

Introduction

Towards a Sensual Curriculum

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Introduction

WE LIVE sensual lives. Regardless of how one organizes, conceptualizes, or otherwise constructs meaning, human beings gain knowledge through their senses. As noted in the call for this issue, where a given sound, smell, or touch may indeed share some universally understood qualities, the meanings ascribed to the sensory are social constructions. The ways in which one interprets sensual perceptions are therefore political acts, choices of meanings from a sea of possibilities. Yet, simultaneously, what one senses is ultimately unique unto one's self, dependent on the singular contours of anatomy, personal predilections, and the ways in which sociocultural contexts are interpreted.

From this perspective, how someone makes sense of her world is a fluid intersection of sociocultural norms and values, agency, identity, physiology, awareness, and personal taste. In these ways, sensual understandings are located firmly in the paradox of human experience, intensely personal and unique yet inexorably informed by interlocking layers of local and less local sociocultural norms and values.

This special issue of the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* on sensual curriculum focuses on the ways in which people make sense of their worlds and how those constructions are made through our senses—understandings that are central to curriculum theory, teaching, and learning. As such, this issue sits at a crossroads between two fields, sensory studies and curriculum studies.

The field of sensory studies' approach to questions of curriculum tends to focus on formal curricular questions, primarily in order to examine how scholars are teaching sensory studies in their university courses. In contrast, contributing authors in this special issue examine the varieties of curriculum (e.g., hidden, formal, informal, enacted, delivered, null) through the senses. In this way, this special issue has something to contribute to both fields, the enunciation of the sensual in curriculum studies and a broadening of definitions for curriculum in sensory studies.

Across fields and disciplines, it appears as though we are again arriving upon a sensual moment (e.g., Ellsworth, 2005; Erlmann, 2010; Howes, 2005; Menon, 2010; Ranci re, 2010; Roelofs, 2009b). Howes (2009) refers to the complex possibilities of sensory understandings as “the sensorium.” As he notes, what is particularly helpful about this term is the way in which it maintains a multiplicity of meanings, a lack of reduction to any single definition of “sensory” or “sense”:

The notion of the *sensorium* is thus a very capacious or *holistic* one. Thanks to its holism it can stand for “the five sense,” which is one way of construing the totality of perception, but nothing prevents it from being extended to other constructions, other models, such as “the two senses” or “the seven senses,” and so forth. (p. 2, emphasis in original)

Furthermore, it is important to note an emphasis on the importance of the senses does not preclude critical attention to text or its use in order to represent ideas, ideals, concepts, and constructs (Kim-Cohen, 2009; Porcello, Meintjes, Ochoa & Samuels, 2010).¹

There is certainly attention to the arts, politics, aesthetics, and experiential ways of knowing and being in curriculum studies. Yet, as I argue below, our field has in many ways yet to arrive at an explicit attention to the senses.² For example, Porcello, Meintjes, Ochoa and Samuels (2010) have stated that an understanding of the power and possibilities for non-ocular perception is now well established in sensory studies. Yet the tendency in curriculum studies remains to either approach questions of making sense as an intellectual endeavor or to associate the sensual with discussions of aesthetics that are often devoid of critical perspectives.

It is along these lines that this special issue seeks to break new ground in curriculum studies. It is a call for attention to the sensorial, an understanding of the senses as critically embodied experiences rather as a common set of universally understood perceptions. It is also an argument for re-cognition, rethinking the relationship between the sensual and the political towards understanding the nexus of meaning making and the senses in curriculum studies.

To these ends, the first section below explores both uses of the sensorium in curriculum studies and how sensual curriculum is located within the field. The next section addresses how the sensorium is presented in sensory studies and the ways in which these ideas echo similar theoretical understandings in contemporary French philosophy and recent postcolonial perspectives. The third section of this introduction presents the articles in this special issue as well as the ideas and ideals that form its throughlines (den Heyer, 2005, 2009; Malewski, 2009). A final concluding section considers implications for sensual curriculum as they regard theories and practices of teaching and learning; possible next steps in the further development of sensual curriculum are also discussed.

