



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

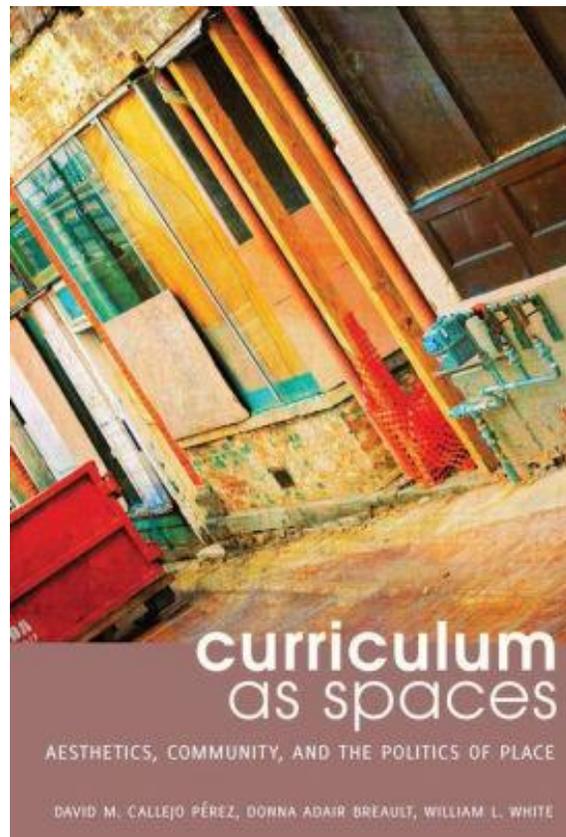
Pp. 119

ISBN: 978-1-4331-2510-2

**Reviewed by Claire Amy Schultz
University of Nebraska, Kearney
United States**

Contributing to the complicated conversations informing curriculum and curriculum theory, *Curriculum as Spaces: Aesthetics, Community, and the Politics of Place* co-authors Callejo Pérez, Breault, and White (2014) work to reframe major ideas in the field. William Pinar served as the editor and his influence can be detected throughout the themes discussed in the book. As a theoretical discussion pertaining to education, and specifically to the field of curriculum theory in education, *Curriculum as Spaces* challenges readers to engage with curriculum and develop new relationships with curriculum theory in order to guide educators and stakeholders in complicated conversations about education.

The prologue addresses the theoretical origins of the discussions throughout the book. Acknowledging the almost three decades of William Pinar's work that described the need for place-based education considerate of the community and political ideologies that frame educational



spaces, this book moves the discussion forward with ideas of bi-directional interactions with communities. Callejo Pérez et al. (2014) emphasize the need for a cosmopolitan engagement with people and the world and frame this book with a Deweyan understanding of the complicated relationship between the individual and the community, acknowledging how both simultaneously work to shape the other. In other words, the authors view the organization of schools to extend beyond the traditional conception of modern schools (e.g., school boards, school buildings, teachers, students, administration, superintendents) and describe the organization and engagement of schools in relation to other forms of social life, specifically communities and more abstract notions space. Ideally the authors hope schools to be the sites where students engage and interact with each other and the world at large creating a type transactional space for teaching and learning where interconnectedness is highly valued. Seeing schools as explicitly connected and interconnected to communities and the world sets the conceptualizations of curriculum offered in this book apart from more traditional ideas of curriculum as discrete forms of knowledge.

The interconnected themes presented by Callejo Pérez et al. (2014) contrast the fragmented perspective informing the current state of education in the United States. The scapegoating of teachers coupled with compartmentalizing and standardization of school curriculum has created public discourses that apoliticize and generalize education almost to a point of irrelevancy. Dealing with non-frangible forms of hegemonic powers that structure the interaction between students and teachers has limited not only the knowledge deemed worth knowing but has also had an epistemological impact. Standardization of curriculum has worked to compartmentalize

knowledge in discrete forms that exist in isolation, and the authors view this as particularly damaging to how individuals grow to understand and ultimately interact with the world around them. While there would have to be considerable adjustments in policy to decenter the standardization that has lead us here, Callejo Pérez et al. (2014) asserted opening the conversation of a cosmopolitan and bi-directional approach to space, time, and community may begin to disrupt contemporary conceptions of curriculum.

What begins as an informal conversation between the authors discussing curriculum, curriculum theory, and general ideas about education evolves into a more formal dialogue through this book. These conversations describe a multi-scalar approach to space, time, and engagement through a recovered form of aesthetic education, which for the authors deal primarily with raising the critical consciousness of individuals. These efforts are made with the goal of displacing current school deform (Pinar, 2012) curricula of mind-numbing standardization and convergent compliance termed by the authors as “anesthetic educational experiences.”

By viewing aesthetic education as a type of lived curriculum, the authors asserted the existence of meaning outside of the self and the subject. This notion is important in understanding their perspective on the rethinking of communities, spaces, and engagement. Similar to Pinar (2012), Callejo Pérez et al. (2014) want the reader to reconceptualize the organization and intersections of the curriculum to promote cosmopolitan or worldly and holistic thinking of the concepts of time, space, and engagement. The role these concepts play in the formation of individual’s identities is also of interest to the authors and provides another connection to Pinar’s work and his use of language in discussing curriculum and

curriculum theory. In this idea of a lived curriculum the formation of individual identity occurs concurrently with the identity of the community in an autobiographical sense.

