

The Orders of Cultural Production

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FEW IDEAS HAVE CAPTURED THE IMAGINARIES of curriculum scholars and educators committed to social justice more than the notion that the arts can change the world. Curriculum scholarship is full of facile arguments premised on the unquestioned assumption that “the arts” are a good thing.¹ While mainstream curriculum policy typically eschews the arts (along with the humanities), many curriculum scholars take the status of the arts for granted and often attribute to the arts a kind of power to transform society, as if the arts could magically fix what is wrong with education. These assumptions belie the complicated role that the arts and other forms of symbolic work and cultural production play in social and cultural processes that, unfortunately, are central to producing inequality and social injustice. Making sense and challenging these dynamics requires a more sophisticated framework that doesn’t simply collapse everything that involves anything remotely symbolic or creative as “arts-based.”²

When I came to education in the late 1990s, I also was moved by the idea that the arts could change the world. Although I brought this commitment to my initial forays in curriculum studies, as I immersed myself in cultural sociology, cultural studies, critical race theory, and postcolonial studies, I realized that the arts are in fact implicated in social reproduction as well as racist, sexist, ableist, and colonial violence (see Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter, 2018). Most of my empirical work has focused on how the arts are implicated in both the production and justification—as well as the misrecognition—of inequality (e.g. Gaztambide-Fernández, Cairns, et al., 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2014, 2016, 2018; Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017; Gaztambide-Fernández & Rivière, 2019; Gaztambide-Fernández, Saifer, et al., 2013). Yet throughout my work, even as I have argued somewhat ironically that “‘the arts’ don’t do anything” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013a), I have remained committed to developing a more sophisticated way of understanding how different forms of creative and symbolic work play a role in education and, in some contexts and under certain conditions, can contribute to social transformation. In this article, I want to offer the broad strokes of such a framework by building on my previous work on the concept of cultural production (see also Gaztambide-Fernández & Arráiz Matute, 2015). To begin, I want to offer a personal narrative as a way to situate and illustrate the framework I want to propose.

Music Didn't Do It

Music has always been and continues to be a significant part of my life. This didn't begin when I studied music as an undergraduate student in the early nineties, and it has not ended despite no longer spending countless hours practicing or hoping to have a career as a classical guitarist and a composer. Every memory I have of my mother mopping and sweeping the house is accompanied by the soundtrack of either the classical hour on *Radio Universidad de Puerto Rico* or the voice of Mercedes Sosa in the background. And to this day, every family gathering involves a complex operation of setting up amps and mixers and keyboards and drums for the family singalong—my grandmother had eight siblings, and at last count, I had several dozen cousins (including the grandchildren of some cousins!); we need a *really* good sound system for this singalong. Both of my children are avid musical theatre fans—despite my grudging—and the piano we rescued from my neighbours' move across the continent is played every day by somebody.

This presence of music in my life is not some sort of privilege I enjoy (although I do enjoy many privileges) or something that somehow made me special among children growing up in the 1970s and 1980s in Puerto Rico. Music doesn't do anything for me or to me or to my children, it is just there—a part of our daily life along with eating, arguing, walking, kissing, and hugging—just like it is a part of everyone's daily lives (see DeNora, 2000). But I did do things with music, and things happened in my life where music gained more or less salience. My family and I bonded around music making, and as a teenager, I used music as a way to construct an adolescent identity that was moored to cultural resistance and anti-colonial politics in Puerto Rico. This relationship with music receded in the context of the Conservatory where I studied classical guitar, which could neither support nor, often, tolerate the political dimension of my musical identity. Indeed, professional training as a musician seemed to be antithetical to any kind of politics and required me to form a different musical identity and to do different things with music (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010).

Whether at home in Puerto Rico or at The Boston Conservatory, *I* did things with music, and people around me did things with music. The places and spaces I inhabited were characterized by various sorts of musical practice, not because music “did” things, but because there were concrete material and symbolic arrangements that made a certain kind of engagement with music possible, at the expense of other kinds of engagements (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, 2011). In fact, these various musical practices often did not travel well across contexts, and when they did, they required a significant amount of adjustment in order to be legible and adequately respond to institutional expectations and to literally perform certain kinds of musical identities that could be framed around specific relationships. And of course, I changed across these contexts, and the ways in which I used music as an expression of who I was changed as well. The ways in which music is wrapped with my inner life is not always coherent or rational, but it is always a vehicle for expressing desires, loves, frustrations, and the complications of being a desiring subject in different contexts and situations. Again, this is not something music *does*, but rather something *we do* through music and through other forms of what I will call throughout this article, drawing primarily on the work of Paul Willis (1990), symbolic creativity or creative symbolic work (see also Hall, 1980).³

In this article, I continue to develop an argument I have been making for some time now regarding the ways in which we frame both the practices and the study of “the arts” in education (e.g. Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Gaztambide-Fernández & Arráiz Matute, 2015; Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2018). Specifically, I want to extend a discussion

about “cultural production” as a framework for making sense of creative symbolic work and how this can be put to use in productive ways, particularly in projects that take seriously commitments to anti-discrimination, decolonization, and social justice. I want to elaborate a framework of cultural production that might help us have a better grasp of how various practices of symbolic creativity figure in our lives and in the lives of students and teachers in schools.

To that end, and as way to situate the importance of the conceptual shift I am proposing, I will first extend my critique of what I have called elsewhere the “rhetoric of effects” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013a, 2013b). Specifically, I want to put forward the thesis that the notion of “the arts”—along with the common phrase “arts-based”—operates through a metonymic relationship to hegemonic understandings of culture and to notions of European civilization in particular in ways that appropriate a wide range of cultural practices in the name of colonization and White supremacy (see Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2018). I will then offer an understanding of symbolic creativity through what I am framing here as the “orders” of cultural production. I want to suggest that such a framework allows us to understand and develop a pedagogy and a practice of creative symbolic work that more effectively encapsulates the complexities of lived experience in and through creative expression and symbolic work.

The Metonymic Function of “the Arts”

I have argued in several previous publications, most notably in an article titled “Why the Arts don’t ‘Do’ Anything,” that the arts in education have relied on what I have described as the “rhetoric of effects” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013a, 2013b). This rhetoric is ubiquitous in education, and curriculum scholars are especially proficient at mobilizing this rhetorical frame, which usually takes the form of statements that begin with “the arts,” followed by some verb (such as inspire, foment, open, increase, encourage, etc.), and finished by some desired or predetermined outcome (such as academic achievement, or empathy, or participation, or conscientization, or even decolonization, etc.).

