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Catching the bus: A call for critical geographies of education

Nicole Nguyen¹  | Dan Cohen² | Alice Huff³

¹University of Illinois—Chicago

²Department of Geography, University of British Columbia

³Department of Geography, University of California, Los Angeles

Correspondence

Nicole Nguyen, University of Illinois—Chicago, 1040 W. Harrison Street M/C 147, Chicago, IL 60607, USA.

Email: nguyenn@uic.edu

Abstract

Informed by recent struggles over schooling, this article proceeds from the premise that education is a deeply geographic and urgently political problem increasingly engaged by a wide range of scholars and activists. We argue that the current political moment demands increasing geographic attention to the confluence of social processes that shape schooling arrangements. We contend that this attention also must address how people involved in collective action understand and enact alternatives and how these mobilizations may articulate with other social movements. Although existing geographers of education have studied schooling in relation to other processes such as gentrification and citizenship, we argue that centering schooling as an object of study can enliven important disciplinary conversations. In light of these arguments, we call on geographers to advance geographic scholarship on education by creating a cohesive critical geographies of education subfield. Drawing from intensified interest in the geographies of education, this subfield can contribute to broader geographic debates by centering schooling in theory generation, rather than only studying education as a site of test cases for existing geographic theories. Given this call, this review highlights how the existing literature on schooling signals the potential of geographic work on education and marks considerations for the development of future research.

1 | INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Walter H. Dyett High School was the last remaining public high school in Bronzeville, a historically Black neighborhood in Chicago's south side. Since the Great Migration of the early 1900s, Bronzeville has been home to a vibrant Black community, including artists such as poet Gwendolyn Brooks and music teacher Walter H. Dyett. For decades, however, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has destabilized the neighborhood by disinvesting in and disenfranchising the Dyett school community. In 1999, CPS converted Dyett from a middle to high school without providing additional resources to support this new student body. Similarly, in 2006, CPS designated Dyett as a receiving school for students displaced by the closing of Englewood High School, again without providing additional

resources. After years of undercutting Dyett, CPS finally slated it for closure in 2015, priming Bronzeville for gentrification through creative destruction (Gutierrez & Lipman, 2013).

Threatened with the closure of Dyett, 12 parents, grandparents, and community members staged a 34-day hunger strike to save their school. Although the fight for community control of the school continues, the hunger strike forced CPS to reopen Dyett in 2016. The campaign was an example of the Dyett school-community's longstanding commitment to shaping educational opportunities in Bronzeville (Gutierrez & Lipman, 2013). But the strike was not only about access to quality public education. Because schools are essential to the economic, social, and political life of the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood, the Dyett hunger strike was, as the strikers themselves stated, also a struggle for racial justice, self-determination, and community control over urban space (Brown, 2015; Gutierrez & Lipman, 2013). This struggle and others like it call attention to the dynamic power relations that shape contemporary educational arrangements and to the possibilities associated with community-led resistance to urban school restructuring.

Attending to the increasing salience of schooling struggles such as Dyett's, this review explores how a cohesive *critical* geographies of education subfield might address the dynamics of power, resistance, and political possibility that are enacted through public education-related social movements. We share with the editors of a recent *Geographical Research* issue on critical geographies of education the desire to construct "a solid platform on which to build further critical geographies of education that will continue to map inequalities and disadvantages in the educational landscape" (Pini, Gulson, Kraftl, & Dufty-Jones, 2017, p. 16). In this review, however, we also examine how critical scholarship might usefully shed light on, and support, how communities *contest* unjust geographies of education.

The review unfolds in several stages. First, we discuss the geographic dimensions of contemporary education-related contestation in North America.¹ In doing so, we set up the more detailed review of geographic literature that follows and lay the groundwork for our assertion that more attention to schooling struggles will enhance existing disciplinary conversations.

Second, we engage in a detailed survey of two literatures within geographic scholarship on education: studies of gentrification and studies of citizenship. Given the breadth of geographic work on education across the globe, we recognize that this is a narrow review. We focus on these two well-developed areas because they provide unique insight into the power structures that organize contemporary geographies of education and urban restructuring, including, but not limited to, racism, sexism, colonialism, and racialized capitalism (Collins & Coleman, 2008; Helfenbein & Taylor, 2009; Pini et al., 2017). By demonstrating how powerful social forces coalesce within and through schools, these literatures suggest avenues for future work that advances geographic inquiry and, as Katz (2008) writes, help activists "organize, advocate, and agitate" (p. 26).