Throughout the book, the authors ask the reader to envision curriculum as space, an idea that is central to understanding the ideas Callejo Pérez et al. (2014) put forth later in the book. This idea of curriculum as a space helps the reader identify and understand the political, historical, and cultural contexts of curriculum. Through the consideration of curriculum as space, the authors situate curriculum as a local affair in which personal narratives form the collective identity of the community. Identity is also considered in the authors' view of curriculum as space, as personal and collective identities are crafted by the space. As both the subject and the object of the curriculum space an epistemological assumption and moral duty described by the authors help people face ontological anxieties of their existence. The authors describe the need for curriculum theory to move beyond the mimetic conception of identity toward a full recognition of the tensions that create identity and anticipate the aesthetic experiences that shape identity and space to understand curriculum as space.

The three distinct themes of space, time, and engagement are discussed in multiple contexts in the book. Through the ideas of aesthetics, communities, and rituals of curriculum, the authors address past epistemological novelties, which linked thought and experience. Here the main ideas of space, time, and bi-directional engagement of communities add to the conception of curriculum and curriculum theory. With these meaningful additions, the authors pay considerable attention to the history of aesthetic theory in order to provide the reader a rich context for understanding the ways in which aesthetics is applied in this work.

The authors' presentation of the idea of curriculum as a space seems to encompass more than just location or the location of community. Callejo Pérez et al. (2014) envision the conceptualization of the community couched in a cosmopolitan perspective where there is an understanding of the communities' relationships and involvement on a global level while maintaining the local identity(ies) of the individual(s) and smaller community. The authors liken this approach to an ecological educational endeavor where the most productivity is achieved while inflicting the least amount of damage to both the individuals and environment. The authors want the reader to understand space from this new vantage point while being sensitive to issues in curriculum and curriculum theory that arise when a bureaucratic business model is applied (e.g., subverting teacher autonomy, marginalizing student interests for profit, promoting cookie cutter curriculum).

A significant part of the solution offered by the authors to some of the aforementioned problems associated with contemporary conceptions of curriculum and its implementation is developing a critical transactional pedagogy. Callejo Pérez et al. (2014) asserted that the creation and maintenance of cosmopolitan educational communities are essential to performing transactional pedagogy. Because learning, in the view of the authors, occurs through negotiations of space, time, and history, educators should be pluralistic in their understanding and foster communities where teaching and learning can flourish within and between its community members.

In the authors' view transactional pedagogy, in conjunction with place-based curriculum may resolve some issues that teachers and schools encounter associated with imposing business models. But due to education's political and institutional nature, educators will still be faced with national curriculum that operates with an apolitical

façade, is overly generalistic, standardized, and fails to acknowledge the context of the place and people who are engaged with the curriculum. The authors do mention that reconceptualizing curriculum as space does not address these political and institutional issues; however, there is a strong need in the field to understand the historical, political, and cultural factors that shape spaces to create multi-directional articulations between lived curriculum, small communities, and global communities.

The multi-directional narrative of curriculum as space created by Callejo Pérez et al. (2014) seems entrenched in similar language used in the work of Pinar (2012) and appears

to be a pedagogical extension of his writing on curriculum theory. While this book heavily relies on theory and offers rich theoretical background, the authors' discussion on place-based curriculum and transactional pedagogy may in fact be more accessible to practitioners in the field. Curriculum as a complicated conversation should be acknowledged and understood by and through the public discourse on education, curriculum theory, and education reform. Because this is a difficult time for teaching professionals and the field of education, this book offers fresh perspective on the ways in which the complicated conversation can move forward and positively affect education.

References

- Callejo Pérez, D. M., Breault, D. A., & White, W. (2014). *Curriculum as spaces: Aesthetics, community, and the politics of place*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Pinar, W. (2012). *What is curriculum theory?* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

About the Reviewer

Claire Amy Schultz, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of art education at University of Nebraska, Kearney. She is a decorated art teacher specializing in performative pedagogy and aesthetic theory. Her larger research is situated around the lived experience of the arts and arts education.



education review // reseñas educativas

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

editors: **gustavo e. fischman /
melissa cast-brede / gene v glass**

Supported by the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University

 *Education Review/ Reseñas Educativas/ Resenhas Educativas* is supported by the edXchange initiative's Scholarly Communications Group at the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. Copyright is retained by the first or sole author, who grants right of first publication to the *Education Review*. Readers are free to copy, display, and distribute this article, as long as the work is attributed to the author(s) and ***Education Review***, it is distributed for non-commercial purposes only, and no alteration or transformation is made in the work. More details of this Creative Commons license are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>. All other uses must be approved by the author(s) or ***Education Review***. ***Education Review*** is published by the Scholarly Communications Group of the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University.

Disclaimer: The views or opinions presented in book reviews are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of *Education Review*.

Connect with *Education Review* on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Education-Review/178358222192644>) and on Twitter @EducReview