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Educational Inequalities

Difference and Diversity in Schools and Higher Education

Edited by
Kalwant Bhopal
and Uvanney Maylor

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Educational Inequalities

While there is considerable literature on social inequality and education, there is little recent work which explores notions of difference and diversity in relation to "race", class and gender. This edited text aims to bring together researchers in the field of education located across many international contexts such as the UK, Australia, USA, New Zealand and Europe. Contributors investigate the ways in which dominant perspectives on "difference", intersectionality and institutional structures underpin and reinforce educational inequality in schools and higher education. They emphasize the importance of international perspectives and innovative methodological approaches to examining these areas, and seek to locate the dimensions of difference within recent theoretical discourses, with an emphasis on "race", class and gender as key categories of analysis.

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An Introduction

Kalwant Bhopal and Uvanney Maylor

Education in the UK has seen significant changes in the past few years, particularly policy changes introduced by the Coalition government such as the introduction of tuition fees and the introduction of free schools and academies, as well as the eradication of the Education Maintenance Grant (EMA). Such significant changes have affected the poorest students the hardest. Far from creating greater equality, such changes have perpetuated inequality both in schools and in higher education—with greater students from poor working-class backgrounds being further disadvantaged. Recent research suggests, for example, that although the gap between the richest and poorest children has started to fall over the last decade, the gap at the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) level remains large, with the latest Department for Education (DfE) figures indicating that pupils eligible for free school meals (FSMs) are almost half as likely to achieve five or more A*–C grades at GCSE compared with those who were not eligible (30.9 per cent compared with 58.5 per cent) (Carter-Wall and Whitfield 2012). Furthermore, poorer children are half as likely to go on to study at university compared with their more affluent peers. Educational attainment continues to be strongly associated with socio-economic background (Sutton Trust 2010), despite some signs that social differences in examination results may have started to reduce. There have been some significant changes with the gap in attainment between ethnic groups narrowing, with some previously low-performing groups catching up with the average attainment. Whereas a generation ago almost all the students attending university were White British, today one in five are from Black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds (EHRC How Fair Is Britain, 2010). Whereas this change is positive, inequalities in education continue to persist. A recent report by Alan Millburn (2012), MP (member of Parliament), explores how the most advantaged 20 per cent of young people are still seven times more likely than the 40 per cent most disadvantaged to attend the most selective universities, demonstrating how access to university remains inequitable. The report argues that 'there is a strong correlation between social class and the likelihood of going to university generally and to the top universities particularly. Four private schools and one college get more of their students

into Oxbridge than the combined efforts of 2,000 state schools and colleges' (2). Furthermore, elite universities such as Oxford and Cambridge are failing to adequately represent BME students and the representation of minority ethnic students at Russell Group universities is unbalanced (*Race into Higher Education* 2010).

A report by the Sutton Trust (2010) found that just 16 per cent of pupils who are eligible for FSMs progress to university, compared with 96 per cent of young people who have been to independent schools. Changes in Coalition government policy outlined earlier, such as the scrapping of the EMA, has had implications for students from low-income backgrounds, affecting their entrance into higher education and consequently their chances of social mobility and future success in the labour market. Inequalities also persist in higher education; research has shown that the majority of the UK professoriate is White and male (Bhopal and Jackson 2013). A report by the Equality Challenge Unit (2011) found that in 2009–2010 only 0.9 per cent of UK staff in professorial roles were from BME backgrounds and 76.1 per cent of professors of UK staff were White males (Equality in Higher Education, Statistical Report 2011).

But these inequalities are not unique to the UK. Michael Apple, in his pioneering new book, *Can Education Change Society?*, starkly reminds us of the disparities and injustices that continue to exist in the US and the significant role that education (particularly schools) play in sometimes perpetuating these inequalities. Schools are 'key mechanisms in determining what is socially valued as "legitimate knowledge" and what is seen as merely "popular". In their role in defining a large part of what is considered legitimate knowledge, they also participate in the process through which particular groups are granted status and other groups remain unrecognised or minimised' (Apple 2013, 21).

As scholars committed to equality and social justice, we are disappointed about the lack of commitment and engagement given to such inequalities not just by politicians, but also policymakers and grant-funding bodies. Consequently, we are committed to examining the discourses of inequalities. *Educational Inequalities in Schools and Higher Education* brings together researchers in the fields of education, class, gender, 'race' and sociology who provide theoretical and empirical understandings of the discourses of educational inequality. The main focus of the collection is to examine difference and diversity, specifically gender, 'race' and class, and how the intersectionalities of these differences work in relation to challenging and also perpetuating inequalities in education.