Based on this review, we next examine the diffuse nature of existing geographies of education. Geographic scholarship on education has encompassed a wide range of concerns, from education's emotional politics (Gagen, 2015) to the role of big data in education (Finn, 2016). We indicate how disconnections between these works might impede the study of schooling and critical geographic thought more broadly, concluding with a call for geographers to create a cohesive *critical* geographies of education subfield. We suggest that this subfield center on the confluence of social processes within schools and the related contestations of dominant logics such as neoliberalism and racism. We argue that by centering schooling in theory generation rather than studying education as a site of test cases for existing geographic theories, such a subfield can enliven important disciplinary conversations. Furthermore, by illuminating how multiple processes articulate with, and are resisted in, particular sites, critical geographies of education can contribute to building alliances with others committed to social struggle.

2 | PLACING SCHOOLING: THE STAKES OF STUDYING EDUCATION

Racialized school closures in neighborhoods such as Bronzeville are co-constitutive of broader neoliberal trends in urban governance. Geographers have pointed to the razing of low-income housing, the municipal use of private financial instruments, the institution of workfare programs, and the prevalence of entrepreneurial discourses as examples

of how evolving forms of urban neoliberalization redefine the role of the local state, marketize public goods, and discourage collectivity (Peck, Brenner, & Theodore 2008). These initiatives dovetail with racially targeted austerity programs within education and “reforms” that facilitate the closure, defunding, and/or privatization of public schools. Together, these racialized projects undermine communities of color by promoting neighborhood change while limiting opportunities for political engagement (Journey for Justice Alliance, 2014).

In resisting such reforms, community members in cities across the United States have articulated how their concerns include, but reach beyond, educational opportunities for youth. For instance, on the tenth day of the Dyett hunger strike, activist and striker Jitu Brown (2015) called on the U.S. public to recognize the school's closure in relation to the broader “destruction of quality of life institutions” throughout the neighborhood. In Bronzeville, this destruction included the forced closing of a trauma center, a police station, schools of distinction, and grocery stores. Brown (2015) underscored the connections between school closure, privatization, and anti-Blackness across U.S. cities, arguing

Only in these communities do people make money off every little Black child that walks past, and it's okay. In Chicago, New Orleans, Detroit, Philadelphia, and all these places, they take away our right to vote and then they take away our schools. Our communities are being colonized. Our communities are being colonized... We need to stop calling these people [school] reformers. They are colonizers.

For Brown (2015), the destruction of public education connects not only cities across the United States, but also the social processes through which communities are colonized. That is, Brown (2015) highlights the centrality of education reforms in the production of racialized urban geographies.

Like Brown (2015), Cindi Katz (2008) identifies education as one of the key elements of social reproduction that organize cities and connect social struggles. Katz (2008) describes how education systems dovetail with health care, housing, environmental infrastructures, and social justice initiatives in the service of social reproduction. In recognizing the relationship between these elements across contexts, Katz (2008) calls on geographers to draw counter-topographical connections around “poor people's evictions from the city, or the school–prison pipeline, or the privatization of security and relief services” (p. 26). Geographers, in other words, must make “strategic, practical, and theoretical connections around issues in ways that broaden the effects of their work to organize, advocate, and agitate” (p. 26). This review proceeds from the premise embedded in Katz's (2008) and Brown's (2015) statements: Schooling is a lynchpin for a range of social, political, and economic processes impacting individuals and communities (see also Collins & Coleman, 2008). In taking this tack, we emphasize that schools are not just the target of oppressive processes; as the Dyett hunger strike demonstrates, schools are also important sites of resistance.

On this view, public education is a deeply geographic, urgently political problem that geographers recently have begun to engage on these terms (Collins & Coleman, 2008; Waters, 2016). Collins and Coleman (2008), for instance, distinguish scholarship on schools as (identity-shaping) places from scholarship that emphasizes the place of schools within broader communities. In their discussion of the latter, they stress the far-reaching effects of school policy given that schools are not only centers of community life but also as sites of identity formation and social reproduction where values are instilled. In doing so, Collins and Coleman (2008) push geographers (and other social scientists) to consider the socio-spatial politics of schooling and how school spaces impact the production of social norms such as gender roles. This important function marks schools as crucial sites “through which societies express, contest and transform identity” (Collins & Coleman, 2008, p. 295). It also makes schools key sites of struggle over those identities and the social forces, such as patriarchy and white supremacy, that structure how those identities are lived and made.