Finally, the terms “senses,” “sensory,” “sensual,” tend to be used synonymously throughout this introductory article and across this special issue. On a similar editorial note, my decision to categorize to the work in this special edition as “sensual curriculum” is in keeping with Paul Stoller (1997) and David Howes (2003, 2005), both of whom use the term sensual to describe their respective calls for the possibilities and value of “engaging the senses” (Howes, 2003).

Always Already There...Not Yet: Curriculum Studies and the Senses

The title to this section on sensual curriculum is meant to reflect the kind of open, fluid framework of possibilities I seek to engender for the sensorium in curriculum studies throughout

this special issue of JCT. On one hand, attention to the senses, as experience and embodiment for example, is always already there³ in curriculum studies, an integral part of our field's DNA. In contrast to a dominant, prescriptive vision of curriculum that stretches from Bobbit through Tyler and Hunter to present day federal policy, there is also a parallel tradition of valuing the artistically experiential and embodied fluidity in education and schooling (e.g., Barone, 2000; Eisner, 2002; Greene, 1995; Jardine, 2004/1992). Similarly, there is a continuing understanding of the political potential at the intersection of education and the arts (in music, for example, see Dimitriadis, 2009; Gaztabide-Fernandez, 2010; Gershon, 2010; Gustafson, 2009; McCarthy, Hudak, Miklaucic & Saukko, 1999; Stovall, 2006).

There are also deeper roots at the intersection of the aesthetic and the political in curriculum studies. For example, both W.E.B. DuBois (1926) and John Dewey (1980/1934) explicitly connect the politics of understanding, art and aesthetics, and the lived experience. Curriculum studies has also recently begun to return to both questions of sense-making and understanding through the senses (e.g., Ellsworth, 2005; Kumashiro, 2008; Springgay, 2008; Urmacher, 2009).

On the other hand, such discussions are infrequent. For example, *Art as Experience* is often utilized without reference to the rather pointedly political tone and tenor of the work's first chapter (pp. 3–19). Similarly, DuBois' "Criteria for a Negro Art," as well as other of his writings that consider the intersection of art and politics, tend to be overlooked in aesthetic curricular conversations.

More common are the critical examinations of curriculum (formal, hidden, enacted, etc.) without much regard to questions of the sensory and/or discussions of the aesthetic with little attention to the political. This can be seen by contrasting two strong pieces of curriculum scholarship, Urmacher's (2009) argument for "aesthetic learning experiences" and Kumashiro's (2008) concerns about the oppressive, normalizing tendencies of common sense understandings.

Firmly grounded in Dewey, Urmacher (2009) argues that "an aesthetic experience is a sensory experience can almost be stated without any elaboration, so obvious this fact seems to be...aesthetic experiences are sensory experiences" (p. 623). For Urmacher, aesthetic experiences are the goal as they, "seem to support deep engagement as well as memory retention, student satisfaction, meaning making and creativity" (p. 632). In turn, "active engagement, sensory experiences, connections, imagination, perceptivity, and risk taking are [the] conditions that encourage aesthetic experiences" (p. 632) that "can enliven and enrich the classroom experience" (p. 633).

In contrast, Kumashiro (2008) maintains that common sense understandings reflect dominant norms and values, conceptualizations that necessarily marginalize already Othered populations and individuals, serving to reify both groups' statuses and relationships to one another. For Kumashiro teaching for social justice is an interruption of students' common sense notions about people, ideas, and ideals. This interruption requires students to be *both* introduced to difficult knowledge (Britzman, 1998, 2003) that troubles dominant norms and values embedded in common sense understandings, *and* guided through this moment of crisis towards more anti-oppressive understandings (Kumashiro, 2000, 2009). This understanding of teaching for equity and access as an interruption of students' common sense notions about teaching and learning can also be seen in other curriculum conversations, about the possibilities and difficulties in critical teaching practices for example (e.g., Daniel, 2009; Ellsworth, 1998; Grande, 2004; McLaren, 1989).

