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Callejo Perez, D. M., Breault, D.A. & White, W. L. (2014). *Curriculum as spaces: Aesthetics, community, and the politics of place*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

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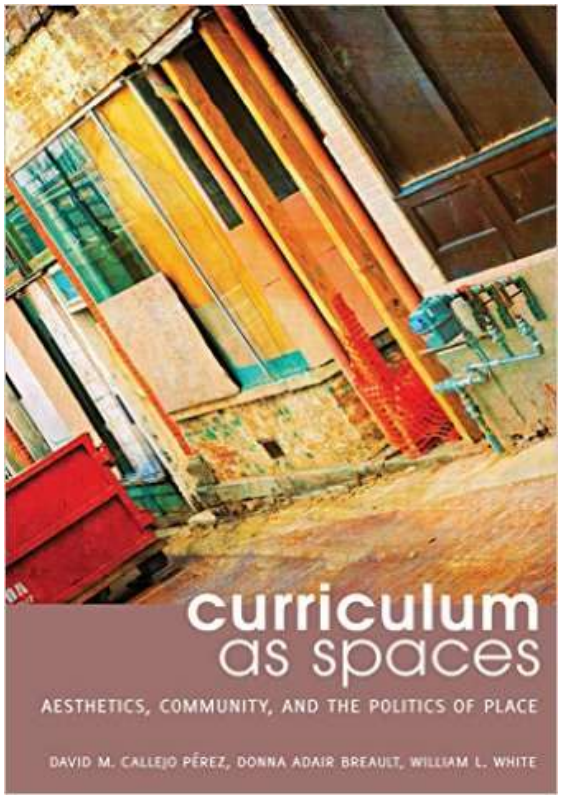
Curriculum as Spaces: Aesthetics, Community, and the Politics of Place by David M. Callejo Perez, Donna Adair Breault, and William L. White is Volume 45 of editor William F. Pinar's Complicated Conversations Book Series of Curriculum Studies. According to the publisher's website (2015), the books in this series aim to "testify to the ethical demands of our time, our place, our profession" and ask "What does it mean for us to teach now, in an era structured by political polarization, economic destabilization, and the prospect of climate catastrophe?" *Curriculum as Spaces* uses theoretical arguments to recommend aesthetic curricula as a solution to Paulo Freire's (2007) banking-like curriculum models in which curriculum is intended to "fill" students with content that is insignificant and "detached from reality" (p. 68). The authors propose that the current practice of preparing students for standardized tests only continues to objectify students and teachers within the educational system, and instead they argue to re-center curriculum "on the common experiences of communities and the individuals who inhabit them" (Callejo Perez, Breault, & White, p. xi).



Stites, R. E. (2016, March 2). Review of *Curriculum as Spaces: Aesthetics, Community, and the Politics of Place,* by D. M. Callejo Perez, D. A. Breault, and W. L. White. *Education Review*, 23.
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In the prologue, the authors present three themes that evolved through their study and conversation. Aesthetic education is defined as the "lived experiences and situated contexts of learners" (p. xiii) and develops into the foundation of the proposed place-based curricula. Cosmopolitan communities require stakeholders to be actively engaged in transactional work which helps to support meaningful growth and identity formation. Finally, urban spaces are questioned in an effort to uncover the "uniformity with which recovery, education, and social plans have been unilaterally imposed on large, yet infinitely diverse cities" (p. xiii). Callejo Perez, Breault, and White develop these themes by building on educational philosophies as a means of pushing stakeholders to rethink curriculum; remove it from within federal mandates, and replace it with contextualized local and aesthetic curricula.

Chapter one covers the transactional spaces of curriculum and builds upon Dewey's theory of transaction in which students are engaged learners within their environments and not just passive receivers of information in those environments. To develop transactional spaces of curriculum, perceptions of educational purpose have to change, and "by introducing an alternative image for curriculum, we may not significantly influence the degree to which the general public *understands* the complexity of schooling, but we can change the manner in which they *perceive* the nature of schooling" (p. 5). The authors recognize that this shift in perception is utopian, and rely on Foucault's 1967 lecture to architects in which he calls heterotopias – real spaces – "the ideal and the real simultaneously," for "while they are outside of reality, they can signify the real world." (p. 12). Callejo Perez, Breault, and White believe that by looking at curricula as real spaces, school reform becomes a part of stakeholders' discourse thus inviting conversations of alternative assessments, curriculum purpose, and community identity.

Chapter two defines the aesthetic movement in education. The authors write a genealogy of the philosophies of aesthetic education beginning with prehistoric art representations and stretching through Kant, Dewey, and Ranciere among others. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White hypothesize the historical use of art not just for its beauty, but for its role as a stimulus for conversations about identity throughout history. They trace educational aesthetic movements beginning with Plato and Aristotle which dominated the discourse until the 17th century. The Age of Enlightenment presented a new voice; Kant, who called for humans to use native intelligence of reason to relate to the senses. John Dewey led the third movement where he aims to connect art with life allowing individuals to reflect on their own experiences. Finally, Ranciere positions aesthetic encounters as moments for modern political questioning. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White end the chapter with a modern definition for aesthetic education which argues for it to "permeate all aspects of education while serving as the corrective lens that refocuses pedagogy within a localized community" (p. 31).