Similarly, Waters (2016) broadens geographic conceptualizations of education by placing the “educational turn” in human geography in conversation with the “mobilities turn” in the social sciences (p. 2). In doing so, Waters (2016) calls on geographers “to think[] relationally and contextually about educational processes and the interplay of structure/fixity and agency/flows” (p. 2). A mobilities approach to education challenges conventional conceptions of schools as bounded containers. Waters (2016) argues that by mapping the tensions between “education as place”

and “education as mobilities,” geographers can “animate fresh approaches to understanding education” by bringing the practice and politics of schooling into conversation with the circulation of people, ideas, and capital (p. 15).

Building on these insights, this review considers how geographers might productively engage with dramatic changes in the provision and experience of education in North America and intensifying efforts to create more just alternatives. Recent waves of education reform and resistance have brought attention to the relationship between neoliberalization, racism, and schooling. A range of academics and activists have engaged these interlocking issues in their scholarship as well as in grassroots struggles over schooling. Although the antecedents of these developments have been marked in previous reviews (Collins & Coleman, 2008; Hanson-Thiem, 2009; Helfenbein & Taylor, 2009; Holloway, Brown, & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011; Pini et al., 2017; Waters, 2016), we argue that the current political moment demands sustained geographic attention to (a) the confluence of social processes from capital accumulation to the contested politics of citizenship that shape schooling arrangements and (b) how resistance to education reforms can help advance existing critical geographic debates. In a political context defined by the creative destruction of cities, this approach illuminates how complex social processes such as anti-Blackness and marketization articulate in urban schools and spaces. As Brown (2015) and Katz (2008) suggest, however, examinations of these dynamics must also attend to how people involved in collective action understand and enact alternatives and how these mobilizations may interact with other social movements.

3 | EDUCATION, GENTRIFICATION, AND THE (DE)CONSTRUCTION OF PLACE

Informed by community resistance to the neoliberal remaking of public schools (Buras, 2015; Cohen & Lizotte, 2015; Huff, 2015), geographers have interrogated the spatialized, racialized, and geopolitical processes that shape schooling and its relationship with place. For example, geographers have contributed to conversations regarding the **spatial politics of education** by drawing squarely from disciplinary concerns and expertise (Cook & Hemming, 2011; Metcalfe, Owen, Shipton, & Dryden, 2008; Pike, 2008). These geographic studies include examinations of how schools organize **mobilities and migration** (Beech, 2015; Cairns, 2017; Perkins & Neumayer, 2014; Raghuram, 2009) as well as how **distance to schools** shapes educational opportunity and school choice (Andre-Bechely, 2007; Hamnett & Butler, 2011; Harris, Johnson, & Burgess, 2016). In addition, geographers have addressed how **school closures** affect communities (Basu, 2004; Burdick-Will, Keels, & Schuble, 2013; Kearns, Lewis, McCreanor, & Witten, 2009). This robust educational turn in human geography has challenged the “institutional, place-based bias in educational research and has encouraged the consideration of other (more spatially contingent) ways of conceptualizing education and learning” (Waters, 2016, p. 1).

An area where geographic research on the spatialities of schooling is best developed is the relationship between schools and processes of urban change. This work most notably has focused on education reforms in the service of the gentrification of urban neighborhoods in North America and the United Kingdom. Scholars have undertaken this work through two main lines of inquiry: First, geographers interested in urban restructuring have examined schooling as the “final frontier,” or late stage, of gentrification (Akers, 2012; Butler, Hamnett, & Ramsden, 2013; Butler & Robson, 2003; Hankins, 2007). Second, education scholars have explored the relationship between education reforms and broader processes of urban restructuring such as the destruction of public housing (Buras, 2015; Gulson, 2011; Lipman, 2011; Pedroni, 2011; Yoon, 2011). In both cases, scholarship on the relationship between educational policy and urban governance illustrates the potential for critical geographies of education to contribute to the discipline at-large as well as future directions for the subfield.

