

InterActions draws together current inter-disciplinary research in education and information studies and welcomes a variety of topics, research methods, theoretical frameworks, and analytical approaches. The articles brought together in this issue explore a variety of concerns and implicitly press the point that all activity in education and information institutions is inescapably political. Collectively, they constitute a body of work congruent with the mission of the journal. This issue begins with a look at the university setting in terms of affirmative action policies and claims about the conservative vs. liberal discourse. In addition to these policy-oriented research projects the issue looks into the difficulties of naming and classification. Examining the politics of ontology through a philosophical conversation is important to the problematic process of categorizing all aspects of life including race, gender, and sexuality. Articles following this theme explore the underlying issues of categorizing, traditional assessment and evaluation in US schools, and the discourse of inequity concerning technology.

The first article, *Admissions and Public Higher Education in California, Texas, and Florida: The Post-Affirmative Actions Era*, is a review of the legislation, policies, and practices that eliminated affirmative action in university admissions and subsequent impacts on freshman enrollments for students of all races, genders, and ethnicities for which data have been collected. Looking at universities in these three states, authors David R. Colburn, Charles E. Young, and Victor M. Yellen conduct a thorough quantitative analysis of freshman enrollment patterns. They evaluate the consequences of these policies in terms of the groups who have been impacted the most, as well as highlight the reduced diversity of the educational experience. Additional information about the authors' view on this topic is available in the February 8, 2008 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. The controversial nature of such a topic cannot be holistically covered in one article. We anticipate and welcome not only additional research, but more theoretical and critical discussions about affirmative action policies.

Ironically, during the post-affirmative action era, higher education has seen a peculiar critique from a self-proclaimed conservative attack on perceived liberal domination in U.S. universities and colleges. With election season here, critics are even measuring how much university professors donate to Democratic vs. Republican campaigns (Sarlin, 2008). In light of these criticisms, Erin Kimura-Walsh's judicious study, *Encroaching on Autonomy: The Influence of the Academic Bill of Rights on U.S. Higher Education*, calls for the re-examination of a cornerstone of the university: institutional autonomy.

Both the study of affirmative action's role in higher education and the university-focused rhetoric of a strong current in conservative/liberal politics highlight the degree to which the issue of naming and categorizing—especially when these are implicit forces at work in the academy—should be approached

with caution. Damaging categories can emerge from scientific classifications and casual attributions alike. *Burning Down the Shelf: Standardized Classification, Folksonomies, and Ontological Politics* by Andrew J. Lau grapples with the imperialistic tendencies of categories and their users. Both *Admissions and Public Higher Education in California, Texas, and Florida: The Post-Affirmative Actions Era* and *Encroaching on Autonomy: The Influence of the Academic Bill of Rights on U.S. Higher Education* are indicative of the critical nature of how categories are used; they can essentialize and they can be turned against a group as a weapon. Lau proposes assemblage theory as a strategy for acknowledging the potential conflict in prescribing how information is organized and encouraging multiple ontologies. Another type of classification system—commonly known as evaluation, assessment, or grading—is also scrutinized in this issue. In *Growth, Personalization, and Dialogical Exchange in High School: A Discursive Analysis of Alternative Assessment* Sylvia S. Bagley employs Critical Discourse Analysis to see how one U.S. high school uses an alternative form of assessment to create dialogue between the students and teachers, inviting more voices into the “public sphere” and recognizing the necessary limitations of any assessment philosophy or mechanism.

The problematic process of naming or evaluating contributes to perception and judgment. It is an essential act in the process of social construction. Once a concept is socially constructed, it can then contribute to various ends, including ideological hegemony. Authors Ilhan Kucukaydin and Elizabeth J. Tisdell offer a Gramscian perspective on the role of the educator in *The Discourse on the Digital Divide: Are We Being Co-opted?* The paper analyzes how various “digital divide” rhetorics have classified different groups according to their access—or lack thereof—to technology. Kucukaydin and Tisdell argue that this discourse becomes an ideological obstacle to social justice projects by reimagining complex power relations in simplistic terms. Technology and power have contributed to how social problems are evaluated, and the role of intellectuals in producing cultural forces that are used for domination is something that should be of great concern to the academy.

We have introduced a special “Appreciation” section to the journal to recognize the service, passion, and academic richness of two colleagues whose tragic deaths abruptly ended their scholarly work. Their commitment to equity in their fields was exemplary. We also plan to introduce a “Letter to the Editors” feature with our May issue. We invite responses to the articles published here, for scholarly endeavor is not a conclusion but a contribution to an ongoing conversation.

With this issue, *InterActions* continues the tradition of being an online, open access journal as a critical juncture between education and information studies for the creation and dissemination of knowledge. As a journal, our mission

has been shaped by the belief that academic institutions should be nodal points for the distribution of information. We are pleased to offer an issue that conceptualizes inter-disciplinary issues that are pertinent to the role of academic institutions, including this journal. We thank you for your participation in this community and we invite you to share your experience with others, submit your contributions for publication, and send us your thoughts about how to further the use of critical frameworks in progressive analysis and research. The journal will continue to navigate its role as a forum for interdisciplinary research that serves the cause of social justice. Even as ideology and agendas are often a part of research, we are committed to maintaining this journal as a forum in which varied agendas can be in conversation, resulting in a productive tension with one another. We intend for this tension to further refine research and knowledge that is useful in education and information studies.

### References

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