Chapter three is where Callejo Perez, Breault, and White begin to present their own definitions and theories for place-based curricula by examining the role of ritual in promoting cosmopolitan curriculum communities. Jennings (1982) informs the authors' definition of rituals: they are activities that "not only teach participants to see differently, they also teach them to act differently" by offering "patterns of action through response" (p. 43). Callejo Perez, Breault, and White define cosmopolitanism as "connections – being in relationship with others, even when those connections span hundreds of years" (p. 35). The authors argue that these kinds of relationships allow education stakeholders to achieve progress and greater authenticity within the education

system. They believe that a cosmopolitan curriculum is complex, social, historical, reflective, and lived. In other words, Foster (2002) says it shifts the role of schools from organization to community (as cited in Callejo Perez, Breault, & White, 2014, p. 35), and by doing this stakeholders in cosmopolitan communities can engage in progressive conversations of connecting, questioning, and understanding.

Chapter four focuses on radical curricula to recapture democratic spaces. The United States is a country of immigrants, which suggests a blended national identity; however, Callejo Perez, Breault, and White use Castenell and Pinar (1993) to explain that race and identity are different. Race "grows out of the individual's past," while identity is "how the individual deals with her past, and what role society assigns that past" (p. 50). A radical curriculum is individual and autobiographical. It links the issues of the nation's past to the goals of its future by crafting alternative narratives in the present to provide individuals opportunities to reflect on past experiences as a means of altering their futures. Radical curricula should be studied through democratic contexts to confront historical and present conflict while working to build a societal identity for the future. The authors view these curriculum spaces as occasions for social change; issues are addressed in schools and communities thus allowing for individuals and small groups to build identities in cosmopolitan relationships that use the present to renegotiate the problems of the past by seeking solutions for the future.

Chapter five moves from theory to practice to address the role that higher education should take in regards to research and stewardship in the field of curriculum, particularly its place in urban communities. The authors aim to present a transfer from stewardship in urban communities to actual practice of change where the political, economic, and environmental shifts are carried out along side community stakeholders. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White argue that "the major problem with urban policy today is that too much decision making takes place in Washington and within corporations instead of in communities and homes of those impacted" (p. 68). The authors suggest that social action and change needs to be addressed by measurable problems – they look specifically at societal concerns of infant mortality rates and disconnected youth, claiming that through collaboration with the community, societal change is possible. They suggest that integrated services reach out beyond the schools and into the community to create cohesion. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White stress that education is the key to all change as long as the curriculum is holistic and not strictly academic.

Chapter six provides a historical look at educational reforms, their beginnings, successes, and failures. They begin with Horace Mann's Common Schools and their push for a consensus of educational outcomes. They then move into more modern reforms that still hold influence on our schools today including *A Nation at Risk*, No Child Left Behind, and most recently the Common Core State Standards. The chapter concludes that "the importance of education has taken a backseat to the importance of testing" (p. 92) instead of fostering curiosity and autonomous learning. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White again emphasize that place-based aesthetic curriculum is a reform effort that "awakens the senses across and between all disciplines and challenges rule-bound notions of education that ignore both space and place as determining factors in the lived conditions of individuals and whole communities" (p. 93). They provide more practical explanations in this chapter including the role of teacher as guide, the importance of connecting learning to students' every-day lives, and the use of

place-based curricula for exposing disproportionate social power. Most importantly, place-based education is grounded in self-reflection which encourages and equips students to become agents of change in their individual lives and communities.

The conclusion of the book presents three fictional film examples of aesthetic encounters that encouraged conversations about complicated places. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White first present the 2001 film *No Man's Land* to demonstrate contested political spaces between Bosnian and Serbian soldiers who are physically in a neutral ground but fundamentally at war. The second example, *Kandahar* (2001), also looks at political spaces where an Afghan refugee returns to her homeland in hopes of rescuing her sister. Finally a 2000 film, *Songcatcher*, displays how hope can exist in contested spaces as an outsider professor develops relationships with a small mountain community. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White state that these examples are intended to provoke action among readers to engage in cosmopolitan communities as a means of reimagining curriculum as space.

Curriculum as Spaces: *Aesthetics, Community, and the Politics of Place* is a critical work and worthy of a philosophical read. The theories presented are provoking and intentionally crafted to encourage social and educational reform. They are well-supported and engaging. Unfortunately, the last few chapters, those that call for action, leave the reader unsatisfied because they lack a distinct real-world illustration. It is a bit confusing as to why Callejo Perez, Breault, and White would choose to use fictional examples from film as their illustrations of aesthetic encounters that encouraged conversations about complicated places. While the fictional examples embrace the aesthetic elements discussed in chapter two, the authors missed an opportunity to share real-life examples of successful place-based curricula. Current literature is rich with qualitative data that demonstrates how the theories of *Curriculum as Spaces* play out in real-world rural, suburban, and urban spaces.

Chapter five is somewhat problematic only in the sense that the authors' focus on urban spaces limits the power that place-based curricula can have in all school environments. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White aim to propose curriculum design that embraces the urban community and positions schools as a place for community learning, but they fail to accomplish this without making the urban communities sound desperate and inadequate. They pull from Freire (1970/1997) stating that "place-based social justice should evolve into a set of experiences that attempts to inspire the notion of *educators as change agents*, seeking to liberate students through reflection and action, thereby living out theory in practice (p. 81). While the authors were able to capture place-based curriculum for linking schools and communities as a way to combat societal concerns, they miss the opportunity to focus on the strengths and resources that urban communities can share with schools through radical curricula. They position educators as the agents of change instead of looking for change agents from within the already existing cosmopolitan relationships.

As a whole, the text offers a strong theoretical and philosophical foundation for place-based aesthetic curriculum reform. Callejo Perez, Breault, and White draw argumentative support from classical theorists like Plato and place them in dialog with more modern voices like Freire and Dewey. They are convincing in regards to why this curriculum design is beneficial and essential for the future of American education. The first four chapters are cohesive and thought-provoking, encouraging the exact movement for place-based curriculum that that authors set out to achieve.

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