My point is not a critique of either scholar's strong argument, both of which are worthy of further examination and consideration. Instead, I seek here to demonstrate the differences in

these two positions of making sense, aesthetic/sensory vs. political. Where the term “critical” for Urmacher refers to processes of more deeply engaging ideas and possibilities, Kumashiro’s discussion of common sense is critical in that it is grounded in the idea that schools are addressing oppression “often by reinforcing it or at least allowing it to continue playing out unchallenged, and often without realizing that they are doing so” (p. xxiv). In sum, Urmacher foregrounds experience and sensory understandings without much regard for the sociocultural contexts that surround individuals’ experiences and Kumashiro provides a political argument generally absent of any aesthetic consideration in which making sense is an intellectual rather than a sensual endeavor.

In contrast, Ellsworth (2005) argues that all human experience is necessarily a literal interpretation of our senses. Her move to situate the ways in which people use the sensorium to create meanings that are inherently political in nature enjoins Urmacher (2009) and Kumashiro’s (2008) positions:

When taught and used as a thing made, knowledge, the trafficked commodity of educators and producers of educational media, become nothing more than the decomposed by-product of something that has already happened to us. What has already happened was once very much alive: the thinking-feeling, the embodied sensation of making sense, the lived experience of our learning selves as they make sense is more than merely the sensation of knowledge in the making, and is that not the root of what we call learning? *Places of Learning* explores what it might mean to think of pedagogy not in relation to knowledge as a thing made but to knowledge in the making. By focusing on the means and conditions, the environments and events of knowledge in the making, it opens an exploration into the experience of the learning self. (Ellsworth, 2005, pp. 1–2)

In this process, Ellsworth (2005) notes that such understandings

especially challenge those assumptions and practices whose histories have privileged language over sensation, objects of experience over subjects of experience, and control over learning as play and pleasure. Concurrently, with its connection to body, emotion, subjectivity, and the realm of the ephemeral, experience has often been attributed to qualities of the feminine, and therefore has easily been dismissed. But things are changing. (pp. 2–3)

To such ideas, I would add an important reminder that the sensorium is a powerful means for examining questions of colonization, race, and history (e.g., Classen, 1993; Geurts, 2002; Howes, 2009; Portello, et al., 2010)—a conceptualization that should be further appended to include questions as they relate to sexual orientation, perceived mobility, and other such areas that are not as of yet as fully explored in sensory studies.

For this reason I have turned to Greene’s phrase, “I am who I am not yet” (Pinar, 1998, p. 1). As Pinar notes, it is the incompleteness of this phrase, the continual becoming of possibility that resonates so strongly with not only curriculum studies in general (Malewski, 2009b) but also the burgeoning possibilities of sensual curriculum that resound throughout this special issue. Sensual curriculum has always already been there yet is only now being named.

As the contributors to this special issue make clear, while sensual curriculum resonates throughout many if not most manifestations of curriculum, it is neither precisely enacted, formal, or hidden curriculum, nor is it some kind of *bricolage*, unnamed third space, or null curriculum,

noticeable for its absence. Rather, sensual curriculum is difficult to locate precisely because of its complexity, its presence, and that it can be named—post-modern yet embodied, political yet affective, aesthetic yet critical. For these reasons, sensual curriculum resides not in either/or tensions or both/and constructions in the field. Sensual curriculum exists in the neither nor. It is meaningfully emergent and resonantly fluid—present, evolving, not yet.

Sensual Ideas, Sensory Studies

The rise of sensory studies (e.g., Classen, 1993; Geurts, 2002; Howes, 1991; Stoller, 1997),⁴ a diverse field that spans the length, breadth, and depth of the social sciences, can be conceptualized as part of a more broad return of scholarly attention to the sensual (e.g., Bahri, 2003; Djebbar, 1992; Nancy, 2007; Panagia, 2009; Ranciere, 2010). My purpose in this section is to both detail concepts central to sensory studies and to demonstrate the ways in which these ideas resonate in other post and critical discourses. Specifically, I focus here on two such examples, contemporary French philosophy and postcolonial theory, fields that inform curriculum studies and the scholarship in this special issue.

It is important to note that none of these discussions is meant to be exhaustive. Rather, they are intended to be evocative of connections between these three fields and, in the process, illustrate the ways in which sensory studies' approach to the sensorium contains many of the ideas and ideals central to contemporary curriculum studies.

