

Stop Making Sense!

An Editorial Foreword

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DURING MY YEARS AS A K-12 STUDENT, I was more than just a band kid. I was one of those students who lived for band. I slept, ate, breathed, and dreamed music. Very soon after my first flute lesson in fourth grade at the age of nine, the band room became my haven. It was a refuge from the bullying of the popular kids and the one place where I could not only be myself, but where I was celebrated for doing so. I was first chair in my high school's most advanced ensemble from my sophomore year on, was the drum major of the marching band for two years, and served as concert master and featured soloist in countless bands and symphony orchestras, including one group that spent a summer touring and giving concerts across Europe. To say that arts education was important to me is a major understatement. As an adult, I proudly and willingly served as choir/dance/theater/band mom in turn for each of my three children, two of whom have gone on to choose the creative and performing arts as their college majors. As a curriculum scholar, a large part of my *currere* journey (Pinar, 1975), how I had come to understand and conceptualize the nature of my educational experience, was wrapped up in a relationship with traditionally taught arts education.

And so this was the context I brought to the chapel at the Bergamo Conference Center as I sat listening to Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández deliver a keynote address to the attendees of the 2019 Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice that made me want to jump out of my seat and scream ala David Byrne, "Stop making sense!" Rubén's work in that keynote speech gently yet firmly and logically challenged the very arts education that had been my salvation and my happy place as a student. At the same time, I was torn by my feelings as a curriculum scholar, as I recognized Rubén's work as having the potential to push me and others in our field to new places of understanding that might just allow arts education to live up to its potential, which I am more convinced than ever is great enough to make a real difference in the quality of life of not only our students, but in the quality of our society as well.

Not since I had first read Pinar's (2012) *What is Curriculum Theory?* had I felt so completely redirected in my understanding of what curriculum was and could be, and so the scholar in me was grateful that, as Managing Editor of *JCT*, I had the responsibility to seek out Rubén the following day to extend to him the opportunity to publish his address in the *Journal* should he wish to do so. I was gratified when Rubén said that he would be happy to publish the work in *JCT*

once he had the chance to fully consider the responses he had received from those of us at the Conference. It seemed that I was not the only one in the audience who had reacted strongly to the address. As a matter of fact, everyone had a strong opinion on the subject, either pro or con, and Rubén's talk had become something of a conversation piece for a good number of the Conference attendees, many of whom were less than shy about sharing their feelings with the author. I was further gratified when Rubén suggested that we not only publish his piece, but seek responses to it that could be published at the same time. As I readily agreed, I had the feeling that I was bearing witness to the birth of a truly new idea in the curriculum field, something that felt rare and exciting.

This special issue of *JCT* is the result of the work that Rubén and I discussed at Bergamo that day. In the year since that time, Rubén has further polished and developed his ideas into the gem of an essay that is presented here. To generate responses to accompany that work, Rubén provided me with a list of scholars he felt would be helpful in challenging, developing, and engaging with the ideas he had presented. Four scholars responded to that call, and their thoughts are commended to you here. The collection begins with Gaztambide-Fernández's (2020b) address, "The Orders of Cultural Production," which encourages the reader to consider arts education through the lens of cultural production, highlighting the actions it takes and responsibilities it incurs as it engages in cultural practice. In doing so, Gaztambide-Fernández (2020b) argues that the material that we label "arts" can be used to center all learning and focus it on moving toward social justice. To do so, however, we must untether it from a problematic history and continued relationship with white and Western ways of knowing.

Following Gaztambide-Fernández's (2020b) work is that of Elizabeth Mackinlay of the University of Queensland. Mackinlay's essay, "Paying Attention to the Order of Cultural Production Framework in Arts Education: What are our Response-abilities?" takes up Gaztambide-Fernández's challenge and views it through the eyes of a "white-settler-colonial woman *in relationality with* Indigenous Australian peoples, as a mother to Aboriginal children, an arts educator, and an ethnographic researcher" (p. 29). From that position, Mackinlay (2020) encourages the reader to grapple with and, in her words, "to pay attention to" their own cultural entanglements and the ways in which those entanglements inform their practice, for good or ill.

Next, Joni Boyd Acuff from The Ohio State University, in her work entitled, "'Y'aaaaas,' 'Okay nah,' and other Black Woman Utterances About a Proposed Cultural Production Approach," pushes Gaztambide-Fernández's (2020b) work even further by considering what it might mean to fully embrace the idea of cultural production as a scholar in the curriculum field. In doing so, Acuff (2020) has created a work that highlights what it means to center education upon art as cultural production. Acuff's work succeeds in both furthering and challenging Gaztambide-Fernández's ideas, while engaging in the sort of creative and richly current curricular thought that I had always hoped it would be my privilege to publish in *JCT*. I hope hers is only the beginning of a trend of scholars challenging the traditional forms of curricular theorizing.

Dipti Desai from New York University provides the most direct challenge to Gaztambide-Fernández (2020b) in her work, "Response to the Orders of Cultural Production." In what Desai calls a "reflective conversation" and "internal monologue," she takes the reader along on her own exploration of Gaztambide-Fernández's (2020b) essay. In doing so, Desai (2020) allows readers who may still be, as I was, railing against the criticism of traditional arts education to come to terms with what may be its failures to live up to its potential as an avenue for social justice, while at the same not yet being "ready to abandon the term, 'art'" (p. 40).

"Doing Away with Music: Reimagining a new Order of Music Education Practice," by Patrick Schmidt (2020) of Western University, Canada, considers the "magical" and

“transformational” possibilities of considering music education through the lens of cultural production (p. 45). He ponders the paradox of music education as being steeped in exceptionalism while at the same time being marginalized within the public school setting as apart from, rather than a part of, the core of the curriculum. Schmidt (2020) tackles the practical issues that may arise from the kind of centering of “art” in the curriculum that is suggested by Gaztambide-Fernández (2020b) while at the same time arguing for the timeliness and benefits to the curriculum field that are intrinsic to the shift in thought that comes from considering art as cultural production.

The collection is made complete by a brief concluding essay, “Holding ‘The Arts’ at Bay,” in which Gaztambide-Fernández (2020a) responds to his respondents and makes a final argument regarding the very real processes, products, and by-products that are created when we, especially those of us who are educators working in classrooms, hold something up to ourselves, our colleagues, and our students and call it “art,” with all of the prestige and baggage that accompanies the term. With this final coda, Gaztambide-Fernández (2020a) goes beyond consideration of the timeless, Spencerian question of what knowledge is of most worth to explore what happens when we, as curriculum scholars, label anything as knowledge, as education, as academic, as that which is worthy to know, worthy to seek, and worthy to be the thing upon which we pin our hopes that education can become the vehicle whereby social justice is realized.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández for the work he has done here and for allowing *JCT* to be part of bringing it to the curriculum field. Many thanks are also owing to the other four authors in this work for their willingness to write and the great care with which they took up the challenge of crafting their responses. I hope the ideas you will find expressed in this special issue are as meaningful and as useful to you and your curriculum theorizing as they have been to me.

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