A few examples should suffice as illustration. The widely distributed UNESCO *Roadmap for Arts Education* (2006), for instance, claims that arts education “*fosters* cultural awareness and *promotes* cultural practices, and is the means by which knowledge and appreciation of the arts and culture *are transmitted* from one generation to the next” (p. 6, italics added). From the former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; “The arts *can help* students become tenacious, team-oriented problem-solvers who are confident and able to think creativity” (U.S. Department of Education, 2009, n.p.). Much more akin to curriculum theory than the words of politicians and global organizations, the same rhetorical turn organizes the words of beloved education philosopher and curriculum scholar, the late Maxine Greene (1991):

It is not uncommon for the arts *to leave* us somehow ill at ease, not for them *to prod* us beyond acquiescence. They may, now and then, *move* us into spaces where we can create visions of other ways of being and ponder what it might signify to realize them. (p. 27)

While less definitive in her declaration (the arts *may, now and then*), Greene is no less committed to the idea that something called “the arts” at least “should” have a positive and transformative effect. Curriculum scholars might find more resonance with Greene’s hope that encounters with something called “the arts” might lead to “shocks of awareness” that “challenge

empty formalism, didacticism, and elitism,” and leave persons “less immersed in the everyday, more impelled to wonder and to question” (p. 27).⁴ Yet the parallel with so-called “instrumentalist” approaches to the arts, such as those expressed by UNESCO and politicians like Arne Duncan, reveals how more progressive and even radical approaches to the arts in education rely on the same rhetorical frame. The arts *leave us* somehow ill at ease, *prod us* beyond acquiescence, *move us* into spaces where we can create visions of other ways of being. In short, the arts *do things*.

In this rhetorical formulation, premised on the idea that something called “the arts” (or, by extension, anything that can be labeled as “arts-based”) has the capacity to transform educational experiences and social circumstances, the arts are framed as a substance or as a set of methods that can be transferred or injected into social situations in order to transform unequal circumstances and bring about some desired change. The rhetorical frame—that something called the “arts” has the capacity to enact some action (some verb) on a situation or on individuals or people—is the same, whether it is UNESCO, Arne Duncan, or Maxine Greene. And implicit in such a frame is the idea that, whatever they are and whatever they do, “the arts” are assumed to be a “good” thing that has “good” effects. But where does this idea that “the arts” are a good thing come from, and what role does this idea play in producing social inequality? Before continuing to propose an alternative approach, and to underscore the importance of a shift in rhetorical frame, I want to briefly suggest an answer to this question by way of clarifying and illustrating a point I make in “Why the Arts Don’t Do Anything” about the Eurocentricity of this “rhetoric of effects” and the very idea of “the arts.”

While not uniquely European,⁵ the concept of the “the arts” plays an important role in signifying the presumed superiority of European cultural sensibilities and affective ways of knowing and, by extension, of whiteness as a way of being.⁶ As a category that marks certain kinds of objects, practices, and experiences as in some way superior or better than others, the concept of “the arts” is homologous to other kinds of hegemonic social and cultural hierarchies. The hierarchical relationship is the product of a complex historical process through which “the arts” have come to stand in for what distinguishes European “culture.” This metonymic function of the arts has to do with the modern usage of the concept of culture and how it evolved in Europe throughout the Enlightenment (Williams, 1958/1983, 1976). Raymond Williams (1958/1983) traced how “culture” as a concept evolved from its early use in the 15th century as a noun referring to the “tending of natural growth” and “a process of human training” (p. xi). These meanings later “acquired definite class associations through *cultivation* and *cultivated*” (Williams, 1976, p. 78, emphasis in original), as these terms became metaphors for social and cultural improvement and hierarchical distinctions.

By the end of the 19th century, the uses of the term “culture” moved in semantic tension between an applied (more Anthropological) sense of the word referring to particular ways of life, and a more abstract sense of the word referring to processes of cultivation and development and to “the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic ability” (Williams, 1976, p. 80). Williams describes a process of metaphorization by which the latter sense of the term comes to symbolize the former, so that particular objects and practices come to stand in for the whole of a particular way of life. In this process, notions of cultural development, cultivation, and improvement became metaphors for the very idea of European civilization, and “the arts” became the material and symbolic manifestation of European uniqueness and superiority to other “ways of life.” In this way, “the arts”—*qua* culture—came to play a significant role in how Europeans imagined and constructed themselves as superior in the context of the colonial projects of empire that have been evolving over the last five centuries (Said, 1994).

As one understanding of “culture” (i.e., those objects and practices deemed artistic) becomes entwined with another (i.e., a particular way of life, specifically that way of life that is coded as “white” or “European”), “the arts” emerge as the expression of what makes European culture not only unique, but also superior, and, therefore, entitled to conquest. Moreover, in these colonial projects, “the arts” come to be understood and mobilized as a vehicle for “culture,” now understood as cultivation or as “a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development” (Williams, 1976, p. 80). In this complex process of metonymic elision, “the arts” shift from being seen as the outcome of a process of cultivation and evidence of a superior way of life to being seen as the tool that causes proper cultivation and, by extension, an instrument for approximating a superior way of being. As such, “the arts” emerge as an apparently benign form of enculturation and a tool for the salvation of the “Other,” both within Europe (see Mörsch, 2017), as well as in the colonies (see Chalmers, 1999; Wolukau-Wanambwa, 2018).

This movement, from being understood as the outcome of a process of cultivation and the manifestation of the superiority of a particular way of life to being mobilized as an instrument for such cultivation, inserts “the arts” in the context of schooling as a tool for betterment. In the context of contemporary schools, as the terms of reference shift, the colonizing force of the concept of “the arts” becomes occluded. No longer responsible (at least explicitly) for the enculturation of the inferior racial “Other,” arts educators now find themselves having to make other kinds of promises, mainly that “the arts” can make pupils into better citizens, more aesthetically sensible, even—if we believe the hype—smarter and more mathematically savvy. This shift relies upon and requires the rhetoric of effects and encourages the kind of “banal empiricism” that characterizes most of the literature on the arts in education (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2017). As a set of “objects” or “practices” that can be implemented—or injected—into students to particular effects, “the arts” are construed as instruments for the realization and proper cultivation of productive and engaged citizens, even when the desired “effects” of such cultivation are about being moved into visions of other ways of being, as Maxine Greene’s words suggest.⁷

