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Lance T. McCready

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Queeruptions, Queer of Color Analysis, Radical Action and Education Reform: An Introduction

Lance T. McCreedy

University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

ABSTRACT

In this introduction, the author (guest editor) points to the five articles that comprise the symposium conversation on “queeruptions.” The articles describe “queeruptions” by queer people of color (QPOC), specifically who are homeless, who work on ‘zine projects, and/or who engage in student of color advocacy and popular education workshops. Each of the articles in the symposium offers examples of queeruptions that have the potential to radically transform education.

Queeruptions are activist spaces where participants exchange information, network, and organize in order to make change and challenge mainstream society. We take the term *queeruptions* from an annual international grassroots festival that started in 1998 for alternative and radical queers (Brown, 2007). More broadly, through an adult education lens, *queeruptions* can be thought of as a radical form of informal education outside of the structured curriculum, similar to social movements, where participants organize as a means of critical consciousness-raising for social change (Biahar, 2010). The five articles in this symposium of *Equity & Excellence in Education* are the first to document and describe *queeruptions* by queer people of color (QPOC) and offer important considerations for formal education. The articles focus on the education between homeless youth, in community workshops, through collaboration on ‘zine projects, and in student of color advocacy; each offers *queeruptions* that have the potential to radically transform curricula of formal education (Shlasko, 2005).

The *queeruptions* that are illustrated in this symposium are notably based on queer of color analysis, which is grounded in queer of color epistemologies (McCreedy, 2013). For example, in 2016, the Toronto chapter of Black Lives Matter sent shockwaves across North America when they delayed the Toronto Pride Parade for 25 minutes in protest of violence against queer people of color by state-sponsored institutions (Ware, 2017). Drawing inspiration from this *queeruption* and others that challenge dominant norms and discourses within educational institutions, the articles will extend the theoretical and pedagogical work that began in a special issue of *Curriculum Inquiry* on queer of color epistemologies and knowledge production edited by myself and Ed Brockenbrough. Specifically, the articles in this symposium of *Equity & Excellence in Education* document non-formal and informal education grounded in queer of color epistemologies that oppose dominant norms within formal education spaces (i.e., schools and universities). *Queeruptions*, we argue, have implications for how schools and universities can be restructured to facilitate the thriving of queer students of color. In the following, I offer a brief summary of each article and how, together, they make a strong argument for recognizing the ways *queeruptions* by queer people of color can transform education.

Sam Stiegler’s article, “Under the Trees in Lincoln Center: Queer and Trans Homeless Youth Coming Together,” explores the relationship of two homeless youth—one queer and one trans—as they pass time in public space between the opening hours of shelters and group homes. Drawing

from a critical ethnography of the experiences of trans and queer youth in New York City, this article examines how these youth navigate and are in relation to the affects, structures, bodies, and discourses that comprise the city. Stiegler's article centers the youths' relationship as an act of resistance against normative assumptions about race, gender, and sexuality that dictate how the city is "supposed" to be used.

Rigoberto Marquez's article, "Queer Latina/o(x) Youth Education: A Community-Based Education Model to Queer of Color Praxis," describes the author's collaborative work with the *Promotoras* of Planned Parenthood Los Angeles who teach the *Familias Diversas* workshop series. Taught in Spanish, the project's goal is to teach parents how to become advocates for and supporters of Latina/o(x) queer youth. The *Promotoras* work provides one example of how schools can create and enforce policies that affirm the lives of queer youth of color. Their work also serves as an example of queer of color pedagogical practice and activism.

Vijay Kanagala and Steven Oliver's article, "Our Younger Selves: QPOC Student Affairs Professionals Supporting QPOC Students," draws on grounded theory, validation theory, and critical race theory to analyze the experiences of queer students of color through the lens of QPOC student affairs professionals who work with QPOC students in higher education settings. The participants in Kanagala and Oliver's exploratory study describe their calling to student affairs work aimed at QPOC, the challenges faced by QPOC students, and their recommendations for how higher education professionals in student affairs can develop strategies to support QPOC students that challenge racist and heterosexist assumptions of student life.

Tomás Boatwright's article, "Flux 'Zine: Black Queer Storytelling," describes how QPOC youth contribute liberating initiatives and acts of resistance through multiple formats, including grassroots organizing, storytelling, music, and performance art. Boatwright offers critical reflections on an experience creating and collaborating with Black queer youth activists to produce *Flux Zine*. Boatwright explores how the 'zine became a coalition-building tool, a collaborative queer of color critique, and a creative platform for narrating Black queer ontologies.

Kia Darling-Hammond's conclusion, "Queeruptions and the Question of QTPOC Thriving in Schools: An Excavation," serves as a reflection on the ideas explored across the symposium articles, as well as the spaces and places of radical informal education toward which the authors point the reader. Recapping the four examples of *queeruptions* described by the authors, Darling-Hammond asserts how QPOC mobilize autonomy, collectivity, and creativity to build spaces for learning, healing, and being. She invites readers to consider both structural and curricular possibilities of *queeruptions*, and to hold these up against formal schooling as it is currently practiced. Importantly, Darling-Hammond argues that *queeruptions* based on queer of color analysis do not necessarily give us clear policy mandates. Rather, they help us question the status quo, reflect on norms that control and exclude, and look to the many ways QPOC make meaning of education.

In my view as a guest editor, the early- and mid-career scholars included in this symposium are among the most thoughtful community-engaged scholars in the academic field of QPOC queer studies in education. Their articles serve as a jumping-off point for more dialogue about the potential of *queeruptions* to radically transform schools, universities, and beyond. They also direct our attention to the importance of centering QPOC in rethinking education futurities that provide opportunities for teachers and students to challenge heteronormativity, critique harmful social norms, and examine systems of oppression (Snapp, Burdge, Licon, Moody, & Russell, 2015). This is the work at hand.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Lance T. McCreedy is Associate Professor and Director of the Transitional Year Programme in the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, University of Toronto. McCreedy's research program is concerned with the education, health, and well-being of urban youth. He is author of *Making Space for Diverse Masculinities*. More recent research and publications focus on educational trajectories and the impact of migration on the well-being of Black queer youth.

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