In particular the collection seeks to locate the dimensions of difference within recent theoretical discourses with an emphasis on 'race', class and gender as key categories of analysis and does so by using theoretical approaches to examine the inequalities and diversities of educational experiences. Whereas there is considerable literature on social inequality and education, there is little recent work which explores notions of difference

and diversity in relation to 'race', class and gender. Given the gap in the literature, it becomes all the more important to address the specificity of difference. In this collection, we bring together major research located across the UK and diverse international contexts (such as Australia, the US, New Zealand and Europe). Contributors explore the ways in which dominant perspectives on 'difference', intersectionality and institutional structures underpin and reinforce educational inequality. They also emphasise the importance of international perspectives in such discussions by using innovative methodological approaches to examining these areas. A collection that integrates and interrogates the debates about difference, diversity and inequality in education and theorising such approaches is long overdue.

Educational Inequalities in Schools and Higher Education is based on the premise that education and notions of inequality are controversial subjects in which difficult and contested discourses are the norm. Individuals in education experience multiple inequalities and have diverse identifications that cannot necessarily be captured by one theoretical perspective alone (Gillborn 2008; Ladson-Billings 2003; Reay, David and Ball 2001). The purpose of this collection and the coherence of its arguments are dictated by an examination of controversial grounds, both empirical and theoretical debates, within national and international educational research contexts foregrounding issues of gender identity, 'race', culture and inclusion. As such, the aim of the collection is to do the following:

- Specifically examine areas of discrimination and disadvantage such as gender, 'race' and class within education as well as debating the difficulties of applying such concepts in relation to the experiences of students in education.
- Analyse contesting discourses of identity in different educational cultural contexts.

By combining a mix of intellectually rigorous, accessible and controversial chapters, the collection presents a distinctive and engaging voice, one that seeks to broaden understandings of 'intersectionality' beyond the simple confines of the education sphere into an arena of sociological and cultural discourse. In this way, the collection provides a challenge to current racialised, gendered and classed educational discourse and promotes new ways of thinking about educational practice.

The collection is divided into three specific parts. Part I examines difference, diversity and inclusion and consists of four chapters each of which explores how discourses of difference are understood in different educational contexts. Zeus Leonardo in Chapter 2 interrogates the status of whiteness in American education by exploring two significant camps regarding the uptake of whiteness: White reconstruction and White abolition. In the first, reconstructionists offer discourses—as forms of social practice—that transform whiteness, and therefore White people, into something other than

an oppressive identity and ideology. Reconstruction suggests rehabilitating whiteness by resignifying it through the creation of alternative discourses. It projects hope onto whiteness by creating new racial subjects out of White people, which are not ensnared by a racist logic. On the other hand, White abolitionism is guided by Roediger's announcement that 'whiteness is not only false and oppressive; it is nothing but false and oppressive' (1994, 13). In opposition to reconstructing whiteness, abolishing whiteness sees no redeeming aspects of it as long as White people think they are White. This chapter considers White reconstruction and abolition for their conceptual and political value as it concerns not only the revolution of whiteness, but of race theory in general, particularly in relation to educational contexts.

In Chapter 3, Gill Crozier examines the school experiences of secondary-aged young people in England and explores the factors that advantage or disadvantage their academic success. The chapter presents an analysis of existing research of educational under/achievement amongst a cross section of BME, working-class and middle-class, girls and boys in order to investigate the similarities and differences in their school experience. Crozier argues that there is an abundance of research which shows that social mobility between the social classes has remained stagnant for the past twenty years and that the academic achievement of Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage children remains obdurately lower than the rest of the population. By employing theories of ideology, Whiteness and Bourdieu's concept of 'field', the chapter develops insights into why this remains the case in the twenty-first century. As part of this, Crozier considers the role of the school in its challenge to or maintenance of existing stratification and inequalities of outcome. This is followed by Jasmine Rhamie's chapter, 'Black Academic Success: What's Changed?' Rhamie examines whether there have been changes of Black academic success since the new Coalition political climate in England. The chapter begins by reviewing the literature on the academic achievement of Black pupils, focusing on research which identifies and promotes their academic success, it particularly focuses on such research conducted since 2007 (Rhamie 2007). The chapter raises concerns about the education policy direction of the present Coalition government and the implications of some of its key decisions on equality for the inclusion of Black pupils. Rhamie provides a picture of the current situation for Black pupils in terms of (under)achievement and explores some of the theoretical explanations for the continued underachievement of Black pupils. The chapter concludes by emphasising the importance of acknowledging Black academic success and considers the implications of this for educational research and policy making.