What is typically missed in all of these arguments is that, as a category that distinguishes certain kinds of objects and practices from others, “the arts” also index a set of ideological and intuitional practices that actually have the “effect” of securing the ideology of white supremacy, as well as other social hierarchies and structures that are indexed by the very concept of “the arts.”⁸ In these arguments built through the rhetoric of effect, the metonymic function of the arts is elided and made invisible so that the colonizing role of the very concept of “the arts” disappears from view while remaining a significant force in securing dominant orders. This metonymic function is also elided when “the arts” are invoked in reference to a wide range of objects, practices, and experiences associated with non-European (or non-dominant, i.e., “popular” or “folk”) “cultures” (here understood as “ways of life,” presumably with their own artistic objects and practices). Yet, every time the concept of “the arts” is invoked, appropriating any practice in its wake through its exalting (and also abstracting) logic, it carries along the residues of white supremacy (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2018).⁹ As the concept of “the arts” travels, the objects and practices lucky enough to be captured by its discourses become appropriated and instrumentalized as substances that can be mobilized in educational projects. Whatever the aims of such projects, “the arts” are construed as having the capacity to yield—to educate—better human subjects, whether more “awakened” or sensitive to beauty, or better at math, or better citizens, or just more civilized, closer to the properly cultivated “only possible and universally applicable mode of being human” (Wynter, 2003, p. 303).¹⁰

This role of the arts and of the discourses and ideas that are normalized through the concept, such as talent, creativity, and expression, in the perpetuation of inequality is clearly illustrated in the context of public secondary arts high schools in the U.S. and Canada. In our research, we have documented how publicly funded arts high schools disproportionately serve and contribute to the production of elite status among affluent and other high status social groups (Gaztambide-Fernández & Parekh, 2017; Parekh & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2017).¹¹ Our research shows, for instance, that the students who attend specialized arts high schools in the city of Toronto are disproportionately more likely to be affluent, more likely to be white, and more likely to have parents with university degrees than the students in almost all other schools in a district that is remarkably diverse, perhaps one of the most diverse in the world. The students are also more likely to come from schools that are equally homogenous, and in fact, the choice to attend an arts high school appears to exacerbate rather than diminish homogeneity. This homogeneity is justified through the discourses of the arts and the mobilization of ideas about talent and creativity that render opaque the role that race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability play in processes of exclusion (; Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2014; Gaztambide-Fernández & Rivière, 2019; Gaztambide-Fernández, Saifer et al., 2013; Saifer & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2017).

Moreover, discourses of “the arts” play a constitutive role in how students internalize a “sense of entitlement” to the privileges of attending an exclusive and well-resourced school that is akin to a “private school in a public system” (Gaztambide-Fernández, Cairns et al., 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández & Maudlin, 2015). For instance, the right to attend a school that feels safe and where students are encouraged to explore and be creative, which is often attributed to the arts, is construed through the figure of an “Other” who is not only dangerous, but also incapable of properly taking advantage of the opportunities that an arts education presumably enable (Gaztambide-Fernández & Rivière, 2019). In short, a close examination of the differences that make a difference in the context of arts high schools makes evident the very metonymic function of “the arts.” Our work illustrates that the discursive “effect” of the arts is the occlusion of its very exclusionary force and of the ways in which its institutions serve to reproduce extant social hierarchies, discreetly protecting the interests of those already abundantly privileged.

In light of this evidence and in response to other analyses of how discourses of the arts operate in ways that reproduce social orders and reiterate sexist, racist, classist, and ableist logics, the problem becomes how to frame processes of creative symbolic work without recourse to either the rhetoric of effects or the dominant discourses of the arts this rhetoric relies upon and reiterates. Neither the rhetoric of effects nor its romantic ideal of “the arts” can capture the complexity of the many ways my family and I engage in music making together, the symbolic role music has played in my life, or the complex desires and emotions that are expressed whenever we make music. These experiences require a way of framing symbolic creativity that does not insist on a distinction between something called “the arts” (or even “music”) and the active, creative, productive, symbolic work that characterizes daily life for everyone, everywhere. Such a framework must abandon the romance of the “the arts” as a magic salve in order to excavate the deeper meanings people make through processes and practices of symbolic work. This is crucial even (perhaps especially) when such processes and practices are implicated in the production of inequality and ongoing marginalization, as the research outlined above illustrates. In short, we need a conceptual framework that opens up analytic possibilities for making sense of creative symbolic work. At the same time, such a framework should generate ways of thinking about and engaging creative symbolic work in curricular and pedagogical projects that are inclusive, committed to the pursuit of equity and justice, and that expand rather than diminish participation.

Cultural Production

The concept of cultural production provides a framework through which we can make sense of how practices such as making music, expressing ourselves through movement, or marking a wall with spray paint or a canvas with oil paint organize social orders. At the same time, such a framework allows us to make sense of the full range of ways in which these practices can be mobilized for different sorts of social justice projects. The framework I am proposing here does not take equity, anti-discrimination, and social justice as outcomes or as problems to be solved through arts education. It rejects the idea of the arts as “innocent” solutions to be injected in an attempt to make people more alike, rather than more different. Instead, the framework of cultural production—particularly as a descriptive/analytic concept—takes the position that all work of symbolic creativity is embedded in and is, therefore, the outcome of unequal power relations and that, as such, it is always implicated in the production, reproduction, and, sometimes, transformation of social orders.

Generally speaking, the term cultural production suggests that “culture” is not a given, but rather a constantly evolving process through which meanings are both conveyed and constructed as people interact within localities, negotiating the material and symbolic orders and rules of engagement that define each context and, indeed, each life (Willis, 1981, 1990). For Willis (1981), cultural productions,

occur on the determinate and contradictory grounds of what is inherited and what is currently suffered through imposition, but in a way which is nevertheless creative and active. Such cultural productions are experienced as new by each generation, group and person. (p. 49)

This way of understanding culture has become commonplace in contemporary cultural studies and, more relevant here, to the anthropology of education and the ethnographic study of schools (see Levinson et al., 1996). From a cultural production perspective, culture is understood “as a continual process of creating meaning in social and material contexts, replacing a conceptualization of culture as a static, unchanging body of knowledge ‘transmitted’ between generations” (Levinson & Holland, 1996, p. 13). This approach is quite different from the dominant conceptions of “culture” discussed earlier that are foundational to extant approaches to arts education and to the rhetoric of effects. Curriculum scholarship has generally failed to recognize these differences in understandings of culture, especially in relationship to “the arts.” In fact, there is often a slippery movement between dynamic and essentialist understandings of culture, and of the arts in particular, largely because a dynamic understanding of culture is anathema to the rhetoric of effects.