For example, questions of the sensual, as they relate to questions of embodiment and voice for example, are also important to fields such as feminist poststructuralism (e.g., St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000), postmodernism/beyond (e.g., Lather, 1991, 2007) and queer theory (e.g., Quinn & Meiners, 2009). As a result, the points raised here may well strike sympathetic (but not mimetic) tones in other areas of scholarship with which the reader is familiar. Should this be the case, I encourage you to respond to the lingering note (Aoki, 1991) at the end of this introductory article.

Sensory Studies

Scholarship in sensory studies foregrounds the ways in which the senses are central to how people understand themselves, their relationships to others, and local and less local ecologies, norms, and values inform their ways of knowing and being (e.g., Brandt, Duffy & MacKinnon, 2009; Feld & Basso, 1996; for a list of associated scholars see the research directory at www.sensorystudies.org). Within the field there are certainly explicit (e.g., Pink & Howes, 2010) and implicit⁵ disagreements about the nature and meaning of what the senses mean and what it means to make sense. However, the following understandings about the sensual and making sense tend to resonate across the wide range of fields, disciplines, and perspectives that is sensory studies.

First, central to the field is an understanding that what counts as a “sense” or as “sensible” is socioculturally dependent (e.g., Classen, 1993; Feld, 1982; Geurts, 2002; Howes, 2003; Stoller, 1989). These questions and possibilities apply as much to taken-for-granted Western sensual constructions as to considerations of how non-Western sensibilities interrupt long-standing Western notions of the sensual—the ways in which the senses are constructed, the importance or

ordering of the senses, and connections between the senses and making sense (e.g., Erlmann, 2004, 2010; Feld & Basso, 1996; Howes, 1991, 2005).

As a case in point, consider the following quotation from Howes (2009) taken from the same page as the material cited at the beginning of this introduction on the versatility of the sensorium.

For example the Hausa of Nigeria have one word for sight (*gani*) and another (*ji*) for “hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, understanding, and emotional feeling, as if all these functions formed a part of a single whole” (Richie 1991: 194)...The Cashinahua of Peru hold that knowledge resides in the skin, the hands, the ears, the genitals, the liver, and the eyes, hence six “senses”—or better, “percipient centers.” (p. 2)

Just these comments evoke concerns at the center of postcolonial studies, there is also scholarship in sensory studies that reflects broader postmodern theoretical understandings—that Western relationships to the sensorium are fluid over time (e.g., Smith, 2004) or are part of a conversation that has been categorically disregarded (e.g., Erlmann, 2010) for example.

Second, there are scholars who tend to focus on a given aspect of the sensorium and efforts to further understandings of the epistemological, theoretical, ontological or methodological possibilities of a given sense (e.g., Korsmeyer, 2002). However, within these possibly divergent discussions there is also a general understanding that one sense does not stand above all others and that the senses are often strongest when examined in conjunction with one another. In other words, sensorial focus is more a question of foregrounding for examination than an elevation to primacy. This perspective has led to the study of such possibilities in sensual scholarship as the study of the sixth sense, synesthesia, and ways of making sense that do not ascribe to a 5-senses framework.

Third among these common understandings in sensory studies are methodological and epistemological implications for how to study or represent sensory experiences and similarly important questions about what might count as scholarship in studies of the senses. The consideration of sound methodologies (e.g., Bauer, 2000; Feld & Brennis, 2004; Gershon, 2011; Makagon & Neumann, 2009; Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa & Porcello, 2010) and the regular review and discussion of performances, exhibits, and gatherings in addition to traditional book reviews in the journal *The Senses & Society* are but two examples.

Finally, there is an understanding that attention to the sensorium and the methodological uses of the senses can serve to interrupt dominant paradigms of study, including tendencies within critical and post-traditions. Additionally such attention can serve as a means to simultaneously acknowledge the broader sociocultural contexts that constrain social actors and local actors’ ability to exercise their available power (agency) to negotiate such constraints. It is precisely the location of the senses—individually specific yet fully enmeshed in broader ways of knowing and being—that gives the sensorium its unique possibilities for study, a paradoxically concrete plasticity. In these ways, the transdisciplinary field of sensory studies demonstrates the importance and value of examining the senses and the political, social, and personal intersection of making sense.

