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Editors' Introduction

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## Editors' Introduction

Education is often upheld as an equalizing force, a means for disrupting race- and class-based disparities across countless factors, such as income, housing, employment, and mobility. Constituents across the board, from politicians to parents, point to education as the key to change. Yet, inequity persists, and many scholars have detailed how, contrary to this discourse, education is actually complicit in its reproduction (see e.g., Apple, 2012; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). As Rebecca Shamash shows us in this issue, income levels perpetuate elitism in higher education, but this tends to be masked by discourses of meritocracy in the neoliberal era. Still, the authors of the remaining four pieces explore the nuances of everyday moves that students and teachers are taking or could take to challenge power and inequity at the classroom or school level. Zachary A. Casey and Michael McCanless revisit the work of Kliebard, Akin, and Rugg, prompting us to consider capitalist motivations in schools and where there are openings for making curriculum more relevant to students' immediate worlds. It is this attentiveness to students' lived experiences that teachers seek to enact with curricular approaches such as youth participatory action research (YPAR) and "school-as-museum" (D'Acquisto, 2002) learning, as explored by Christopher J. Buttimer and Genevieve Caffrey and Rebecca Rogers, respectively. Both approaches attempt to promote student power and decision-making while altering the teacher's role. Yet, Irene H. Yoon reminds us how complex teachers' moment-to-moment decisions about exercising power can be by exploring how one teacher confronts racial humor in the classroom. Together, the pieces in this issue further nuance the ongoing conversation about education's reproductive forces within the neoliberal context, yet the everyday openings for students and teachers to challenge these forces.

In our first article, "(Re)production of the Contemporary Elite Through Higher Education: A Review of Critical Scholarship," Rebecca Shamash takes a critical look at interdisciplinary literature to discuss socioeconomic inequality and the ways that contemporary elitism is enacted and reproduced in modern higher education systems. The author argues that increased diversity in degree attainment is observable in terms of race and gender, but that diversity of class is still lacking in the most selective colleges and universities in the United States. Using neoliberalism and meritocracy as frameworks, the author discusses the role of income, rather than inheritance, as a current driver of access to prestigious universities, and the idea that inequality is propelled by neoliberalism, and then justified by meritocratic discourses.

In our second article, "Looking Backward to Go Forward: Toward a Kliebardian Approach to Curriculum Theory," Zachary A. Casey and Michael McCanless draw on the work of Herbert Kliebard, arguing that his work can be utilized as a lens of curricular theory to open up radical possibilities in education today. The authors consider the Eight-Year Study, and textbooks of Harold Rugg specifically, to demonstrate how these important educational events of the 1930s did not lead to federal centralization of curriculum and school policies. The authors offer these instances as similar conditions to the economic and racial moment of today, and contemplate how reflection on those historical examples can

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offer alternatives to the *commonsense* (Kumashiro, 2008) approaches that we are seeing today.

In our third article, "The Challenges and Possibilities of Youth Participatory Action Research for Teachers and Students in Public School Classrooms," Christopher J. Buttimer examines how two public school teachers approach the implementation of YPAR. The author argues that the bulk of existing research about YPAR has focused on teachers and contexts that are outside of the typical core academic classroom—such as university-based partnerships, or teachers of electives or programs that are offered outside of the regular school day. In contrast, Buttimer's study focuses on teachers without substantial training or support in YPAR who teach core academic subjects in urban public schools. Using action research and ethnographic approaches over two years, the author analyzes these teachers' YPAR implementation to compare their experiences with the epistemology, implementation, outcomes, and school-based challenges of YPAR that have been identified in previous research. Buttimer finds that structural and professional challenges—such as curricular requirements, class sizes, testing pressures, time constraints, and a lack of YPAR training—did limit or distort implementation. Yet, the two teachers successfully adhered to some of the central epistemological principles of YPAR—including students taking authentic action on critical issues in their communities—and achieved some of the intended outcomes valued by YPAR advocates. Buttimer's study has implications for reforming professional preparation and educational structures of testing, time, and curriculum that would better enable teachers in typical urban school settings, and their students, to benefit from YPAR's full potential.

In our fourth article, "Students Taking Social Action: Critical Literacy Practices Through School-As-Museum Learning," Genevieve Caffrey and Rebecca Rogers provide an in-depth analysis of the transformative influences that critical literacy, multimodal projects can have on students' orientations toward social justice issues. The authors use discourse analysis to examine artifacts and interactions within the context of one "Bullying and Discrimination" exhibit that is part of a culminating school-as-museum event. They find that the four students who created and led this exhibit were able to make connections between course readings and issues of bullying and discrimination within their own lives, and that through the process of creating the exhibit's various artifacts, the students began to take on an activist stance. The rich description of the exhibit and the students' interactions highlights the power of the school-as-museum pedagogy, which allowed students to tap into their lived experiences and engage the public in their learning. This study has implications for educators at all levels who seek to engage students in critical literacy and social justice learning beyond the walls of the classroom.

In our final article, "Silencing Racialized Humor in Elementary School: Consequences of Colormuting and Whiteness for Students of Color," Irene H. Yoon explores instances in which racial humor, expressed in daily classroom exchanges, can present challenges for teachers. Through ethnographic work over the course of five months, Yoon focuses on two specific exchanges in a teacher's classroom that required rapid calculations of whether or not to respond—and if so, how to respond in ways that support inclusion and equity in the classroom. Yoon argues that because teachers hold power in the classroom, we should examine how their identities influence their responses to students' racial humor. She focuses on the actions of a White, middle-class female teacher in her elementary school

classroom, and how Whiteness was constructed through daily interactions and embedded in taken-for-granted social norms in teaching. Her analysis of two exchanges between students of color begins by affirming the teacher's decision to intervene in both instances. Yoon then explores how this teacher's interventions had layered consequences as a result of silencing racial talk amongst students of color. Findings from her analysis raise questions about how teachers can support meaningful and respectful discourse about race during classroom interactions that serve as moments of socialization to race.

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The Berkeley Review of Education invites pieces that continue and extend the conversations started by the authors in this issue as well as work that starts new conversations on issues related to equity and diversity. We encourage senior and emerging scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to submit articles that address issues of educational diversity and equity from various intra/interdisciplinary perspectives. The editorial board especially welcomes submissions that provide new and diverse perspectives on pressing issues impacting schools, educational systems, and other learning environments. We also welcome a broad range of "critical" scholarship. We define critical work as that which aims to analyze, evaluate, and examine power and dominant structures while helping us to imagine something new.

We thank the many people who have assisted in getting this issue to press: the authors, current and former board members, volunteers, reviewers, advisers, and the students and faculty members at the Graduate School of Education who have helped us in many other ways. We especially thank Dean Prudence Carter, Assistant Dean Alejandro Luna, and our faculty advisers, P. David Pearson and Kris Gutierrez, for their ongoing support and guidance as we broaden the scope and readership of the journal. Finally, we thank the University of California Berkeley Graduate School of Education and Graduate Assembly for their generous financial support.

*The Editors*

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