The concept of cultural production can be used as a framework to make sense of a whole range of phenomena and dynamics, including for example how certain kinds of subject positions are articulated and produced in schools (see Willis, 1981).¹² Here I want to outline the contours of a cultural production framework that aims to make sense of how creative symbolic work emerges at the intersections between structures and agency, as relationships evolve and materialize, attaching and reattaching both established as well as new meanings. By creative symbolic work I mean those *products, practices, and processes that deliberately engage available materials for the purpose of arranging—and sometimes rearranging—available meanings*. Unlike the concept of the “the arts,” understanding symbolic creativity as cultural production highlights how such work

reifies power structures, often in order to secure them, but at times in ways that undermine them, particularly when narratives can be shifted in the interest of producing more just and equitable dynamics in particular circumstances and contexts.

To speak of creative symbolic work as *productive* is to point to the ways in which particular practices and processes yield concrete (although not always or only tangible) arrangements that are produced through a deliberate engagement with meanings and materials for the express purpose of making and communicating (and sometimes interrupting) meanings. Such purposes are not always evident and are usually contested through the interactions that make the work possible and that ultimately bring it to life. They are driven by both conscious and unconscious needs and desires that evolve and find expression within specific material conditions while responding to the affordances of matter.¹³ Moreover, understood as cultural production, creative symbolic work also responds to discursive regimes and larger ideological forces that shape but do not over-determine either the intentions, the experiences, or the outcomes of any particular instance or expression of symbolic creativity. In short, symbolic creativity involves practices of deliberate and dialectic engagement with available materials and conditions in order to produce new and meaningful objects and experiences.¹⁴

To reframe “the arts” as cultural production is to understand them as practices, processes, and products of symbolic creativity that are situated in particular local contexts, shaped by specific material circumstances and power relations, and driven by relational encounters that are themselves shaped by both conscious and unconscious drives and desires. Yet the framework of cultural production does not grant particular status to any given practice, process, or product, as “the arts” do through their metonymic function *qua* European culture and civilization. Rather, as a framework, cultural production raises critical questions about the granting of such status and what this process reveals about the material conditions and power relations that shape any given work of symbolic creativity.

For instance, while all practices, processes, and products that come to be bestowed with the status of “the arts” are by definition works of symbolic creativity, not all such work is always granted the status of “the arts” (although some times the adjectivization “arts-based” seems to do that rhetorical work, particularly in education). A cultural production approach to arts education research and practice questions the dynamics by which certain cultural practices, processes, and products come to be classified not only as *apart from* but as *superior to* others. The processes by which something comes to be classified as “the arts” involve institutional and hierarchizing discourses that depend on the exalting function of the term. This exalting function depends on the ellision outlined earlier between “the arts” and dominant European ways of life. As such, every time we invoke “the arts,” we also invoke its association with European civilization and sense of superiority.

This association is further elided in function of projects of assimilation that seek to encompass works of symbolic creativity that might not otherwise be classified as “the arts.” In fact, when discourses of “the arts” are used in reference to practices that are not usually associated with European conceptions of beauty and aesthetics (often from cultural contexts and worldviews that do not actually have a classificatory concept such as “the arts”), the purpose is usually to differentiate and to exalt such practices over others. This often happens through the invocation of a “broad definition” of the arts, in an attempt to encompass certain kinds of creative symbolic work that would not otherwise be considered as “the arts.”¹⁵ While such an invocation might appear benign, generous, and even—by some accounts—politically radical, it works through a “double gesture” that at once seeks to include while at the same time to enforce the boundaries of a category

that is inherently exclusive, precisely because it is exalting (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2018).¹⁶ Ultimately, this double gesture leads to the appropriation of various manners of creative symbolic work and the imposition of hegemonic institutional and discursive formations. This imposition results in the decontextualization and dehistoricization of such practices, precisely because the category of “the arts” must elide its own contextual and historical attachment to the particular “ways of life” from which it evolved, on which its exalting function depends, and for which it serves as a metonym.

The ultimate consequence of this double gesture is the neutralization of the possibility that a given practice of symbolic creativity might be mobilized for the purpose of challenging established orders in the interest of social justice projects. Imagine, for instance, the difference between making and holding posters while chanting and walking in a public protest against police violence versus looking at a series of protest posters while strolling in a quiet and sterile Museum gallery. It is entirely possible that the gallery stroll might “leave us somehow ill at ease” or that the images in the posters might “prod us beyond acquiescence,” to borrow once again from Greene (1991, p. 27). Yet the move into the gallery space entirely removes the material realization of the ways of being that become available in the protest space, anaesthetizing us through the comforts of “the arts” back into acquiescence. Moreover, when “the arts” are invoked in the context of pedagogical projects committed to social change, practitioners are often caught in ethical and political predicaments regarding representation, appropriation, and participation that can be intractable.¹⁷ In short, discourses of “the arts” are never innocent; they are always-already imbued with the power to categorize and to exalt and, in turn, to reissue the supremacist ideology from which the very concept emerges and for which it implicitly stands.

This recognition, in and of itself, is a significant departure from extant approaches to arts education research and practice, if for no other reason because it begins from a skeptical questioning of the value imputed to “the arts.” Instead, a cultural production approach holds “the arts” at bay, deferring its metonymic function by playfully invoking and relinquishing as needed its anachronistic value as a hierarchizing force. This play requires a commitment to dislocating the discourses of “the arts” by deliberately opposing the implied hierarchies that give the concept meaning—no one is inherently more or less talented; nothing is inherently more or less beautiful or worthy. Talent, beauty, and worth are only meaningful in context and in relationship to particular practices and processes that, when removed from context, lose significance. Moreover, a cultural production approach centres symbolic creativity in education not because it might have an “effect” on a desired educational outcome, but because it begins from the premise that education is itself cultural work. As such, education is also inherently unpredictable, and it is precisely in this unpredictability that lies the possibility that symbolic creativity might play a significant role in recasting oppressive social relations. This requires a direct engagement with local conditions that does not aim to strip such practices of their meanings.