Sensual Philosophy

From Derrida to Deleuze, Foucault to Rancière, contemporary French philosophy resonates with questions of sense-making and the sensual. Although all schools of philosophy can be

framed as an attempt to understand what makes sense to human beings and how such sense-making is constructed, what sets contemporary philosophers' apart are the ways in which they are explicitly turning to the senses in order to make such connections. Consider, for example, how both Derrida (1998) and Nancy (2007) conceptualize the sonic and the physical attributes of the ear. Where Derrida's championing text (1998) causes him to dismiss phonocentrism, Nancy (2007) provocatively asks, "Is listening something of which philosophy is capable?" (p. 1). Nancy continues:

Or—we'll insist a little, despite everything, at the risk of exaggerating the point—hasn't philosophy superimposed upon listening, beforehand and of necessity, or else substituted for listening, something else that might be more on the order of understanding? Isn't the philosopher someone who always hears (and who hears everything), but who cannot listen, or who, more precisely, neutralizes listening within himself so that he can philosophize? (p. 1)

Derrida's points about the importance and value of words are in many ways well taken. However, what of his phonophobia, Derrida's consistently negative framing of hearing and the ear as the site of the separation of self/other, particularly in light of a misreading of the location and function of the *tympan* (ear drum) (Erlmann, 2010, pp. 11–12, 47–48)?

Rancière's (2009, 2010) explicit focus on the relationship between aesthetics and politics, such as his concerns about the narrowing of ideas and possibilities through consensus and associated possibilities within the multiplicity of dissensus in his parallel critiques of politics and art, is another example of this intersection. Along similar lines lie Deleuze's (1990) discussion of the senses as commonsense and nonsense, Badiou's (1999) championing of the importance of nonsense and critique of Deleuze (1997), as well as others' further wrestling with both Deleuze and Badiou (e.g., Smith, 2003; Žizek, 2003)—all of which are grounded in questions about the relationship between sound, language, and the written word.

The contention between these scholars can be characterized as differences between how the sensual (aesthetics) can interrupt commonplace, dominant constructions of meaning. Rather than debate whether or not the sensual is political—or if it has discursive and material value as a means to critique, reject, or interrupt ways of knowing—these philosophers are attempting to parse the ways in which the sensual is political in thought and action. In sum, "moments of sensation punctuate our everyday existence, and in doing so, they puncture our received wisdoms and common modes of sensing...sensation interrupts common sense" (Panagia, p. 2).

Postcolonial Sensibilities

Postcolonial discourse is also in many ways rooted in discussions of aesthetics and the sensual as a means to disrupt colonizing gazes and ways of knowing (e.g., Bhabha, 1994; Djebbar, 1992; Durrant & Lord, 2007). Similar to other fields within the social sciences from the late 1980s forward, discussions of aesthetics in postcolonial studies have often been rooted in language and literature, a tradition that is alive and well today (e.g., Bahri, 2003; Karlstrom, 2003; McCarthy, 2002; Mullaney, 2010).

There is, however, a group of scholars who have recently begun exploring questions at "the intersection of the philosophy of race, postcolonial theory, and aesthetics" (Roelofs, 2009a, np),

as can be seen in a special issue of the *Contemporary Aesthetics* on the topic of *Aesthetics and Race: New Philosophical Perspectives* (Roelofs, 2009b). As contributing authors to the special issue clearly demonstrate, turning to the sensorium, particularly here to layered notions of taste, can indeed interrupt both aesthetic discourses absent discussion of race and serve as a cutting critical tool for critique.

