

Introduction to the Special Issue: Proceedings from the 2019 Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference

Adrian M. Downey, Candace Gallagher, Alicia F. Noreiga[†]

The 8th annual Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference (AEGSC) was held on Saturday, July 13, 2019 on the University of New Brunswick's (UNB) Fredericton campus. UNB Fredericton is located on the unceded and unpurchased territory of the The Wolastoqey Nation. The Wolastoqiyik are members of the Wabanaki confederacy, which includes the Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Abenaki nations. As graduate students privileged to be living and studying on traditional Wabanaki lands, we have a responsibility to build and maintain sustainable relationships with those lands and their stewards. As the previous AEGSC chair, Amelia Thorpe, wrote in the 2018 proceedings, "we are grateful for the opportunity to study on the traditional lands of Wolastoqiyik and recognize that all attendees at the AEGSC benefit from the Wolastoqi stewardship of the land" (Thorpe, 2018, p. i).

The theme of the 2019 conference was "Bridging Theory and Practice". While there is a long history of attempting to bring together theory and practice in education (Entwistle, 2013), we view the theme as responding to the current movement in education research aimed at bridging the gap between knowledge acquisition and application (Biggs, 2006; Goodnough, Flakenberg, & MacDonald, 2016; Shaharabani & Yarden, 2019). Like many others (Entwistle, 2013; Goodnough et al., 2016; Shaharabani & Yarden, 2019) we seek balance between theory and practice and, more

importantly, a space open to dialogue between the two. We believe the AEGSC, and by extension these conference proceedings, has provided a forum for such dialogue by holding space for student researchers to conceptualize the relationships between their theoretical understandings and research practices. In addition, the conference created the opportunity for the audience to merge the presenters' theoretical insights with their own real-life practices and for conference presenters to reflect on the realities of classrooms in Atlantic Canada. Candace Gallagher's piece, for example, emerges from a thoughtful engagement with her own classroom experiences, bringing together theory and practice in precisely the manner the AEGSC 2019 planning committee envisioned.

The contributions to this year's proceedings reflect the wide range of disciplines, topics, methods, and methodologies which make Education such a unique academic field. Though most texts share common geographical origins in Atlantic Canada, they also emulate broad trends in social sciences research pursued in distinctive localities, thus highlighting the growing significance of place in research (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Apart from the AEGSC, there are only a few cross-disciplinary, place-informed, and broadly conceived forums for discussions on education in Atlantic Canada. The Association of Atlantic Universities' Teaching Showcase and its proceedings, as well as the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education's Eastern Conference, offer spaces for comprehensive conversation on educational issues affecting Atlantic Canada. These conferences, however, are aimed at stimulating discussions on distinct components of education—namely, post-secondary and adult education, respectively. Consequently, *Antistasis* is perhaps the only education journal situated within Atlantic Canada that allows students, scholars, and educators of universities in Atlantic Canada the autonomy to explore a full range of educational issues. Through the AEGSC and its yearly

proceedings—including the current volume—*Antistasis* has become a unique forum to promote research geographically situated in, connected to, and appreciative of Atlantic Canada.

The AEGSC's proceedings provide an avenue for graduate students to showcase their exceptional talent by sharing their research and philosophies while also acquiring valuable publication experience. The quality of the articles showcased within this volume represents the work of authors who exhibit high levels of creativity, diligence, and professionalism. The research projects described in many of these texts were conducted under rigorous and thorough processes, and oftentimes represent the cutting edge of methodological innovation. The emerging tendency toward contemporary research methods, such as storytelling and arts-based methodologies, in many of the projects described in this year's proceedings is particularly innovative and inspiring. In many of the texts, narratives in the form of journal entries, poetry, artwork, and other visual methodological approaches were adopted as mediums for self-reflection, self-actualization, and identity development. These methods have created avenues for researchers to incorporate relevant participatory approaches in their research.

Another common element of this year's proceedings is the focus on social justice and empowerment as fundamental theoretical suppositions and ethical imperatives. The articles, both implicitly and explicitly, promote the emancipatory quest through identity development and personal growth, as well as systems change. These concepts can be identified in articles that describe issues such as university students' identity development, reflective practice to support women in early childhood education, self-reflection for student behavior modification, self-reflection as a coping mechanism for mental health, and the promotion of human rights in education.

The proceedings begin with Christina Flemming’s “Dear Matilda: Letter Writing as Research Method”. As a researcher engaging arts-informed methodology, Flemming shares letters she has written to her infant daughter in order to bring reflexivity into her research process. These letters demonstrate how creative inquiry can help develop a conceptual framework while remaining mindful of positionality. Flemming’s research seeks to explore what we can learn about storytelling from art curation in service of social justice.

In keeping with the arts-informed methodology, Kim Stewart’s article entitled “Sacred Spaces: Places to Call Home?” follows. Here Stewart shares narratives, artifacts, and samples of writing as she unpacks encounters with herself and others in sacred spaces; these sacred spaces are defined as literary spaces to call home for adult and child. Stewart relives stories to uncover how new literacies unfold and sustain us through human and more-than-human entanglements. She turns to this sacred space on the page to write, to theorize, and to understand new ways of knowing/being/doing.

Next, Candace Gallagher’s contribution to this year’s proceedings, “Entangled Women: Markmarkers, Worldmakers”, perfectly responds to Ardra Cole’s (2004) call for research to be evocative, provocative, and accessible. Gallagher brings together her sketching process and deep considerations of relational ethics within the space of early childhood education. This relationality, for Gallagher, includes the human and more-than-human which are always co-present during learning. In this, her article is representative of two major movements in current research: posthumanism and arts-based inquiry.