Framing “the arts” as cultural production is to take up symbolic work in its full complexity by underscoring the particular material conditions and unequal relations that make such work possible to begin with and against which, at times, such work emerges. A cultural production approach also encompasses a broader set of practices and processes, and in so doing, it insists that creative symbolic work is not the exclusive domain of some talented few, but a horizontal field of practice in which everyone everywhere participates (see DeNora, 2000; Gauntlett, 2018; Willis, 1990). Because of its inclusivity, a cultural production approach does not ignore or attempt to dismiss the practices and products that are typically associated with the discourses of “the arts”; it simply grants them no privileged position. Because it does not owe loyalties to particular

institutions or depend on institutional recognitions, as “the arts” do, a cultural production approach promiscuously embraces all forms of symbolic creativity, taking each expression as a manifestation of important processes of both thickening and contestation. At the same time, it does not seek to colonize works of symbolic creativity, as the discourses of “the arts” typically do, because it grants no privileged status; no cultural practice has a manifest destiny.

In order to take up the discourse of cultural production as a way to engage in research and practice around creative symbolic work, I want to propose that there are five interconnected orders—or aspects—of cultural production through which we might approach this work. These orders of cultural production are a way to think through practice as well as to frame an analysis of cultural production in various settings. In what follows, I want to identify and begin to describe these five different orders as dimensions that must always be accounted for when taking up symbolic work. I will point to some of the interesting and more challenging aspects of each of these orders, underscoring that these orders do not operate independently of each other, but rather imbricate and interact in complex ways. In fact, it is precisely by highlighting the interactions between orders that a cultural production approach illuminates the complex ways in which particular material and symbolic conditions along with the relational and affective dimensions of production shape symbolic creativity and the possibilities that emerge from such work.

Symbolic Order

Once the sound system is in place and everyone gathers on my mother’s terrace for the family New Year’s singalong, everyone pulls out their “cancioneros,” and together we sing the traditional “villancicos” of the Puerto Rican Navidad. The lyrics of these “villancicos” are full of meaning: “Hanging from the cross our saviour; a birdy arrived to pull off the thorns; the blood of Christ stained his feathers; and thus is red, and thus is red, the tiny cardinal.” Unpacking the meaning behind these lyrics, as well as tracing how those of us singing make sense of them, is attending to the symbolic order of cultural production. This is the discursive order of signs and the order of meanings, but also the order of stories and the order through which, often, other orders become manifest and available for interpretation and analysis. For example, not everyone gets to sing these songs into the amplified microphone, and not everyone has to look up the lyrics on their cellphones—all details that can also be interpreted as “signs” of family organization and sense of belonging. It is also the order in which meanings can be challenged and perhaps reconfigured; the sexist humour of “Dame la Mano Paloma” provokes indignation along with laughter, and new gender configurations emerge as a younger generation takes over the performance space.

This order of symbols is of course not autonomous or entirely up for grabs. Signs and meanings are organized by discourses and ideological formations that delimit what symbols become available and whether and how they become legible (Barker, Galasinski, & Galasinski, 2001). Discourse organizes who is able to communicate what to whom and to what effect in particular contexts and power arrangements (Foucault, 1972; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1997). Indeed, while all words—or symbols—are technically always available for creative work, how symbols gain meanings and how they are read by audiences depends on a complex set of circumstances that are related to other orders as well as to the ways in which signification as a deciphering practice is negotiated (Hall, 2001).

To some extent, the symbolic order of cultural production is the most familiar because it is the order through which dominant approaches often establish what counts as “the arts.” There are

entire intellectual and academic edifices, such as Literature and Art History, dedicated to the interpretation of symbols, and it is through this order that the label “the arts” often works as an exalting category. At the same time, from a pedagogical perspective, the symbolic order is important because it is the order of stories and of representation and self-representation, of how we choose to express ourselves in a given time and place and to a particular audience. This symbolic order is also an order of possibilities, the order through which new narratives can be formed, where we can imagine otherwise, but also through which we remain exactly the same. It is the order through which every year my family goes back to the exact same “villancicos,” whether some of us like them or not, through which the orchestra conductor remains the conductor, and through which sedimented ideas about talent and quality assert themselves and become central to the sustaining of other orders, such as the material orders through which social class arrangements are reproduced. Yet there is more to these material orders.

Material Orders

Cultural production is always situated within and in dialectic relationship to material orders. We can attend to these material orders from at least three different perspectives, or registers, each with a different view of what constitutes the material and how the material is constituted. The first approach or register, which is the most common within a hegemonic understanding of “the arts,” focuses on technique and on the skills that an individual (often called “an artist”) uses to work with materials in order to create a work deemed “artistic.” This technical register embraces a view of creativity as a specialized ability that some individuals have to work with (or rather, on) different kinds of materials, whether visual, aural, literary, expressive, affective, or any other kind of material available for creation. A second approach rejects the view of these materials as inert or passive and instead proposes that materials bring their own affordances and resistances (Bennet, 2016; Malafouris, 2008). This “new materialist” or “posthuman” register approaches materials as taking an agentic role in a creative process of becoming that transforms both the human and material, or non-human, actors involved (Braidotti, 2013). A third register takes a macro-social perspective to examine how social structures produce unequal material arrangements that create the conditions for symbolic creativity. This “dialectic” or “cultural” materialism draws on Marxist theory and emphasizes social structures and the unequal distribution of material resources along social class lines that form historical lines of dialectic contestation (Hall, 1980; Williams, 1977; Willis, 1990, 1998).¹⁸

A cultural production framework provides a critical view of the first register and of its underlying assumptions regarding creativity and talent as characteristics of individuals who are uniquely endowed to create artifacts from given materials. Moreover, while it is grounded on a Marxist understanding of class structures and social reproduction, cultural production rejects the determinism that often accompanies this register. Instead, it draws attention to the dynamic interplay between cultural practices and material circumstances, focusing on “the creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices, and group processes to explore, understand, and creatively occupy particular positions in sets of general material possibilities” (Willis, 1981, p. 59). While this approach extends our understanding of human agency and the creative possibilities that emerge within unequal material arrangement, like the first approach, it also holds an anthropocentric view of non-human materials or entities as passively available for creative (re)arrangement. A “new materialist” or “posthuman” register brings attention to what Karen

Barad (2007) describes as “the mutual constitution of entangled agencies,” which “recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their *intra-action* (p. 33, emphasis added). This register brings attention to the role that materials themselves play in processes of becoming and creation, highlighting what materials make possible and how these contribute to a universe of possibilities that is not boundless or limitless, but that presents its own constraints (Malafouris, 2008; Taylor & Hughes, 2016).

