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The Role of Public Scholarship in Promoting Justice in Education: Expanding the Boundaries of Education Research

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The Editorial Board of *The Assembly: A Journal for Public Scholarship on Education*
The University of Colorado Boulder

As doctoral students committed to justice and equity in education, we recognize that the knowledges of education practitioners, students, parents, and other community members are invaluable to confronting the most salient and timely issues related to educational equity in the United States. Included in these knowledges is the kind of knowing and expertise produced experientially, grounded in day-to-day experiences. We came together with the goal of challenging notions of what counts as scholarship in education and to create a structured space that promotes public scholarship that is comprised of diverse voices, not limited to traditionally recognized researchers from universities and other research organizations. To work towards this goal, we created *The Assembly: A Journal for Public Scholarship on Education*, an online, open-access journal, housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education that advances public scholarship committed to democracy, diversity, equity, and justice in education.

Our mission at *The Assembly* is to showcase public scholarship authored by researchers, policy makers, educators, students, community members, and the public that addresses timely topics in education, particularly work committed to educational equity and social justice. Because we are a Colorado-based journal, in addition to publishing work by national contributors, we highlight work that engages with critical issues in our state. Each issue will be organized into two sections: a peer reviewed research section and a themed "Dialogues" section. The peer-reviewed section will feature scholarship on education issues of national importance and local education issues in the state of Colorado that has implications for national audiences as well. The themed Dialogues section will feature critical essays authored by a range of stakeholders bringing together a wide-array of voices on a single issue. Our work is guided by three organizing principles:

1. Education research must open up space for all groups to speak, in their own voices, about their own experiences so that their knowledges become part of the collective social understanding.
2. Education research must be accessible, and comprehensible to those who are most directly impacted by the research so that collective understandings can include discourse that names injustices, validating the social and educational experiences of marginalized groups.

3. Education research must engage in full reciprocal dialogue with those who are most directly impacted by research.

These organizing principles represent our commitment to education scholarship that is representative of those most impacted by education policy and practice. *The Assembly* should not be seen as a replacement for traditional education research, particularly since we are part of a traditional research-intensive university. There is certainly still a place for the voice of researchers in education (Rose, 2018). Instead, this is a way to add knowledges that have been traditionally excluded from our collective understanding. As an online journal, we encourage work presented in new and innovative formats, that is accessible in availability and communication, and that is responsive to the lived realities of those most impacted by education policies and practices.

What is Public Scholarship?
We are guided by the Center for Community of Civic Engagement (2018), which defines public scholarship as "diverse modes of creating knowledge for and with publics and communities" (para. 2). Public scholarship must have certain characteristics in order to address and transform education: 1) It is *timely*, responding to and engaging with current debates and realities; 2) it is *relevant* to the people most impacted by education policy and practice; 3) it is *critical*, illuminating and interrogating the power dynamics that shape policy and practice; 4) it is *place-based*, informing the socio-political context from which it emerges and for which it is used; 5) it is *accessible*, in availability, usefulness, and clarity for those who most directly feel the impact of the scholarship; and 6) it is *expansive*, broadening the boundaries of what counts as scholarship and redefining expertise in education research. Despite the broad implications for education policy and practice, traditional university-based research, even critical research, is largely one-sided, with traditional scholars producing and disseminating knowledge in scholarly journals, which are produced and read by other traditional scholars (Bartha & Burgett, 2015). Our vision of critical, public scholarship removes the barriers to the production and dissemination of education research to include and collaborate with the public, or the communities who are best positioned to inform education research to address issues of educational justice.

The focus of *The Assembly* is to engage in critical public scholarship in order to address the ways in which those in positions of power control knowledge production and dissemination (Fricker, 2007; Mason, 2011). One of the ways this is carried out is through silencing the knowledges of marginalized people and preventing them from participating in full and equal dialogue (Dotson, 2011). Many scholars have done important work to elevate perspectives historically silenced in traditional education research (Anyon, 1980; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Kane & Mertz, 2012; Lynn & Dixson, 2013). *The Assembly* aims to build on this important work and to be a space where the very people experiencing

the consequences of education research can, in their own voices, contribute to and be in dialogue with scholarship on education policy and practice.

In addition to those who are traditionally considered researchers, such as university faculty and graduate students, we are reaching out to educators, students, and community members to submit pieces to *The Assembly* based on timely and relevant education issues. In this issue, for example, we include two pieces from current public school teachers. In future issues, we will continue to intentionally seek out and publish manuscripts from members of the public on pressing issues in education, because we know these are the people who have the deepest understandings of the daily realities of education in the United States. Their knowledge is essential for promoting educational equity and justice.

Public Scholarship, Public Pedagogy, and Community Action

The articles in this inaugural issue of *The Assembly* address public scholarship, public pedagogy, and community action informed by the knowledge of diverse communities. Because much traditional education research is implicated in further marginalizing particular communities, public scholarship is often complicated, requiring university-based scholars to de-center themselves in order to gain the trust of the public. It also requires these scholars to question the very traditions that secure their positions in traditional research institutions, such as tenure guidelines. Further, a public ethos likely must include ethical notions like recognizing others' rights of refusal, where limits might be placed on the questions publicly-engaged scholars can ask or what can be made public (Tuck & Yang, 2014). For members of the public, including educators, engaging in work that is meant to improve educational conditions for all students and educators is risky because they are experiencing the daily realities of education and may experience negative backlash when resisting the status quo in education. Despite these challenges and realities, we believe it is necessary to create space for public scholarship on education aimed at addressing educational inequity and transforming education in the United States.

For our inaugural issue we present four peer-reviewed articles that highlight dilemmas that arise from being a public scholar, exemplars of ways to engage multiple audiences with traditional research, and expand our notions of who counts as a scholar.

1. Katherine Schultz explores the challenges and dilemmas involved with engaging in public scholarship
2. Rita Kohli, Arturo Nevárez, and Nallely Arteaga as well as Nicole Mirra present two examples of new ways to engage the public with traditional research.
3. Hayley Breden, a practicing high school history teacher, provides important insights into teachers' unions and her work is the first example of how we are working to expand notions of who counts as a scholar.

For future issues, we encourage submissions from multiple, diverse authors, encouraging relevant public education scholarship and submissions that push public

scholarship to further promote educational justice. We also will accept submissions of traditional scholarship that is written for and useful to broad audiences. We will be accepting many styles of writing, and we encourage that authors take advantage of our online platform, providing interactive articles that assist in broad accessibility.

The Assembly: A Journal for Public Scholarship on Education is a space that reimagines the possibilities for education scholarship and expands the boundaries of who are considered experts within that scholarship. Our digital platform offers tools to broaden the reach of important scholarship aimed at addressing educational equity and justice. This journal is open and free, available to anyone interested and invested in timely and relevant educational scholarship.

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