Gallagher’s article smoothly leads into Keith Williams’s “Garden Entanglement as Ecological-Becomings: An Arts- Based Diffractive”. In this article, Williams shares poetic insights from his

garden-based autoethnographic journaling process. As Williams outlines the theoretical influences shaping his research, including kasasten'sera, Deleuzian becomings, and arts-based methodologies, he speaks of poetry as a way of understanding and representing experiences that may carry on unnoticed using conventional logico-linguistic and linear qualitative research methodologies. Williams' autoethnographic journaling process "mark[s] [his] decolonizing journey based on rebuilding the delegitimated web of relationality associated with the seasonal food cycle: planting, tending, harvesting, sharing, eating, and saving seed from traditional Turtle Island food plants" (Williams, this volume, p. 47).

The next article picks up on the thread of reflexivity by proposing a step-by-step guide for the adoption of reflective practice. In "Narrative Identity Development: A Proposed Focus for Student Development", Jacqueline De Leebeeck explores identity as an integral component of student development and, as such, a critical aspect for student affairs personnel in higher-education institutions. De Leebeeck proposes David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Model as a functional tool that student affairs educators can adopt when assisting university students with identity development. De Leebeeck merges the theoretical underpinnings of emergent adulthood in the context of undergraduate students and the use of narratives in exploring identities to provide a concrete example of the way the Experiential Learning Model can be used in student identity development.

David Wolff's "Paramedics Do Not Always Develop PTSD: Emerging Data on How Paramedics Prepare for and Process Their Day to Day Critical Stressors Experienced on the Job" follows by providing a formidable description of one aspect of his larger case study research. His paper describes his analysis of the use of reflective practice in improving resilience to occupational stress injury among paramedics. By examining and recounting the

narratives of paramedics who self-identify as having grown from their paramedic experiences, Wolff describes participants' experiences and use of reflection as a strategy to strengthen their resilience. In Wolff's study, paramedics were able to use reflective practice to apply meaning to their experiences, thus becoming more resilient to occupational stresses.

Mohamed Kharbach's article, "Exploring the Methodological Affordances of Critical Discourse Analysis in Social Research", is a thoughtful and considered accounting of the critical discourse analysis and how it can be used in counter-hegemonic research contexts. Drawing examples from his own research, Kharbach's article offers both an exploration of the theoretical underpinnings of discourse analysis, as well as several illustrative applications of the method. Kharbach's conclusion gestures toward an expanded application of critical discourse analysis to new topics and old—like many authors in this volume, suggesting a boundless potential of research.

Next, Katie Hamill's "Exploring Human Rights in Atlantic Canada" presents a comprehensive depiction of one aspect of a border study which explored challenges and support mechanisms in place for the implementation of Human Rights Education (HRE) for K1-Grade 12 students in Atlantic Canada. In her study, Hamill used secondary data analysis to explore the effectiveness of The Foundation of the Atlantic Social Studies Curriculum in meeting national and provincial human rights objectives based on the Canadian Human Rights Act. Supported by her research findings, Hamill highlights shortcomings in the curriculum document, challenges for the implementation of an effective HRE program in schools, and suggests resources and approaches that can be used to address some of the challenges identified to create, what Katie Hamill describes as a "culture of rights".

Alicia F. Noreiga's article, "When Leaders Collaborate: Transformative Leadership for Rural Development in Trinidad and Tobago", also touches on the themes of human rights and social justice embedded this year's proceedings. Noreiga's article draws the foundational philosophies of Paulo Freire around transformative education into the context of educational leadership through the notion of transformative leadership and the work of Carolyn Shields. She localizes her discussion in the context of Trinidad and Tobago and specifically the rural parts of the country. Noreiga's work, though international in scope, resonates deeply in the context of Atlantic Canada, where rural education is a common phenomenon.

The final article in this year's proceedings is based on the keynote address given at the conference by Dr. Casey Burkholder. Her article, "Exploring Participatory Visual Research Methodologies with Queer, Trans, and Non-Binary Youth in a Research for Social Change Framework", discusses her recent work using cellfilms and other forms of media with LGBTQ+ youth toward social change. In this regard, Dr. Burkholder's work is on the cutting edge of both methodological innovation and social action. As with all her work, here Dr. Burkholder shows graduate students what can be achieved through collaboration in a research context. We would, of course, like to thank Dr. Burkholder for her contribution to this special issue.

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Adrian M. Downey is a Mi'kmaw PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick and, effective July 1, 2020, an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. His interests are in curriculum theory, Indigenous knowledges, poetic inquiry, death education, and arts-informed research. He holds a Master of Arts in Education from Mount Saint Vincent University and undergraduate degrees in music and education from Bishop's University.

Candace Gallagher is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from St. Thomas University and a Master of Education from University of New Brunswick. Candace has experience teaching in early childhood settings, public school systems, and as an instructor at UNB. She has taught and has experience as a curriculum developer both internationally and locally. As a critical feminist researcher, she is investigating early childhood leadership as worldmaking through pedagogical documentation in the interest of social justice.

Alicia F. Noreiga is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of New Brunswick where she pursues studies in Rural Education. Alicia holds a Bachelor of Education (Elementary Education) and Master of Education (Curriculum and Administration) degree from the University of New Brunswick. She is a primary teacher in Trinidad and Tobago's public-school system. Alicia is currently the Vice President Academic of UNB's Graduate Student Association along with being the graduate student representative for various committees within the university. She also works with groups to promote initiatives aimed at raising awareness of issues affecting Black university students.

ⁱ Authorship is alphabetical. No hierarchical positioning is intended to be read from the order of authorship. All authors share responsibility for the contents of the material herewithin.