

# Editorial: Navigating Divides

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We all navigate divides daily. Some are easy and seamless and others are a consistent challenge. Some divides separate people and privilege one group over another, for instance some children and adults have to code switch their use of language, while others are able to seamlessly speak their version of English at home, at school, at work, to their friends, and throughout their day. There are students whose home knowledge aligns very closely to the school knowledge that is valued and other students who encounter very different sets of knowledge as they navigate the home-school divide. Great divides also exist for some students or educators who can show or must conceal their sexual orientation in their home, school, workplace, or any other setting. In other cases, a student's, artist's, or educator's perceived disability creates a divide between that individual and peers; such a divide may be created by institutional policies rather than actual ability.

While some divides have obvious physical and geographic markers such as living in a community of one socio-economic status and teaching in a community with another, others are more subtle. Great divides exist among educators with regard to their philosophical orientations about how people learn or the purpose of education. Interestingly, many educators do not articulate a formal philosophy of learning and thus they may be unaware of the divide between their methods and those of coworkers. When we collaborate with our peers, we may also encounter divides related to when and how we were educated, who we are as people,

how we see the world, and our hopes for the future of art education.

Informal learning environments can be the site of divides as well. I remember taking a group of students on a field trip to a large urban museum during my first year teaching seventh grade. Seeing one student hesitate and grow nervous on the steps outside the building because she was fearful of entering such a large and grand place has stuck with me for more than 20 years. For her, this economic divide was so great that it evoked fear; I had not considered that divide before that moment. In fact, I thought I was being a good teacher because I created a field trip opportunity. I learned many lessons that day, none related to art.

Social theories including critical race theory, feminism/gender studies, post-colonial theory, post-modernism, queer theory/sexuality studies, disability studies, critical studies of social class, and media theories are well suited to help us study, critique, understand, and possibly change divides. Some people view divides as negatives to be overcome. While some certainly are negative, others may be more nuanced and provide a range of challenges and opportunities. If we only consider divides as negative, this limitation may prevent us from seeing the possibilities of working across a divide while recognizing its existence and not trying to change it.

This is my first time as the editor of a journal and I encountered many difficult tasks. One that was delightfully difficult was deciding the order of the articles accepted for this volume. As Dave Robbins, the editorial assistant, and I considered the article topics, we identified a few thematic trends. The first trend includes divides within formal educational environments related to our roles as artists, educators, students, university supervisors, student teachers, among others. The second trend encompasses how our work in or understandings of informal learning sites relates to divides. Because of the number of articles related to institutional settings in preK-12 or higher education settings, we start with this theme. This grouping of articles is the largest within this volume of the journal, perhaps speaking to the numerous divides that we encounter in our workplaces. R. Darden Bradshaw confronts some of the divides she encoun-

tered during her early years of teaching including the difficulties she faced being the type of teacher she wanted to be. Justin Sutters addresses the divide that many student teachers face when entering schools where they sometimes act like tourists because of the new and unfamiliar setting. Karyn Sandlos and Miriam Dolnick write collaboratively, crossing the divide between professor and student. In their article, they discuss student teaching, but focus mainly on the divide between the expectations held by the student teacher and the cooperating teacher. Alice Wexler unpacks the divides prevalent within disabilities studies and uses examples from her own teaching at the college level to articulate ways to address divides related to students with different abilities. Kristopher J. Holland and Nandita Baxi Sheth address how they navigated a divide within their teaching practice related to the physical structure of their classroom space. Pamela Harris Lawton explores the various *attitudes* held by people in higher education and school art teachers related to the different degrees and trajectories that artists and educators choose.

One artist, Jennifer Combe, created a series of images that make visible the divide between those who score well on standardized tests and those whose abilities are not measured sensitively with those instruments. Intentionally placed in the middle of this volume, her piece acts as a bridge to the articles that address divides in informal learning environments or daily life. Eunjung Choi considers the display of Korean art objects loaned to the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Because she previously worked at the National Museum of Korea that owned these particular objects, her familiarity with them leads to fascinating insights about the created Korean context in Houston and the divides there. Also addressing museum practice, Stuart Robinson describes a project he created that navigates the divide between curators and the general public, through investigating the displays people create on their refrigerators. In their article, Alice Lai and Yichien Cooper consider the ideas of gender divides, feminism, and girly culture and how children construct the concept of gender in their surrounding visual culture. Aaron Knochel addresses a divide between actual and potential by theorizing

our online selves (avatars) and our “real” world selves, challenging notions of identity, aging, and reality. Working collaboratively on their polyvocal text, Gloria Wilson, Sara Scott Shields, Kelly Guyotte, and Brooke Hofsess investigate the divides around race that existed within their informal arts-based research and writing group.

A common thread in these diverse articles is how the authors use theory as a means to understand their lived realities. Through identifying, theorizing, and thinking through divides, the authors offer new possibilities for how we might navigate these divides.

Rather than focusing only the potential negative aspects of divides, these authors consider many possibilities including ways to rethink a divide or ways to understand a divide. The authors also overtly address how they used social theory to find ways to navigate divides as well as changes they made in their daily practice after recognizing a divide. This approach to theorizing daily practice and building deeper understandings of the divides that are inherent in our work and our lives may help us find ways to build more bridges across divides.