Geographic scholarship on the education and urban restructuring nexus has centered largely on changes to schooling as a late-stage aspect of gentrification and displacement processes. Geographers Tim Butler, Chris Hamnett, and Mark Ramsden (2013), for example, discuss how middle-class gentrifiers used their resources to remake a local school in a gentrifying London neighborhood into the “good” local school. They also highlight how these middle-class

parents worked not only to reform the school's practices but also to ensure that their children would have access to this school over the "lesser" one that working-class children attended. These actions cemented demographic change in the neighborhood by making residents feel comfortable staying in the area once their children reached school-age, rather than moving elsewhere in search of a more "suitable" school.

Katherine Hankins (2007) similarly demonstrates the centrality of schools in communities through her examination of efforts to open a school in a gentrifying Atlanta neighborhood. According to Hankins (2007), the attempt to open this school was not simply about providing an alternative to middle-class parents; it also was a conscious act of building an alternative imagined community for parents entering a neighborhood with a defined identity they did not share. In this context, the "school became an institution around which complicated dynamics of community, as expressed through place identity, was contested" (Hankins, 2007, p. 23). The work of Hankins (2007), in conversation with Butler et al. (2013), illustrates how schools not only operate as an extension of the gentrification process; they also actively shape how people experience their communities and define neighborhood imaginaries. Importantly however, although these analyses highlight the role of education in shaping processes of gentrification and community building, they tend to characterize schooling as a downstream effect of an already existing process of gentrification. Rather than focus on what makes schools unique drivers of gentrification processes, oftentimes, such studies simply extend existing theories.

Sociologists of education have drawn upon geographers within the political economy tradition to explore similar terrain (Buras, 2015; Lipman, 2011; Pedroni, 2011). Yet, informed by their disciplinary orientation, these scholars focus more specifically on education reforms as constitutive of urban restructuring projects. These scholars contend that education reforms must be understood in relation to such restructuring projects because such reforms "remake public education to remake the city" by providing the conditions necessary to attract an influx of capital (Lipman, 2011, p. 72). To these scholars, education reforms are integral to the reimagining and restructuring of urban spaces, and therefore facilitate processes of urban change. Education scholar Ee-Seul Yoon (2011), for example, examines how Vancouver's aspirations for "global city" status are linked to the local school district's "mini-schools" system that helps the city offer the type of prestigious schooling needed to attract international elites. Within the U.S. context, Thomas Pedroni (2011) discusses how widespread school closures in the city of Detroit have helped prime the city for real estate speculation. For Pedroni (2011), the closure of schools central to Black life in the city for generations serves as "the opening salvo of the cleansing of racial histories and place-making from neighborhoods" (p. 211). This process renders the city "safe" for the return of capital and the middle class. For education scholars drawing on geographic theory, schooling is not simply a downstream effect of processes of urban restructuring such as gentrification; it serves to produce the necessary conditions for this restructuring through the erasure and production of neighborhood and city identities.

This work illustrates how schools and schooling are enmeshed within, and actively produce, dynamic geographies. Recent examinations of school closures in Philadelphia (Good, 2016) and of the destruction of the New Orleans public education system (Buras, 2013; Huff, 2015) demonstrate how the remaking of public education remakes the city. Furthermore, these explorations indicate future directions for critical geographies of education. In particular, they pay careful attention to how, in confronting the racialized destruction of public education, communities construct strong emotional and place-based attachments to neighborhood schools. Such attachments transform schools into critical rallying points for community resistance to racialized gentrification projects. Buras (2015), for example, recounts how place-based histories attached to the King Elementary School in New Orleans' 9th ward helped spur efforts to protect the school's status as a neighborhood-oriented institution. Buras (2015) contends that "place-based consciousness, possessed by teachers and students indigenous to the community, is an invaluable resource in the struggle against accumulation by dispossession" (p. 82). Schools not only facilitate capitalist restructuring processes; they also serve as sites of resistance to those same projects (Huff, 2013). Scholars innovatively working at the intersections of educational policy and urban governance have begun documenting and theorizing the complex role of the school that is at once subjected to destruction while simultaneously acting as a site of community contestation.

