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Editors' Introduction

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## Editors' Introduction

In Volume 8 Number 2 of the *Berkeley Review of Education*, we present a diverse collection of articles in which the authors explore how decisions, policies, and practices that may seem benign to those in positions of power have bearing on the lived experiences of students across the educational spectrum. Each piece is concerned with identifying structures of domination within educational systems and, in turn, the agency to resist such structures and express democratic, autonomous forms of self-determination—the limitation of student choice in reading instruction, Indigenous students' experiences with structural barriers in higher education, and the promotion of specific values related to civic participation and citizenship in seemingly objective education policy documents (e.g., the *Common Core State Standards*). Through diverse methodological approaches—including quantitative multilevel modeling, critical discourse analysis, ethnographic interviews, and journal entries—the authors identify educational structures, from the classroom to the policy level, that limit agency. In naming these structures, each piece offers an alternative: Agency lies in providing student choice in reading material, valuing Indigenous voices in higher education, and questioning civic identities of individualist passivity that are communicated in national policy documents. Through varied analyses, the authors highlight the importance of lived experiences. Students connect to their lived experiences through reading choices, and when students exercise agency in selecting their reading materials this relates to reading achievement. Exposing the harm that colonial ideologies continue to exert on Indigenous students in our higher education institutions affirms lived experiences and highlights opportunities for resistance. Analyzing the definitions of literate knowledge within policy documents, and their relation to civic identity, reveals how such policies restrict educational experiences, particularly for students of color.

In our first article, "Choice Matters: Equity and Literacy Achievement," Nicola McClung and her co-authors examine how students' reading achievement is associated with their perceptions of choice of their reading materials. Using multiple regression analyses with data from the 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, the authors find that—when controlling for students' reading self-efficacy, interest in reading, and economic backgrounds—higher-performing readers tend to indicate higher perceived choice in their reading materials, whilst lowest-performing students report the fewest opportunities for choice. The authors theorize that the positive association between reading achievement and choice in selecting reading materials may reflect a way in which reading instruction fosters or inhibits students' intrinsic motivation to read. From these findings, the authors argue that prescriptive reading programs with tightly controlled reading materials—which are frequently employed as interventions to support underperforming students—may be counterproductive when it comes to improving students' reading outcomes in the long term. Moreover, due to a high correlation between economic background and literacy attainment, the authors warn that restricted choice or overly prescriptive reading programs for underperforming students may disproportionately deny students from non-dominant backgrounds the opportunity to access relevant texts, including those that reflect their cultures and experiences.

In our second article, "Challenging the Relationship between Settler Colonial Ideology and Higher Education Spaces," Stephanie Masta explores the ways that Indigenous

graduate students make sense of the ongoing implications of settler colonialism in their educational experiences. She uses a TribalCrit lens to analyze qualitative data from 12 graduate students. Through both interviews and journal entries, she identifies three key themes reflecting participants' experiences: knowledge of the settler colonial project, linking settler colonialism to academic practices, and the tension of living in two worlds. As an Indigenous scholar bringing forward these student conclusions, she encourages a dynamic response to the harmful ingrained nature of settler colonialism in the United States' educational system. This piece calls for the educational field to lift Indigenous student voices, to emphasize the inclusion and encouragement of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, to name and challenge the structures of settler colonialism, and to refuse discourse that normalizes colonial ideology in academic practices and policies.

In our final article, “‘Signifying Nothing’: Identifying Conceptions of Youth Civic Identity in the English Language Arts *Common Core State Standards* and the National Assessment of Educational Progress’ *Reading Framework*,” Antero Garcia and Nicole Mirra examine the discursive nature of seemingly neutral documents—the *Common Core State Standards* and the National Assessment of Educational Progress’ *Reading Framework*—to examine the ways that particular ideologies regarding democracy, civic engagement, and belonging are transmitted through these policies to schools. The authors argue that these policy documents may rest in an objective veneer, but, in reality, they reflect fundamental epistemological and civic assumptions made by the collective authors. Thus, these documents communicate and define specific values that shape classroom pedagogy. Taking a critical approach to reading these documents can encourage teachers, parents, and other educational stakeholders to help students enact new civic identities to more meaningfully participate in contemporary civic life.

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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 adviser, 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*