In Chapter 5, Robyn Henderson explores intersections of ethnicity, social class and gender based on an itinerant lifestyle identified amongst some Australian students. She does so by deconstructing teachers' narratives in theorising transformative action. Her chapter explores how considerable research has highlighted how social membership—in terms of

ethnicity, social class and gender, or combinations of these factors—can influence the successes that children achieve in school literacy learning. Teachers often use these features as points of reference, creating narratives about why some students in the school context succeed and others do not. One result can be narratives of blame—stories that blame students for not bringing appropriate understandings to school, or stories that blame parents for being deficient in caring for their children and negligent in not preparing them for school literacy learning. Such narratives are often based on normative and stereotypical views of families and provide common sense understandings that reinforce educational inequality. The chapter draws on empirical evidence from a two-year research study that was conducted in a school located in a north Australian rural community. It is framed within cultural-critical understandings of literacy, alongside critical discourse and poststructuralist theories. The chapter investigates the intersectionality of social class, ethnicity and gender in teachers' narratives about itinerant farmworkers' children and their successes or otherwise in school literacy learning. In many of the stories, deficit discourses about the children's 'differences' from their residentially stable peers represented commonsense knowledge that regarded children's inappropriate behaviours, actions and underachievement in literacy learning as predictable and 'natural' consequences of families' lifestyles and perceived characteristics. The chapter argues that these taken-for-granted assumptions about the negative impacts of ethnicity, class, gender and an itinerant lifestyle on children's schooling served to narrow the pedagogical options that were available for teachers. As a result, educational inequities seemed to be maintained and there was little opportunity for itinerant children to move beyond underachievement. The chapter further considers possibilities for transformative action, arguing that a reconceptualisation of itinerancy and the supposedly deficient characteristics of itinerant families could disrupt deficit views and help teachers focus on responsive, flexible and enabling pedagogies for children who are often marginalised in school settings.

Part II focuses on 'Understanding Difference: Policy and Practice in Education'. It examines how the effects of educational policy and practice can work to interrogate and understand the discourses of difference in Swedish education. Anne-Sofie Nyström in Chapter 6, 'Negotiating Achievement—Students' Gendered and Classed Constructions of (Un) Equal Ability', explores how educational institutions are structured around achievement and evaluating and comparing students' achievements. The chapter explores how stratification processes are not just about cognition but about social processes such as affect, negotiations of values and causes of achievements. Like other Nordic countries, Sweden has long been associated with equality—not least in education. Many statistics suggest increased differences are primarily based on school and student categories in terms of class and 'race', whereas gender stratification has focussed on policy debates. The chapter examines privilege via analyses of peer-group

interactions amongst a student category that is rarely problematised: an ethnographically informed doctoral study on young people's identity negotiations in Swedish upper secondary schools. The focus is on examining a setting structured by high performance and dominated by White, upper-middle-class students. Identification processes such as social categorisations based on gender, class and age and dominance relations are studied as micro-processes and placed in the context of equality/equity and education. The chapter outlines how young men and women in the study draw attention to dominance relations amongst peers in the classroom; it also demonstrates the hierarchies between schools and study programmes. The chapter further explores how students questioned the legitimacy of such identity claims and hierarchies, but these were often reproduced in terms of unequal educational and social ability (resources).

Farzana Shain's chapter, 'Change *and* Tradition: Muslim Boys' Talk about Their Post-Sixteen Aspirations', examines how the neo-liberal restructuring of education has resulted in a relentless pursuit of educational success through policies such as Parental Choice, Beacon and Leading Edge schools, Gifted and Talented (Hey and Bradford, 2007) and, more recently, Academy and Free Schools in England. As Ozga (1999) maintains, these policies are located within a wider framework which ties education to national competitiveness and sees achievement as the solution to social exclusion. Rather than equalising opportunities, analyses (Reay 2008; Tomlinson 2008) suggest that these polices have enhanced middle-class choice and advantage while reinscribing working-class and racialised disadvantage. Despite such observations, policies on citizenship, for example, place the focus on 'helping' individuals navigate their way through a series of individualised 'personalised' choices away from the old certainties of gender, 'race' and class solidarity (Avis 2006). Drawing on a wider empirical study of Muslim (predominantly working-class Pakistani and Bangladeshi) boys' identities and educational experiences (Shain 2011), the chapter argues that class, 'race' and gender remain salient factors which constrain and enable educational outcomes. Following a brief overview of policy and academic debate, the chapter focuses on the boys' orientations to schooling and 'success', their subject preferences and imagined future choices about post-sixteen education and careers. The chapter outlines a range of factors that shape these experiences and 'choices', including school processes such as setting, peer relations, and the boys' economic location in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England.