4 | SCHOOLS AND THE MAKING OF CITIZENSHIP

In another well-developed area of the geographies of education, geographers studying citizenship have identified education as a key tool of nation- and polity-building (Staeheli & Hammett, 2010) and in the making of citizen subjects (Driver & Maddrell, 1996; Hanks & Martin, 2006; Hemming, 2011; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012; Mitchell, 2003; Pykett, 2009; Pykett, Cloke, Barnett, Clarke, & Malpass, 2010). "The salience of citizenship to geographic inquiry" is evident in the rise of special issues on the topic (Staeheli, Ehrkamp, Leitner, & Nagel, 2012, p. 632). Given this saliency, political geographers have turned their attention to educational processes and policies as entry points to studying citizenship (Cowen & Siciliano, 2011; Mills, 2013; Staeheli et al., 2012). Meanwhile, education scholars have drawn from political geography to develop their understandings of citizenship and its spatiality (Abu El-Haj, 2015; Abu El-Haj & Bonet, 2011; Ghaffar-Kucher, 2009; Torres, 2002). In fact, Lynn Staeheli and Daniel Hammett (2010) bridge the work of political geographers and education scholars, arguing that "the importance of education in fostering a democratic citizenry is hard to overstate" (p. 669). In both approaches, studying education is critical to geographic inquiry for two key reasons. First, schools serve as an important site of citizenship, statecraft, and nation-building. Second, education and the struggles surrounding it provide insight into the social processes and local actors that shape meanings, institutions, and practices of citizenship and belonging. These approaches thus reveal the intellectual and activist possibilities of the intensification of critical geographic explorations of schools.

In a recent *Progress in Human Geography* article, for example, Lynn Staeheli, Patricia Ehrkamp, Helga Leitner, and Caroline Nagel (2012) begin their analysis of "ordinary citizenship" with a story of Jesus Apodaca. After graduating from high school, Jesus's status as an undocumented student led to the revocation of his college financial assistance and his notification of deportation. For these geographers, Jesus's experience as an undocumented student points to the legal, institutional, participatory, normative, and everyday contours that shape the "complex geographies of citizenship" (p. 628). Educational law and its associated social processes and practices provide insight into what citizenship is and how it is structured, reworked, and contested in daily life (see also Staeheli & Hammett, 2010).

Writing for both education researchers and geographers, political geographer Katharyne Mitchell (2003) examines "the new scale of citizenship" in the midst of "state deterritorialization" and how citizens in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States are "constituted within and by it" (p. 388). For Mitchell (2003), "the institution that is perhaps the most crucial in both the formation and maintenance of democratic communities ... is the institution that is often the *least* studied in academia: the institution of education" (p. 389). That is, institutions of education lie at the heart of Mitchell's (2003) critical exploration of citizenship and citizenship formation. In her study of citizenship formation, Mitchell (2003) interrogates the shift in educational rhetoric from multiculturalism in education to "a more strategic use of diversity for competitive advantage in the global marketplace" (p. 387). More specifically, Mitchell (2003) asks "What happens then to the concept of democratic, *national* citizens when the nation no longer contains those citizens, when the citizens are increasingly 'trans'-national, and the nation itself is tightly networked with others in a global system of social, political, and interdependency?" (p. 388, emphasis in original). As neoliberal globalization and its associated spatial patterns evolve, the question of citizenship demands an understanding of the dynamic shifts in the "relationship between state formation, economic organization, and educational systems" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 387).

Given the centrality of education in the (re)making of citizens and their identities, educational research anchors Mitchell's (2003) work. However, she finds that "although educational historians have investigated the shifting practices of individual states through time, few have looked at state formation in spatial terms, and none have investigated state formation in spatial terms other than the nation" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 390). Drawing from the work of educational historians, Mitchell's (2003) exploration of citizenship through the institution of education offers a critical spatial analysis of schooling typically absent from educational literature. Mitchell's (2003) work illustrates the synergetic possibilities of a critical geographies of education subfield that contributes to issues at the forefront of geographic inquiry and educational thought through spatial analysis.

Examining social processes like those Mitchell (2003) addresses, educational anthropologist Thea Renda Abu El-Haj's (2015) ethnographic research of Palestinian American youth in U.S. schools reveals the limits of dominant models of

citizenship anchored in the nation-state. Because youth identified as both Americans and diasporic Palestinians, Abu El-Haj (2015) argues that “transnational citizenship” is a “condition of modern life” that “calls upon us to fundamentally re-conceptualize citizenship education in ways that might support substantive inclusion in multinational democratic states” (p. 213). Abu El-Haj’s (2015) interdisciplinary research thus provides insight into how young people “construct belonging and citizenship across national borders” in a context defined by social forces central to geographic thought, including racialization, nationhood and trans/nationalism, the politics of belonging, citizenship, social and cultural memories, and the political economy (p. 213). Drawing from political geography, Abu El-Haj (2015) adds a spatial analysis to schooling often absent in educational research. At the same time, her (2015) ethnographic inquiry documents the strategies young people deploy to make sense of, negotiate, and contest meanings of citizenship and belonging in schools. Such ethnographic inquiry advances geographic theorizations by emphasizing how citizenship is made and remade in everyday life.