This work is important precisely because contemporary discussions of race may indeed be “a conceptual blind spot in philosophical aesthetics” (Roelofs, 2006, np) such as those presented above. Young and Braziel (2007) suggest that an absence of discussion at the intersection of race and Western notions of aesthetics is precisely because of a tendency towards a universality of understanding that is inherent in many strains of aesthetics—our public memory has been erased:

As such, aesthetics marks, paradoxically, both the taxonomic codification of race and racial categories (perhaps especially in genres and classifications of genres) and simultaneously the erasure of racialized public memory; that is, race reified and universalized becomes transparent, invisible and normalized through seemingly pure and apolitical concepts such as beauty, truth, form, symmetry, organicity and sublimity. (Young & Braziel, p. 5)

This is a space in which sensory studies’ uses of the sensorium to disrupt commonplace understandings about not only theory but also similar constructions of meaning as they apply empirically to daily interactions (e.g., Geurts, 2002; Sterne, 2005; Wilkins, 2007).

The Possibilities of the Sensual and the Politics of Making Sense

As these examples illustrate, while perhaps not often presented in this manner, it can be argued that contemporary philosophy and postmodern studies have reached a point where not only are questions of making sense central to understanding the human condition but such debates are constructed in such a way that they are presented through the senses. Although there is a long history of debating the role of the senses, as well as what is sensed, throughout many strains of Western philosophical traditions, it appears as though a movement through the postmodern to the current moment has landed contemporary philosophy in its own sensual turn in which the political is aesthetic and the aesthetic is inherently political. Similarly, in spite of a purposeful focus on questions of aesthetics in postcolonial studies, the field has only recently turned to the sensuous. However, as Stoller (1997) presents, such consideration of the sensory are often manifest in a most insensitive manner, a point that is also raised in this issue (Gershon; McDermott).

In these ways, the wide variety of fields and ideas represented in sensory studies makes explicit the implications of contemporary philosophy, understandings that in turn rest on ideas that have danced with the sensorium. It does indeed appear as though our current moment is sensual. As I argued in this section, this understanding of the sensual is not to be confused with visions of either aesthetics or the affective domain that eschew the political and/or racial for examinations of the emotive, developmental, or experiential. Rather, as is evident throughout sensory studies and contemporary philosophy, the aesthetic is inseparable from the political—sensory studies are necessarily examinations of perspective, perception, and power. This understanding is also inclusive of sensual scholarship and studies of the emotions, human develop-

ment, and people's experiences that similarly attend to questions of power and politics as the next section that focuses on the contents and connections in this special issue documents.

Sensual Curriculum

The articles in this special issue here span a relatively wide swath of theories, perspectives, and possibilities for sensual curriculum. Sensual curriculum has been utilized to consider questions social justice in educational leadership (Boske) and the taste of identities (Hurren & Hasebe-ludt); the controlling and limiting natures of touching (in) institutional places and spaces (Leafgren; Wood & Lathem) and danced through poetry of critical embodiedness (Wiebe & Snober); considered the language and perspective of curriculum theorizing through critically embodied motherhood (McDermott) as well as the further possibilities of the somatic imagination (Fettes); and argued for the importance of and implications for sound as educational systems of meanings (Gershon).

In their work, contributing authors seek to challenge current conceptualizations of teaching and learning as well as common sense (Kumashiro, 2008, 2009) constructions of knowing and being. These articles also performatively demonstrate the potential for examinations of the sensorium and the possibilities of the sensual for critically embodied considerations of educational contexts, ideas, and ideals.

Although I originally conceptualized this special issue as moving from articles that focus on a particular sense to those that consider the senses from a more broad, theoretical perspective, I have organized the articles in this issue as follows for both theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, I felt a developing discomfort in adhering to a five-senses model that has now fomented. Additionally, a split between a focus on particular senses and a focus on more theoretical examinations of sense-making seemed only to implicitly further an unintentionally ironic body/mind split. Practically, all but one of the discussions here relate in some way to both concrete, daily practices of sense-making in teaching and learning and to broader questions of making sense. In addition, several of the articles address multiple senses and their relationship, even when that relationship is in some way oppositional.

Furthermore, given the many connections between these articles' themes, this special issue could have been organized around shared theoretical frameworks, location in or out of institutional educational contexts, or by their use and relationship to the arts. Ultimately, in keeping with the theme of this special issue and contributing authors' perspectives, I organized the articles in this special issue in the following fashion in an attempt to enunciate the ebb and flow of making sense through the senses.