In Chapter 8, Heidi Mirza and Veena Meetoo explore how new and virulent forms of faith-based racism in the form of Islamophobia have gripped Western multicultural societies since the 9/11 and the 7/7 bombings by British-born Muslim (male) youth. In this climate, education has become a key site in the battle against the spectre of the 'Muslim extremist' in our midst. Educational programmes such as the Prevention of Violence and Extremism exemplify this hysteria with its focus on averting the next generation of

potential terrorists by combating the ideology which might produce them. However, such programmes are largely aimed at Muslim young men and boys. Ironically, young women in patriarchal Muslim communities, often at risk of domestic forms of violence such as forced marriage, slip through the cracks of educational policy and school practice. In terms of safeguarding and well-being, young Muslim women are effectively caught between the multicultural discourses that focus on issues between communities rather than within communities and the Islamophobia discourse that demonises young Muslim men. Drawing on interviews with seventeen young women in two inner-city schools, this chapter traces the narrative constructions of young Muslim women as they negotiate gendered, 'raced' and classed structures, dominance and power in the classroom and in their everyday lives. Interviews with teachers and policymakers contextualise the young women's subjectivity and social relations with their perspectives on religious identity and gendered discourses of risk, safety and well-being. Using a Black feminist framework of 'embodied intersectionality' (Mirza 2009), the young women's narratives not only demonstrate the fluidity of a collective transcendental ethnic Muslim female identity, but they also express a strong outwardly individualistic neo-liberal career-orientated identity. In effect they were negotiating the traditional wearing of the veil as a means of personal transformation in socially and educationally restrictive circumstances. The chapter concludes that to understand young Muslim women's lived reality in Britain we need to theorise beyond the limitations of the multicultural discourse which invisiblises minority ethnic women and the Islamophobic discourse that visibilises the over determined female Muslim body with its obsession with the 'veil'.

In Chapter 9, Carl A. Grant and Annemarie Ketterhagen Engdahl discuss how the concepts of politics of difference, intersectionality and an understanding of and resistance toward a pedagogy of poverty can be used to help education researchers and teachers to see missed opportunities in the classroom in order to create a culturally relevant instructional environment where all American students are academically engaged and have a meaningful classroom experience that leads to a flourishing life. They conclude the chapter with examples of missed opportunities where teachers did not use a lens of intersectionality or the concept of the politics of difference in their classrooms. The examples used are contrasted with fulfilled opportunities where these lenses and points of view are applied as a counter to the pedagogy of poverty. This chapter is intended to deepen understanding of both academic theory and classroom practice.

Part III of the book, 'Educational Inequalities: Identities, Inclusion and Barriers', specifically examines how educational inequalities persist through an understanding of identities and barriers to inclusion. Alexandra Allweiss, in Chapter 10, 'I Want to Hear You': Listening to the Narratives, Practices and Visions of a Chuj Maya Teacher in Guatemala', examines the progression of educational reform. She argues how in many countries, classroom

teachers are on the front line of the reform effort. These education policies, however, are generally devised, implemented and evaluated using a top-down approach. Yet, there is much more that can be learned about the effects of such education policies by discussing these reform efforts with teachers. This chapter documents the experiences of one middle school teacher, who is representative of a sample of thirty-two educators in Xantin, Guatemala, participating in a larger research project designed to shape instructional practices to be responsive to the Intercultural and Bilingual Education (IBE) reforms in Guatemala. At the heart of the teacher's work is the goal of teaching students in a manner that fosters academic, social and personal success. A narrative inquiry approach is used to frame the chapter and investigate the intersections and influences of 'cultural racism', gender inequities and place-based classism on education policy and practice through a teacher's experience. Voices of educators working within the framework of the national reforms provide powerful critiques and visions for change that are not always visible through a top-down approach. The chapter explores how narrative inquiry allows educationalists to view the challenges and possibilities of these reforms using the experiences and insights from one teacher.

Chapter 11, 'What Does It Mean to Be the "Pride of Pinesville"?: Opportunities Facilitated and Constrained', by Amy Johnson Lachuk, Mary Louise Gomez and Shameka N. Powell, presents the life history of one African American woman living in a small rural community in the southern United States. Surpassing many social, economic and contextual barriers, she earned postsecondary degrees and returned to live and work in her community. Using in-depth interviews, the chapter explores factors that facilitate and/or constrain the literacy and educational experiences of this woman. Through examining her life history, the authors present ways that educational pursuit in rural areas is framed by intersecting dimensions of 'race', class, gender and place.

In Chapter 12, Edwina Pio, Ali Rasheed, Agnes Naera, Kitea Tipuna and Lorraine Parker use ethnicity to explore the lived-in and lived-through academic and support staff experiences of Maori and Pasifika peoples in a New Zealand university. Based on staff perceptions of their experiences and hopes around curriculum, students, colleagues and institutional structures, the authors present broad themes on the inscription of ethnicity in the doing and being of who one is in a university. A hermeneutic approach and semi-structured qualitative interviews are used to provide an in-depth understanding of key issues. Using the lens of diversity management, specifically post-colonial scholarship, this chapter examines the enduring impact of ethnicity. The findings point to the coalescence of the historical streams of migration and Indigenous peoples along with newer nuanced ways of handling ethnicity. Creating mana—respect/honour through ethnicity is a prevailing theme, along with the perception that ethnicity is based on stereotypes of Indigenous people which are easily