourishment, and development of the ideals of community, compassion, and interdependence" (Purpel 1989, 117). In Foshay's view, as described in "Transcendence and mathematics," the transcendent dimension is conceptualized along different lines.

Foshay's understanding of transcendence emphasizes the inner awakening, the "sudden awareness of the connection between what is immediately apparent and a vastly larger sphere of being" (Foshay 1991, 283). In short, Foshay describes the transcendent as "a private affair" (Foshay 1991, 287). The interest in the transcendent and the spiritual facets of education and of life is shared by Macdonald, Purpel, Freire, and Foshay, however Foshay's description of transcendence highlights its internal, personal, and individualistic facets. This emphasis on the inner, private nature of a curricular purpose in also apparent in Foshay's consideration of the emotional.

Considering the Emotional Purpose

Though Foshay writes, "The social studies deal with human interaction and thus, inevitably with human emotions...." (Foshay 1997b, 322), he chooses not to focus on interpersonal connection or interaction in his

piece "The emotions and social studies," saving that for his consideration of the social self. Instead, Foshay takes a personal, internal, individualistic view of emotion analogous to his stance on the transcendent. Foshay encourages the development of an inner awareness of emotions and feelings in students, and suggests that teachers attend to the emotional undercurrents of historical events. Emphasizing emotions in the social studies curriculum, he asserts, will allow children to better understand their own feeling lives.

Foshay's perspective on emotion stands in direct contrast to the feminist curriculum theories informed by the ethic of care (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1984), which position emotion as central to interdependence and personal connection to others. The feminist curriculum theorizing emerging from this perspective, such as that of Nel Noddings (1992) and Jane Roland Martin (1992), centers around understandings of caring and connection deeply rooted in the emotional and the moral domains.

The caring relationship between teacher and student is seen by these theorists to be a source of satisfaction and motivation. Noddings asserts that "working together . . . produces joy in the relation and increasing competence in the cared-for" (Noddings 1984, 178), and that "there is mutual pleasure not only in the child's growing competence, but also in the shared activities and their products" (Noddings 1984, 63). It has even been argued elsewhere that these caring educational and emotional relationships play a crucial role in children's intellectual development (Goldstein 1998). For these feminist educational theorists, emotion is a shared experience; in Foshay's matrix, on the other hand, emotion is an internal phenomenon.

In another departure from Foshay, these feminist curriculum theorists understand education as grounded, situated, contextual, specific. Looking at Foshay's matrix through this lens raises questions. Where is the student?

And where is the teacher? The student's parents? The community? Can the immense human face of education be confined simply to the "who" dimension of practice?

Each of the 145,800 intersections of purpose, substance, and practice represented in Foshay's matrix occurs within a student, within a teacher, within the shared intellectual space between student and teacher, within a classroom and a school context, and so on. Aiming for general applicability and clarity, the matrix loses specificity and postitionality. The free-floating, decontextualized nature of the matrix makes it problematic for curriculum theorists with this type of feminist orientation, and for many others as well, including the critical theorists.

Considering the Social Purpose

"When we speak of the social self," Foshay asserts, "we mean the relational self"(Foshay 1997a, 246). In his article "The social self and the human side of science" (Foshay 1997a), Foshay turns his attention to issues of connection with others, such as cooperation, competition, social relationships, community, aggression, empathy, sympathy, and similarities and differences.

Similar issues are currently under consideration by curriculum theorists, such as Michael Apple (1982), Henry Giroux (1983), and Peter McLaren (1994), who use the overtly political lens of critical theory. Rooted in the belief that social relations in schools are shaped by the issues of power, status, and privilege operating on an institutional, systemic level in our society (McLaren 1994), critical theory understands the individual and society to be inextricably interwoven.

By contrast, Foshay's matrix seems to float in space. Contextual factors are virtually absent, fractured and subsumed into the practice dimensions of "circumstance," "governance," "why," and perhaps "who." From the perspective of critical theory, then, Foshay's decision to consider the social self while ignoring the contexts in which social interactions occur weakens the model considerably.

Though Foshay's matrix is fully intended to be general, critical theorists would argue that there is no generic child, no decontextualized school. Gender, race, class, disability, culture, language, sexual orientation, ethnicity, family background and many other factors intersect in each of our educational lives and shape our experiences: curriculum does not, and cannot, exist in a vacuum.

Concluding Thoughts

Looking at issues of difference and diversity in relation to Foshay's notion of the social brings us back to an issue raised earlier: what does Foshay's matrix conceal from our view? What escapes consideration? One possible answer to these questions is attention to issues of race, culture, and gender. A rapidly growing body of theory and research indicates that race (Ladson-Billings 1994; Scheurich and Young 1997), culture (Valdes 1996), and gender (Belenky et al. 1986) have significant epistemological dimensions which directly impact a child's identity, a child's needs, and a child's experiences in school. How might issues of difference, sure to become increasingly important as the United States population grows increasingly diverse, be reflected in Foshay's matrix? Does the structure of the matrix allow for changes in our thinking about the curriculum?

To conclude, it is important to recall that Foshay's matrix is firmly rooted in a strong curricular tradition, almost a century old. Using the powers of analysis and organization to understand schooling in a heartfelt effort to serve our children as effectively as possible has been a strategy employed by curriculum theorists since the Progressive era. In contrast to this tradition stands a range of contemporary perspectives--postmodern, feminist, critical, and so on—also aimed at understanding schooling and serving children well, but doing so in a manner wholly inconsistent with the tradition from which Foshay's matrix emerged.

Curriculum studies is a hotly contested field, and on the cusp of the 21st century, no singular path has been charted for us. At this critical juncture, Foshay's matrix offers us a theoretical model, one attempt to depict and to explain the curriculum, a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. To quote our session organizer, Jennifer Deets, Foshay's curriculum matrix can be seen—and should be seen— as "a starting point, a jumping off place from which [to] find endless possibilities" (personal correspondence 1998).

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