Political geographer Ranu Basu (2007) centers “acts of citizenship” in her inquiry into the collective resistance over school closures facilitated by neoliberal educational policy in Ontario, Canada (p. 109). Through participant observation, Basu (2007) witnessed how “policies formulated at one spatial level (provincial) operate quite differently at another (local school) and [that] the spatial disjunctures that arise from the actual implementation of policies are often invisible but intersect with questions related to social justice, citizenship, and rights” (p. 110). Mapping these spatial disjunctures and their corresponding scalar interplays reveals how individual and collective challenges to school closure result in “the constant creation and recreation of new spaces of citizenship” (p. 110). By studying how people contested Ontario school closures through multi-scalar tactics, Basu (2007) provides new insight into how communities exercise citizenship not only in relation to place-bound politics but also across each scale of governance. The spatial dynamics of neoliberal policy, governance, and daily life contextualize different forms of agency. The varied strategies and acts of citizenship that result can generate sometimes conflicting outcomes for communities (Basu, 2007, p. 125). By advancing a “broader framework of collective action highlighting relationship aspects of citizenship and scalar interplays that lead to positive and negative consequences for civil society,” Basu (2007) offers a “cautionary tale for planners, academics, and activist groups interested in grassroots organizing and scalar politics” (p. 111).

Geographers also have explored the fraught relationship between education and citizenship by focusing on the production of young people’s identities and subjectivities (Collet, 2007; Dowling, 2008; Gagen, 2000; Kong, 1999; Valentine, 2000). To better understand the symbiotic relationship between schooling and regimes of power, geographers have focused on issues related to education and: **gender** (Holloway, Valentine, & Bingham, 2000; Hsieh, 2016; Hyams, 2000; Maddrell, Strauss, Thomas, & Wyse, 2016; McDowell, 1997), **race** (Riley & Ettlinger, 2011), and **disability** (Holt, 2004, 2007; Moss, 1999; Worth, 2013). Implicit in this diverse work is the role of education in the making of citizens, formation of identity, and production of difference. Yet these studies also reveal how young people contest processes of subject formation and the power relations that facilitate them.

As these literatures illustrate, schools serve an important role in the production, regulation, and contestation of citizenship across contexts. By studying schools and schooling, political geographers and education scholars have advanced theoretical and empirical understandings of citizenship and its associated social processes. Such work is instructive, illuminating entry points for political contestation and offering cautionary insights as to how to organize ethically and effectively.

5 | FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The literature in this review provides important insight into the intersections between geography and education. In the space remaining, however, we identify blockages that can limit the development of a subfield capable of shedding light on intensifying North American struggles over schooling. First, we reflect on the disconnections between scholars producing geographies of education. Next, we consider the disconnection between academics and those engaged in grassroots struggles over schooling. In response, we call for a subfield that works towards cohesion by engaging across difference.

Interest in what could be called “critical geographies of education” is growing. Our review is one of several that have been published over the last two decades (e.g., Collins & Coleman, 2008; Hanson-Thiem, 2009; Holloway et al., 2011; Pini et al., 2017; Waters, 2016). Intellectual energy surrounding education dynamics fueled a series of Critical Geographies of Education sessions at the 2012 annual meeting of the American Association of Geographers (AAG), culminating in a 2013 special issue of *The Canadian Geographer*. Subsequent meetings have included sessions and panels organized in a strategic effort to build sustained disciplinary scholarship within a broadly defined field of critical geographies of education.