The relationship between the “new” and what some might call an “old” materialism is contested. As Cudworth and Hobden (2015) note, “the eclectic and often slippery perspectives that constitute new materialism have been seen to undermine the potency of older more established materialist positions, particularly those associated with Marxism” (p. 135). Indeed, a cultural production approach would question any “new” materialism that forgets or negates that all “intra-actions” are situated within a social context that is marked by the kinds of social inequalities and power dynamics that are the focus of the “old” dialectic cultural materialism (Chow, 2010). After all, as Barad (2011) herself underscores, “who and what gets excluded matters” (p. 451). While these two approaches are premised on different and not entirely compatible understandings of what constitutes the “material” and how “matter” comes to matter, the two can be brought into productive tension when making sense of symbolic creativity (see Ahmed, 2010). At the micro-level of the actual intra-actions involving material and human actors, a “new” materialist approach helps us remain “attuned to the intra-active constitution (rather than two-way production) of subjects and objects, nature and culture, and matter and meaning” (Barad, 2011, p. 450). At the same time, as Cudworth and Hobden (2015) insist, “agential beings, both human and non-human, emerge into a pre-existent web of social relations and unequally distributed power and resources” (p. 139).

Paying attention to both material registers, in both research and practice, is necessary because cultural production never occurs outside of social orders. Social structures shape not just what opportunities and cultural frames are available, but what materials we encounter and encounter us, how we approach these materials and how materials approach us, and the kinds of possibilities that become possible through symbolic creativity. Class positions—in the old materialist terms (along with the various discourses and ideologies that intersect with social class positions and shape subjectivity), shape what sorts of materials we intra-act with and how those intra-actions unfold—in new materialist terms. And this is true, of course, for all relationships, material, human, and with the more-than-human world, which points to the relational order of cultural production. But first, it is crucial to underscore that this work with materials always occurs in a particular place, at a particular time, and that this spatio-temporal order is central to cultural production.

Spatio-Temporal Order

If we were to think of the very act of writing this article you are now reading through the framework of cultural production, we would ask questions about the where and the when of writing as symbolic creativity. It would reveal something important about this work to know that the writing process has been unfolding for over four years (and continues!) and that the first draft was written in 2016 in preparation for a series of keynote addresses in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The words you read and decipher now (symbolic order) have been informed by interactions in places as diverse as a community-arts centre in Johannesburg, university classrooms

in Toronto, and a chapel in Ohio. As I write this very sentence, the COVID-19 pandemic has been ravaging many parts of the world for at least three months, and I am one of the very privileged people who is able to continue working from home without adjusting my livelihood (material order). It is not possible to understand this privilege or to make sense of the conditions of production of this text without acknowledging how histories of colonization, anti-Black racism, and capitalist exploitation led me to being in this place and doing this work at this time or to you being wherever and whenever you are reading this text. We cannot account for the conditions that make cultural production possible or engage cultural production responsibly unless we articulate an understanding of how histories of colonization, exploitation, and marginalization shape where and when symbolic work unfolds. This also means coming to terms with our complicity and articulating our responsibility for ongoing processes of colonization, exploitation, and marginalization.

Attending to the spatio-temporal order also means paying attention to the institutions we inhabit and to the complex process by which spaces become places, which is itself implicated in all the other orders of cultural production (see DeCerteau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1992). Indeed, in many ways, cultural production is also a process of making place, of both engaging and granting meaning to spaces in order to creatively negotiate new possibilities, if at all possible (Soja, 1996). These places are of course historical and must be understood as occurring in time. Cultural production is an unfolding of space-time, even when the artifacts are immobile, because not only are the artifacts always changing, but also because the audiences change and the intra-actions that unfold in every encounter between audiences and artifacts changes them both anew each time (Barad, 2007). In this sense, place and time are inseparable, and cultural production must be understood as well as engaged with this order in mind, even as that very understanding unfolds in relationship to the spaces, places, and times where/when we engage symbolic creativity.

The symbolic, material, and spatio-temporal orders are intimately intertwined. Both sense-making and the intra-actions that evolve in materially constituted processes of creation always occur in a particular space. This space becomes a meaning-full place precisely through the symbolic order and through the materialities that social structures and inequalities make available, which is itself a historical process. Again, we can think about the act of writing (for me) and reading (for you) this text as a form of symbolic creativity in these three orders. The materiality of the table that holds my screen and the keyboard on which my fingers type—which is the outcome of a materially organized social order—unfolds in the very act of writing this text as I inscribe meaning on this sentence—one, word, at, a, time. And elsewhere, in some place that is not this place and some time that is not this time, you read, using different materials to do so and making sense of my words probably not precisely as I intended them. This co-creation of meaning that is also at the heart of symbolic creativity brings our attention to the relational order of cultural production.

Relational Order

The relational order of cultural production highlights how it functions pedagogically, yet this order is often entirely absent from analyses of various kinds of cultural production. For example, I have heard many educators talk about the power of using popular music to engage with students actively in music making as a form of social justice work (Gaztambide-Fernández & Stewart Rose, 2015). Almost always the argument follows the rhetoric of effect, first by naming

some form of popular music (often associated with hip hop) and then by making a claim about how this particular form allowed students to connect to their daily lives and struggles.¹⁹ Almost never do I hear these educators talk about the importance of their own pedagogical role in pursuing such outcomes or the importance of the ways students engage each other through their use of popular music. In short, they ignore the relational order of the work they do with cultural production, often in the interest of elevating the popular music that their students engage to the status of “the arts.” Yet understanding this relational order is crucial if we are to understand and engage the successes and failures of engaging cultural production pedagogically.

Attending to the relational order of cultural production is to attend to the fact that all making is a making with and that to make is always also to connect (Gauntlett, 2018); we never make alone, even if we sometimes feel lonely when we make. If making music with my family is always obviously a collective endeavor, in the lonely hours I spent as a student in the practice rooms of The Boston Conservatory, I was also always in relationship: with my teacher, whose nagging voice echoed constantly; with the composers whose music I was playing; but also with my *abuela*, who was enamored with the idea that I might someday play guitar on a big stage in Puerto Rico. Whether at home with my family, alone in the practice room, or listening to music on my cell phone while writing these words, all sonic experiences—like all creative symbolic works—are, fundamentally, relational. To borrow the words of Sarah Ahmed (2000), “hearing does not take place in my ear, or in yours, but in between our mouths and our ears, in the very proximity and multiplicity of this encounter” (p. 158).