This special issue begins with a taste, Wanda Hurren and Erika Hasebe-Ludt's combination of non-traditional formatting and integrated discussion of food, taste, identity, and knowledge. Tacking back and forth between theoretical discussions of identities embedded within and revealed by food, recipes for the consideration of tasting curriculum, and personal taste experiences, Hurren and Hasebe-Ludt call our attention to the simultaneity of rhizomatic connections in "the *terroir* that we are."

Their article is followed by two iterations of cautionary tales and interrupting possibilities for touching in institutions. The first of these is Sheri Leafgren's concerns about the ways in which notions of safety associated with touching in elementary schools tends to result in the bodily control and censure of young children's interactions and learning. Elizabeth Wood and Kiersten

Lathem's discussion about the troublesome nature of looking without touching in museums, a standard practice that removes opportunities to explore materiality and audience's haptic relationship to objects in museums, follows Leafgren's piece. For both Leafgren and Wood and Lathem, the purposeful removal of touch results in missing important ways of teaching and learning.

Next is my article on sounds as educational systems of meaning. In it I argue that all sounds, from those most often considered to be meaningful to those that tend to be characterized as inconsequential, carry meaning and as such combine to create literally and metaphorically embodied ways of knowing. The latter part of the article demonstrates this assertion through the inclusion of two sets of sonic data, a classroom in transition and children exploring a forest.

The fifth article in this special issue is Christa Boske's piece on how future school leaders use their senses in reflective practice as they create artworks to explore the questions of social justice. Through a combination of text, video, and sonic data, Boske focuses on three students' journeys of sense-making as they become aware of their own previously unquestioned perceptions of both their role as future school leaders, their potential as school leaders to address concerns of equity and access, and create a work of art that expresses their newfound understandings about social justice.

Boske's article is followed by a pair of discussions of the imaginary. In the first of these two articles, Sean Wiebe and Celeste Snowber use their work in poetry and dance to argue for the importance of the articulating the imaginary and the possibilities for sensual awareness and understandings to interrupt common conceptualizations of what makes sense. The second article on the imaginary is Mark Fettes' use of Gregory Cajete's (1994) descriptions of indigenous knowledge and education to challenge and further Egan's conceptualizations of the imaginary through what he calls the somatic imagination. Like Boske's article on future school leaders, both Wiebe and Snowber and Fettes, it is the possibilities and permutations in artistry and the arts that provide concrete opportunities for individuals to examine how they make sense through an exploration of the sensual.

This special issue ends with Morna McDermott's discussion about the intersection of curriculum, bodies, and mothering as sensory ways of theorizing and being. Through a combination of often-humorous personal narratives about the complicated nature of everyday acts of being a mother and probing theoretical questions about what is valued in the field, McDermott entreats us to critically consider the boundaries of what should count as strong curriculum scholarship and the ways in which the senses can trouble the edges of what curriculum theorizing might mean. It is the implications for this twinned discussion of the sensorium and curriculum studies that are also the topic of the following brief concluding section of this introductory article.

Conclusion

Throughout this special issue of JCT contributing authors have demonstrated that attention to the sensorium can open possibilities for understanding educative processes, further our current conceptualizations of what education might mean and how it can function, and serve as an interruption of common, often essentializing and marginalizing ideas education and the daily practices of teaching and learning. As the articles included in this issue on sensual curriculum have documented, this understanding has important theoretical and practical implications for our field, particularly in light of recent calls for a return to materiality in curriculum studies.⁶

Sensual curriculum resides in the neither nor of aesthetics/politics. While the sensorium is a highly particularized, inherently integral part of one's identity, the meanings constructed through the senses are strongly informed by interwoven layers of ever-increasing sociocultural norms and values. In short, the senses are necessarily personal, anatomical, and social—we taste a certain way or cannot taste, touch in particular ways or do not touch, all according to our particular combination of anatomy, sociocultural norms and values, and personal preferences.

As such, processes of sense-making can serve to oppress traditionally marginalized populations through common sense constructions of dominant norms and values. However, attending to the sensorium, placing the senses back in processes of making sense, can be a means through which “the excluded” (Rancière, 2010) can marshal their available power to negotiate or strike back at hegemony, oppression, and forms of unchecked aggression, institutional or otherwise.