Despite these efforts, however, this scholarship has not yet coalesced into a recognized subfield.² This scholarship also has not fully realized the potential of engaging more deeply with the social dynamics that coalesce around schools, as highlighted by scholars such as Collins and Coleman (2008) and Waters (2016). This is partially due to the breadth of topical concerns that might fall under the rubric of critical geographies of education.³ In addition, these concerns have been pursued by scholars working in radically different traditions: those outside of geography as well as those who identify as political, economic, urban, social, and cultural geographers. Such diversity is welcomed and, as we argue below, necessary. But even those investigating a subset of interactions often are not substantively involved with one another's work. For instance, although both Katherine Hankins (2007) and Ee-Seul Yoon (2011) have focused on the relationship between education and gentrification, conversation may be difficult because they work with different disciplinary influences, vocabularies, and audiences in mind. Another barrier to substantive interaction stems from the fact that geographers who produce work on the relationship between geography and education often do so only sporadically and/or tangentially, publishing more frequently in established disciplinary conversations, such as on gentrification, where they potentially may have more impact.

Clearly such conditions do not prevent scholars from producing important work, but they do make it more difficult to sustain focus on the unique geographical problems of education. The inevitable disjunctures and silences that always exist within disciplines would be less problematic in critical geographies of education if they occurred in the broader context of robust debates between scholars who challenged and built upon existing arguments to develop recognizable and active lines of research. Instead, the lack of conversation across geographies of education leaves many such silences unchallenged.

For instance, as the review of existing work has illustrated, schools and schooling can be central to the production of new geographies and geographic identities. Yet, despite tentative work in this direction, geographers have not fully explored the specific role of education in shaping geographies and the relevance of what happens within schools to broader geographic inquiry. Instead of developing internal debates that foreground the difference that schooling makes, critical geographic work on education has tended to treat educational contexts as illustrative of existing geographic theories. Intentional, sustained conversation between geographers and their co-travelers in fields such as the sociology of education is needed to engage more productively with the difference that education makes.

Although we argue for the benefits of more sustained and focused internal conversations on education, importantly, we do not seek insularity. Instead, we suggest that critical geographies of education must include multiple perspectives and that the avenues of inquiry that anchor critical geographies of education must themselves be shaped by interaction with those whose work is centered elsewhere: in other geographic subdisciplines, in academic fields beyond geography, and outside of the academy. By thinking, and talking, across multiple studies, the value of education to the wider discipline can be better established. This understanding is guided by Hanson-Thiem's (2009) reminder that the subfield should draw on and contribute to other disciplinary conversations to address the intersecting social processes that coalesce through schooling; how schools produce new geographies and how this relates to existing disciplinary conversations cannot be lost in the focus on building a conversation between critical geographers of education.

Without diminishing the contributions of existing scholarship, we recognize the responsibility to build a critical geographies of education subfield able to meet the demands of the current political moment and the concerns of those directly involved in schooling struggles. To do so, we underscore the political saliency of geographers who continue to study the connections between schooling arrangements, processes of urban neoliberalization, and historically rooted forms of racialized socio-spatial violence such as those experienced by the residents of Bronzeville. Existing

critical geographic work on education has often examined the relationship between education and geography through the lens of neoliberalization (Basu, 2007; Cohen & Lizotte 2015; Hankins & Martin, 2006; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2012; Huff, 2013; Lipman, 2011; Mitchell, 2003; Pedroni, 2011). Yet understanding the full range of felt injustices and political aims that drive contemporary schooling struggles requires further engagement with the multiple politically urgent issues that shape struggles over education. To advance this scholarship, we suggest that future work draw more from geographical scholarship that integrates critical political, social, and cultural theory. Work on the co-constitutive relationship between race and place could be a useful starting point for negotiating these intersections (Delaney, 2002; McKittrick, 2011; Peake & Kobayashi, 2002; Pulido, 2000).

This line of inquiry also serves as a reminder that places such as schools are not just the targets of attempts to marketize state institutions and disempower marginalized groups; they are also sites of struggles against these processes. This potential for the contestation of dominant logics is important in a moment when attempts at resistance are often drowned under a wave of quantified “best practices” and a focus on “what works” (Cohen & Lizotte 2015; Huff, 2015). Despite the substantial resources of wealthy philanthropists and local and national governments, attempts to use standardized test scores to promote neoliberal reforms within education have been fiercely resisted. Guided by community resistance such as the Dyett hunger strike, we return to Katz’s (2008) call for conducting research “in ways that broaden the effects of their work to organize, advocate, and agitate” (p. 26). We contend that critically studying schooling can help us understand contestation of these reforms and amplify them (p. 26).