All of the relationships that have shaped the way I hear and listen—including relationships with actual instruments, whether acoustic or electronic, as well as the music I listen to—play a significant role not just in my practice time, but in my relationship with the music, with those who listen to me, or even with those who just *hear* the sounds I make. My cousins don’t come to the singalong because they are drawn by music; they make music in order to satisfy a deeper familiar connection that grounds them as people; they do things with music, not the other way around, and the things they do with music are deeply connected to who they are and, more importantly, who we are becoming. This is precisely why sonic experience and all forms of symbolic creativity are better understood through the lens of cultural production as processes of making and becoming, rather than as processes in which a substance (e.g., some kind of music) has a desired and predictable *effect* (e.g., smarter or more socially conscious individuals). Instead, what is at stake is also the cultural production of *affects*, of modes of being in the world, of being oriented toward our sense of self, toward sensory experience, toward other humans and the more-than-human world. This is the affective order of cultural production.

Affective Order

This affective order has to do with the sensory, emotional, psychic, and embodied ways in which we, in a sense, feel our way into spaces and enter into relationships with others—human and more-than-human—through our bodies, as well as how we are *affected* by these encounters. Paying attention to the affective order of cultural production requires a framework for making sense of subjectivity, as that which emerges through our interactions with subject positions that are made available via discursive regimes and ideological formations that shape—but that cannot contain—the stories of ourselves. In other words, the affective order is deeply organized by the symbolic order, but it unfolds in and through the material, the spatio-temporal, and the relational.

This of course is about relations of power, which require that we tend to the affective order without forgetting the symbolic, the material, the spatio-temporal, or the relational.

The affective order can also be explored through different analytic registers, some of which are more or less compatible with a cultural production framework. The dominant register that is most common within the discourses of “the arts” is the aesthetic register, where aesthetic refers to the sensory relationship between an artifact deemed “artistic” and a viewer or audience. While there are widely divergent—even critical—approaches to aesthetics, most of them rely on some separation between creation, creator, and audience. From a cultural production perspective that takes seriously the importance of relational orders in creative symbolic work, the boundaries between creation, creator, and audience are themselves the outcome of cultural processes that must be examined and accounted for (Fischer-Lichte, 2008; Willis, 1998). Indeed, speaking of the affective order is different from, or at least requires a different approach to, speaking of the aesthetic (e.g., Davis, 2019; Wynter, 1992), as a kind of predictor of what we are supposed to feel when we encounter works of symbolic creativity. Instead, a cultural production approach examines the “structures of feeling” that organize the emotional and affective dimensions of our encounter with symbolic creative work (Williams, 1977). Additionally, through a psychoanalytic register, the affective order leads us to ask questions about our emotional lives and the desires that drive us into making things and creatively arranging, to the extent possible, the symbolic orders of our lives; to make our own stories about who we are (Brushwood-Rose, 2019; Cajete, 2017). While such an approach also tends to individualize processes of symbolic creativity, it brings attention to the desires and the psychic wounds and traumas that drive our need to engage in creative symbolic work in the first place (see Rashkin, 2008).

This affective order of cultural production is largely invisible and not just hard to analyze, but also impossible to prescribe in any way that would be relevant or acceptable to the modernist projects of schooling (see Boler, 1999), or to the rhetoric of effects that grounds dominant approaches to “the arts.” Strangely, it is precisely the desire to affect others’ subjectivities—to “push against”—that often drives the desire to engage cultural production, particularly as part of a broader political engagement in participatory politics (Gaztambide-Fernández & Arráiz Matute, 2013). Indeed, such pushing against is implied in Maxine Greene’s (1991) words, when she suggests that doing this kind of work might “prod us beyond acquiescence” (p. 27). This is the kind of pushing against that Roger Simon (1992) referred to in his book *Teaching Against the Grain*, the kind of pushing against that, in a sense, is always implicated in pedagogical projects (Gaztambide-Fernández & Arráiz Matute, 2013). But our own interiorities are difficult to access, and the “effects” of any such pushing are usually deferred to some other time, some other place, some other arrangement, some other moment of symbolic exchange. It is precisely this deferral that requires a more complex framework that takes account of the overlapping operations of cultural production at the symbolic, the material, the spatio-temporal, the relational, and the affective orders.

The Politics of Cultural Production at Work

Together, the orders of cultural production help us, as researchers and as practitioners, to bring attention to the political life of symbolic creativity by making explicit the intimate links between creation and participation and putting them to work on behalf of particular political projects. In this final section, I will offer a brief reflection on how the orders of cultural production

This is political work, but it is also deeply affective work, as it requires exposing the ways in which the desire for belonging and being recognized is hinged on discourses of citizenship that at the same time undermine Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.



Image 2 – Youth Researchers during a “gallery walk” identifying themes for research projects. Youth Research Lab, Winter, 2019.

Over the 20 weeks that we spend together in the classrooms (and often hallways, gyms, and libraries) of the UIEC, our work together unfolds through the development of research questions and the practices of engaging each other relationally through the exploration of research methods. The youth researchers identify areas of interest and concern that are typically related to the many relationships that have shaped their lives at home, at school, at work, and in the urban spaces they navigate. After conducting their collaborative research projects, the youth researchers choose various modes of creative symbolic work to share their findings with the community, including public theatre, spoken word performances, murals, comics, panels, and documentaries. The very process of creating and sharing these artefacts is imbued with the relational and affective work that shapes the projects from beginning to end.

In all this work, we very seldomly mobilize the legitimizing discourses of the arts, and then only when the students themselves choose that language as relevant to their practice—as part of the story they choose to tell about themselves. A cultural production analysis benefits from the recognition that discourses of “the arts” have significant force and that they are part of the symbolic orders that shape the meanings attached to particular practices in context. While it understands such a force as stemming from the metonymic role of the concept in relationship to European civilization, particularly as it is elided, it does not pretend that such a force is always detrimental, at least not immediately. Instead, a cultural production approach frames the problem of “the arts” by asking first what symbolic purpose such discourses play and what material conditions they enable or disable in particular situations, as well as what role they may play in making places in time and the relationships and desires they enable. In other words, a cultural production approach takes the very notion of “the arts” as part of the symbolic, material, relational, affective, and spatio-temporal orders that shape cultural production. In that sense, while a cultural production framework does not *oppose* the arts, it also does not participate in the continued reproduction of the hierarchies the concept implies. In fact, if symbolic orders can be altered through cultural production, then it is also possible to relocate and re-signify what we mean by “the arts” in order to put the concept to work for other purposes and perhaps to hold the institutions of the arts, which have accumulated so much prestige and wealth, accountable for their public role and to hold their feet to the proverbial fire.

