

*If everything is perfect, language is useless.*

Jean Baudrillard

In this issue, *InterActions* looks to possibilities. Possibilities for advancing the cause of social justice through civic engagement are explored by our authors, as well as the complexities of race and racialization for two authors from non-dominant cultural backgrounds. The publication of articles detailing civic responsibility, community activism, and the use of technology for social change via YouTube seems appropriate at this moment in the national political landscape. President Obama (2009) has instituted a national tone of principled leadership, telling the nation “to set aside childish things” implying that we need to move beyond talking and reasoning like children. We should, rather, focus on the possibility of dialogue between groups and individuals with opposing perspectives, encouraging all of us to listen to each other, to deliberate on viewpoints we may not readily accept, and investigate that which we may not understand. The authors published here, though speaking individually on different topics, also speak together as they chart different courses to the same endpoint— understanding each other and engaging in citizenship for social equity.

McDevitt and Caton-Rosser discuss the parental resistance to open dialogue in social studies classrooms. In “Deliberative Barbarians: Reconciling the Civic and the Agonistic in Democratic Education” they note the importance of capitalizing on youth voices through open discussion of political issues, and how parents often object to what in their view is indoctrination and threats to their authority. The authors propose a *contingent model of deliberative learning* whereby the student conveys discussions between the classroom and the home. The model proposed provides a way to ensure we are not simply “talking to ourselves” (Jacoby, 2008) and shutting out deliberation on and understanding of multiple perspectives on important issues of the day. They provide a positive model, involving the important stakeholder group of parents, for the possibility of change.

Change in educational equity and access is taken up by Crawford in “Self and Society in Youth Organizing.” She shows the relationship between educational equity, civic engagement, and democratic knowledge production using portraiture methodology to highlight one Latina youth and her community activism. The author advances four lenses with which to adopt a multiperspectival view, so as see all aspects of opportunities for positive change and equity with urban youth in society and education. Youth address the quagmire of urban education within the context of a classist and racist society, and intervene through youth activism to identify problems within their communities and propose possibilities for solutions.

YouTube users and the public sphere are analyzed for their role in transforming the democratic social action in Kim’s “The Future of YouTube: Critical Reflections on YouTube Users’ Discussion over Its Future.” Kim uses the impact of YouTube on the 2008 presidential campaign as a reframing of political participation, taking control of how messages are framed from media outlets to ordinary citizens. Possibilities for the future of YouTube and its sociopolitical impact to produce a more participatory democracy is discussed for its potential in bringing about a more egalitarian society.

Liu engages her personal narrative as an Asian American with the theoretical intersection of Critical Race Theory, Asian Americans, and higher education. She infuses humor in “Critical Race Theory, Asian Americans, and Higher Education: A Review of Research” to approach the serious subjects of race and racism in higher education. The salient literature to her story is reviewed, showing how Critical Race Theory can provide understanding of Asian Americans’ experiences in higher education. She notes the stereotyping associated with Asian Americans, and sees open dialogue about race and racism leading to possibilities for a more complex understanding of what it means to be Asian American in higher education.

Muslim women tell their stories to counter monolithic myths that “other” them in Hamdan’s “Narrative Inquiry as a Decolonising Methodology.” The narratives present alternate views to the negative stereotypes presented by Orientalism. The author asserts the heterogeneity in representations the women reveal of themselves in Canadian society. Placing the role of Muslim women in a historical context, she analyzes the precedent of women leaders in Islam to debunk the myth that Islam is categorically oppressive to women. Showing the possibilities of Muslim women living lives imbued with agentic choice give an alternate, more complex reality of what it means to be Muslim and a woman in Western society.

Education is political (Apple, 1996; Kincheloe, 2002; McClaren, 2003). Due to its political nature, it is rife with possibilities for affordances and constraints, forwarding one group’s interests over others’, reflecting the power structures of the wider society in which it operates. In these articles, the authors are all united in proactively breaking down constraints. Whether the positive solutions offered for classroom instructional constraints by McDevitt and Caton-Rosser, the engagement of marginalized immigrant youth in community activism by Crawford, YouTube’s potential for sociopolitical transformation to a more egalitarian society by Kim, the call for dialogue on race and racism between diverse groups in higher education by Liu, or the breaking of monolithic views of Muslim women by Hamdan, these authors all provide positive possibilities for a society that not only talks about equity and access to opportunity, but enacts it.

## References

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