Such work, however, requires not only a commitment to engaging with multiple academic perspectives; it also demands more substantive engagement with those who are directly involved in such struggles. As the opening quote from Jitu Brown (2015) illustrates, academics are not alone in describing schooling as a deeply geographic and political process. Those who confront these everyday realities have unique insight into the relationships between seemingly distinct projects such as the destruction of organized labor, efforts to undermine the education activism, and the geographies of people of color. This recognition has fueled broader efforts to combat racialized social and spatial violence across multiple struggles. In advocating for critical research agenda, we underscore the importance of reciprocal learning in the research process. To ensure that the theories underpinning critical geographies of education are responsive to the experiences of those closest to the dynamics they seek to explain, critical geographers of education cannot simply expand our theoretical frameworks. We must also institutionalize ways of co-constructing geographic theory with participants in collective action such as those resisting education reform (Derickson, 2016; Derickson & Routledge, 2015; MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013).

We cannot know in advance what lines of inquiry will prove most fruitful for geographers interested in pursuing critical geographies of education. However, whatever questions are pursued, critical geographies of education must commit to the rigorous and constant testing of ideas against those developed by differently positioned people working in other contexts. Critical geographers of education must intentionally engage with ideas developed by those involved in social movements whose work often is not recognized as intellectual and by those whom geographers relegate to the category of “acted upon.” Although debates about the relationship between neoliberalism and racism persist in geographic scholarship, schooling activists such as Jitu Brown also actively engage questions of what is driving education reforms, who stands to benefit, and how they can be resisted. Geographers must follow the lead of these activists who engage schools as sites where multiple co-constitutive projects come together and can be resisted. Through this approach, the disjunctures between these projects and the possibilities of contesting them become available for study.

Working from these propositions, we call for the development of an engaged critical geographies of education subfield that cultivates its own internal lines of inquiry through interaction with those who identify as education geographers, schooling activists, and others whose work intersects with education. As Doreen Massey (1999) advised, “some of the most stimulating intellectual developments of recent years have come either from new, hybrid places or from places where boundaries between disciplines have been constructively breached and new conversations have taken place” (p. 5). Through disciplinary boundary crossing, a critical geographies of education subfield can respond to the ever-dynamic social forces and power relations that organize contemporary educational institutions. Anchored in critical scholarship, this subfield can attend to how co-constitutive ordering systems, such as racism, sexism, and colonialism, shape and are shaped by schools. This intentionally interdisciplinary and critical work can learn from, support,

and inform local struggles over education and continue carving out radical alternatives. As an intellectual project rooted in a commitment to communities, such an endeavor would force critical geographers of education to grapple with the full complexity of schooling dynamics, including their relationship to other social movements. This approach positions us to contribute to other geographical conversations without sacrificing the richness of our own. Through this work, critical geographies of education can enliven disciplinary scholarship while working in solidarity with activists such as Jitu Brown and the Black Lives Matter movement (The Movement for Black Lives, 2016).

NOTES

- ¹ Because we understand the primacy of how social, political, and economic contexts shape public education through our research in North America, we have narrowed our review of studies to the North American schooling and its closest comparators. Despite this focus, we acknowledge that scholars have made significant contributions to understanding the socio-spatial restructuring of education through their study of other sites, including the global south (e.g., Jansen, 1998; Jeffrey, Jeffrey, & Jeffrey, 2004; Katz, 2004; Rosen, 2003; Staeheli & Hammett, 2013).
- ² In 2004, geographers Kris Olds and Claudia Hanson-Thiem sought to establish a Geography of Education specialty group, which never materialized.
- ³ Geographers Sarah Dyer and Matt Finn curated an extensive list of literatures related to "geographies of education and learning" that is available to the public. It can be accessed here: <https://tinyurl.com/GeogEd>.

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Nicole Nguyen is assistant professor of social foundations of education at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Her research examines the intersections of national security, the global war on terror, and U.S. public schooling. In 2016, the University of Minnesota published her first book, *A Curriculum of Fear: Homeland Security in US Public Schools*.

Dan Cohen is a doctoral candidate at the University of British Columbia. His research focuses on the marketization of education including the social and political relations that allow markets to function. His dissertation explores the construction of charter school markets in the United States with a particular focus on Michigan and Oregon.

Alice E. Huff is a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her work examines the lived experience of place and policy in terms of its relationship to collective action. In particular, she is interested in how the geographic dimensions of education are politicized and contested. Her most recent work focuses on neighborhood-school struggles in New Orleans.

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