Thus, as can be seen in the contributions to this special issue, it is precisely through this necessarily complex integration of the embodied and the social that sensual curriculum creates a space for critically questioning and interrupting common sense notions of teaching and learning. In so doing, this work replaces the sensual in the curricular. In this way, a focus on the sensorium can help to make now-familiar discussions again strange so they might be reconsidered anew and render the unfamiliar sensible. In sum, making sense is a sense-full act of understanding, attention to and through the sensorium to formal, hidden, enacted, delivered, and null curriculum—a sensual curriculum.

A Lingering Note

It is my hope this special issue offers meaningful tools to be adapted and adopted by our curriculum studies community writ large. The articles included in this special issue span a relatively wide swath of theories, perspectives, and possibilities for sensual curriculum. Along the way, contributors evoked indigenous scholarship, queer studies, critical feminism, postmodern, and postcolonial discourses.

However, it often appears as though there is an aesthetic/political split in our field that continues to grow. Painting with a broad brush, as outlined above in the section on curriculum studies and the sensual, the political doesn't trust the aesthetic for its implicit or explicit claims of (false) universality. And, conversely, the aesthetic doesn't trust the political for its implicit or explicit over-politicization of human experiences. By this I do not mean that critical discourses do not engage the aesthetic or that aesthetic inquiries do not engage the political, for both do indeed occur. Scholarship at the intersection of race, curriculum, and music is but one example (e.g., Dimitradis, 2009; Gershon, 2006; Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2010; Gustafson, 2009; Land & Stovall, 2009).

Yet, although there is certainly a history of scholarship that examines the role of race in curriculum studies, there is a paucity of work that examines race/curriculum with a focus on the sensual. Similarly, discussions of race, the arts, and curriculum tend to be examinations of music, and less present in other visual and performing arts curriculum conversations. These discussions too tend to overlook the sensual for the artistic, incidentally reifying an aesthetics/political (critical) divide in curriculum studies.

Although two contributions to this special issue specifically address the nexus race and making sense (Boske and, more obliquely, Gershon), this intersection remains largely unexplored in curriculum studies. It is my suspicion however that, parallel to Roelofs' (2006, 2009)

argument, in spite of this history of disjuncture between race and the sensual in curriculum studies, work is now beginning to emerge towards this end. And so, in the spirit of Ted T. Aoki, I offer this lingering note towards a continued pushing at the possibilities of sensual curriculum and for the ways in which it can help our field better understand both the theory and practice of making sense.

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NOTES

1. Although curriculum studies' focus on text may have influenced how the field has often overlooked the sensual (Gershon, in press), a sensual curriculum is inclusive of "post" uses of big "T" text.
2. Notable exceptions to this statement includes the following examples: Barone, 2000; Bresler, 2004; Ellsworth, 2005; Grumet, 1988; Kumashiro, 2008, 2009; Springgay & Freedman, 2008; Urmacher, 2009; Wong, 2007
3. This is a term borrowed from Hervé Varenne and Ray McDermott's (1998), *Successful Failure: The School America Builds*.
4. As I detail later in this issue and elsewhere (Gershon, in press), the burgeoning field of sensory studies is a trans-disciplinary field. However, in spite of its apparently emergent nature, this field and scholarship central to this work is not necessarily new (e.g. Feld & Basso, 1996; Howes, 1991; Stoller, 1997). Furthermore, it is also important to note that this special issue mirrors how scholarship in sensory studies is often located, simultaneously in sensory studies and in a given scholar's "home" field, curriculum studies in this instance. For those interested in exploring the field of sensory studies, the recently launched website www.sensorystudies.org is a strong starting point that provides definitions, examples, and a research directory of those associated with the field.
5. See, for example, the contrasting discussions of sound meanings in Dyson, 2009, Erlmann, 2010, Kim-Cohen, 2009, and LaBelle, 2010.
6. While I completely agree with this sentiment, it is also important to note that there has been and continues to be a subset of curriculum studies scholarship that focuses on the enacted curriculum, the ways in which curricular meanings are negotiated through face-to-face interactions by local actors as evident in the Division B Fireside Chat in San Diego (AERA 2009).

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