While I don’t offer easy solutions in this article, the trajectories of arts education research to date have hardly provided a real exit for arts education out of its paradoxical predicament of the

rhetoric of effects. Most research remains focused on a banal empiricist logic that seeks to establish the effects of arts education in order to either justify its position or to demonstrate its contributions to larger educational projects. The substantialist and successionist logic has failed to grant arts education a secure place in educational projects, even though most mainstream educational projects are premised on the same banal empiricism. Instead, a cultural production approach starts from the premise that symbolic work is the stuff of daily life; it is the fodder of pedagogical relations across contexts and time.

Rather than framing cultural practices as *doing something to* educational experience, a cultural production approach begins from the premise that educational experience is always-already imbued with cultural practice; it takes symbolic work as a point of departure, rather than a destination. In this way, a cultural production approach does not reject “the arts,” but rather it makes explicit the symbolic orders and ideologies that imbue such discourses with meaning, as well as the ways in which we as subjects desire the positioning that such labels might grant while repositioning such discourses—along with the practices and products typically indexed within them—in a horizontal matrix of cultural practices. While “the arts,” as discourses, may have much to lose in such a recasting, I believe arts educators and researchers have much to gain from a cultural production approach that situates creative symbolic work at the heart of all learning. To close with the words of Martinican anti-decolonial theorist Frantz Fanon (1963), from his essay on National Culture in *The Wretched of the Earth*:

We must join [the people] in that fluctuating movement which they are now just giving a shape to, and which, as soon as it has started, will be the signal for everything to be called into question. Let there be no mistake about it; it is to this zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come; and it is there that our souls are crystallized and that our perceptions and our lives are transfused with light. (p. 227)

Notes

1. This orthodoxy, of course, is in stark contrast with the dismissal of “the arts” in mainstream schooling and education policy, where the “three R’s” and STEM are pretty much the only focus, except of course in the schooling of elites (Parekh & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2017).
2. The tendency to group anything remotely “creative” or that relies on images, sound, and/or movement, etc., as “arts-based” is deeply undertheorized and problematic, despite the large body of work on the topic.
3. I will use the phrases “creative symbolic work” and “symbolic creativity” interchangeably.
4. Greene notes parenthetically that encounters with the arts “(should leave persons)” in some new state of awareness, suggesting that while such outcomes cannot be guaranteed, they are desirable. But who precisely needs the kinds of shocks that the arts presumably cause? And how do we know whether anyone, including ourselves, has been properly shocked by such encounters? Under what conditions? And to what end?
5. In Arabic, the term “al-funoon” plays a similar categorical function “and refers to anything artistic including skill and technique (craftsmanship)” (Atiqa Hachimi, Personal Communication, April 25, 2020).
6. See the chapters in *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education* (Kraehe et al., 2018).
7. Greene is not alone in imagining the arts as a tool for social transformation (e.g., Bell & Desai, 2011; Quinn et al., 2012). Many progressive and even critical scholars are enamored with the idea of “the arts” as a transformative force. Elsewhere, I draw on my own experiences as a music student at a professional Conservatory to challenge the notion that exposure to the arts somehow transforms individuals into agents of social change (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010). If making music really did make people more open to difference, more democratically minded, more attentive to oppression, more sensitive to racism, sexism, or homophobia, organizations like the symphonic orchestra, which are deeply hierarchical and oppressive in nature, would be long dead—or at least seriously transformed (see also Bradley, 2007; Lamb, 1996).

8. The chapters in Kraehe et al. (2018) offer a range of illustrations from several different disciplines and in different contexts, including perspectives and experiences from the Global South.
9. This impulse to appropriate is also behind the euphemism “arts-based,” particularly in education and educational research, where it works to signal that certain kinds of artifacts and practices are *like-but-not-quite* “the arts,” again illustrating how the concept operates through an exalting logic.
10. The parallel to the “proper” cultivation of land and to the colonial ideology of Manifest Destiny should be obvious here, but deserves more attention (see McCoy, 2014).
11. In 2019, this phenomenon made headline news in New York City, for example, where all specialized high schools, of arts as well as math, science, and other kinds, were under scrutiny for becoming homogenous and serving mostly affluent families (see Camera, 2019; Shapiro, 2019).
12. The chapters in Levinson et al. (1996) offer a critical grounding and a range of illustrations of how the concept of cultural production can be applied in the context of schools.
13. See Bennett (2016) on what he describes as the “resistances and affordances of matter” (p. 72), a point to which I will return later.
14. This is not the place to take up the thorny question of what is “creativity,” which would distract from the main purpose of outlining a framework based on cultural production. David Gauntlett (2018) offers an excellent discussion of the problem of defining creativity and provides a definition using the word “making” in a similar way as I use the words “produce” and “work,” which of course betrays my own allegiances to Marxist cultural materialism. Importantly, Gauntlett also highlights the affective dimensions of making, concluding that “creativity is something that is *felt*” (p. 90), a point to which I will return.
15. Some obvious examples include practices associated with Hip Hop, but also visual, musical, and dramatic practices used during protests as well as various kinds of online and other forms of media creation that are sometimes granted the status of “the arts.”
16. Gaztambide-Fernández et al. (2018) propose a “dual-lens” framework “to observe as well as challenge the underlying relationship between ‘the arts’ and the racist ideologies and racial hierarchies that ensure white supremacy” (p. 4).
17. Sarah Switzer (2018, 2019) offers thoughtful analyses of the kinds of challenges that emerge within participatory processes involving symbolic creativity when “the arts” are invoked. See also Brushwood Rose & Granger (2013).
18. It is worth noting that this is not the “cultural materialism” of Marvin Harris (1979), which also builds on Marxist theory but is far more deterministic and based on essentialist views of culture than the British tradition initiated by Raymond Williams (1961, 1977) and E. P. Thompson (1963).
19. Examples of these kinds of claims are abundant in the literature. Some often cited examples include Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) and Stovall (2006). These two examples are important because, while they do mobilize the rhetoric of effect, they also turn their attention to pedagogy and the relational dimensions of this work in important ways.

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