

Introduction to the Special Issue: Proceedings for the 2021 Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference.

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Amid a global pandemic, the 10th annual Atlantic Education Graduate Student Conference (AEGSC) was successfully held on June 25th - 26th, 2021. For a second year, the AEGSC was held in partnership with the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association (CCPA). Graduate students attending the University of New Brunswick (UNB) Faculty of Education coordinated the event. Attending an institution located on the unsundered and unceded traditional lands of the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) and Mi'kmaq Peoples, UNB's graduate students recognize and respectfully acknowledge the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship," which the Wolastoqiyik, Mi'kmaq, and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. UNB's graduate students understand that the treaties did not deal with the surrender of lands and resources but recognized Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Mi'kmaq, and Passamaquoddy title over the lands and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations (Downey, Gallagher & Noreiga, 2020; Thorpe, 2018). As past editors of the AEGSC posited, "UNB's graduate students are privileged to be living and studying on traditional lands and recognize that all AEGSC attendees benefit from the generosity of the keepers of the land which they occupy" (Ayoola-Adeniyi, Heer & Noreiga, 2021; p. i). As such, graduate students partaking in AEGSC were made to understand their privilege and that their accommodations for professional development made available through the generosity of the genuine keepers of the land (Downey, Gallagher & Noreiga, 2020; Thorpe, 2018).

For the past ten years, AEGSC has created a forum for graduate students across Atlantic Canada to engage in professional activities. The conference continues to bring together emerging scholars to disseminate new knowledge through showcasing their work. Conferences include activities that extend beyond the exchange of information (Haus, 2021). The AEGSC creates a supportive environment for emerging scholars to gain experience presenting their work, develop their ideas and arguments leading up to their final projects, collaborate with colleagues, establish networks, and showcase the success and power of graduate student research. The AEGSC is arguably the only Atlantic Canada conference specifically dedicated to graduate students in education. As a follow-up to the conference, the 2021 AEGSC conference proceedings showcase presenters' articles based on their presentations. As graduate students enrolled at UNB's Faculty of Education at the time of the conference, we, the editors, coordinated the publication process, ensuring that authors benefited from rigorous peer review and editing processes to ensure that the papers published were of good quality. Congruent with past proceedings, this year's authors provided research and theoretical literature based on their fields of interest. The proceedings consist of five papers from former and current graduate students.

The theme of the proceedings is *Education in Times of Crisis and Beyond*. As educators adopt new innovative ways of limiting the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and

¹ Authorship is listed in alphabetical order. No hierarchical positioning is intended to be interpreted from the order of authorship. All authors share responsibility for the contents of material herewithin.

learning, this theme calls for graduate students to ponder on global precarity and education as casualty and panacea to imminent crises. Associating education with crises is not a new phenomenon. Arendt (1954) explored how global crises impact education policy makers' perception regarding what knowledge is most worthwhile, thus, making crisis a crucial influencer and component of education. Similar matters still appeal to researchers today. Some researchers articulate education in times of crisis and beyond as existing on the doorstep of dystopia (Saul, 2021), while others opt to envision the future of education through utopic lens (Bell, 2021). Regardless of the lens through which researchers choose to explore education, one aspect remains congruent: we exist in a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous world (Shields, 2018) where privilege and domination, inequities, and injustices determine the quality of armor various people receive. This armor, in turn, impacts the probability of becoming survivors or casualties of crises. COVID-19 illuminated the harsh realities of inequities in education spaces.

Authors in this year's proceedings took into consideration the ways education exists within a world of mounting crises. Authors addressed issues as they felt fit. As such, the contributions to this year's proceedings reflect an array of disciplines, topics, methods, and methodologies. Some articles are theoretical commentaries while others are drawn from ongoing graduate students' research. Furthermore, authors had the autonomy to address issues as they felt fit. While authors examined education and crises from varying focal points, most made specific connection to the ongoing pandemic impacts.

As with many during this period of challenges, living in a pandemic brought a new perspective to the concepts of distance and time. In the first article of this proceedings, Adrian M. Downey, the author of the article entitled "Graduate education, Linkin Park, and pandemics: A reflection" explored mixed feelings, strained by the stresses of completing doctoral studies and the joys of securing a post at Mount Saint Vincent University. This transition inspired Downey to reflect on his experience as a graduate student. Downey chose to capture experiences in the most "unlikely source of wisdom" (p. 2)—the alternative rock band Linkin Park. Downey employed Linkin Park's rhythmic renditions as a reflective stimulant. Downey reflected on the lyrics sung by the band and the ways the songs' messages impacted his graduate journey as he became, as Linkin Park sings it, "more like me and less like you". The author described his pathway to finding a place of belonging, where the author was able to form *personal narratives*. According to Downey, the pandemic has shown us how to move forward, emerging with the fortitude to believe in ourselves.

Emerging from the author's master's research, the second article, "Decolonizing educational curricula in settler societies: Unpacking white supremacy in Canada", focuses on how and where Indigeneity is situated in the Canadian education system. In keeping with the conference theme, Sarah Lander's contribution to these proceedings explores the Canadian social studies curriculum through an anti-colonial lens. Lander draws attention to the dominant discourse and the role of white supremacy in learning as the most prominent events—the murder of George Floyd and the unmasking of mass graves of Indigenous children from Canadian residential schools—provided a catalyst to reflect on what people consider *the norm*. Considering a new way forward, Lander proposes applying decolonial praxis and looking beyond the "one-sided view of history, actively erasing parts of the past to serve a colonial narrative" (p. 12) as the author advocate for non-dominant histories to become dominant.

With little refuge during the COVID-19 pandemic, many young people spent extended hours on technologies to connect for education, socialization, and communication purposes, sometimes exposing them to cyber violence. In the article entitled “Cyberviolence and victim-blaming in the lives of New Brunswick youth” Shannon M. Waite explores a framework designed for secondary schools to shift away from the current “problematic bullying” approach and ensure the components of cyber violence are not suppressed. Scaffolding from the film *Social Proof* (2019), Shannon highlights the barriers withholding youth from vital supporting programs and marginalizing them from the education decision-making processes that address cyber violence. Waite’s primary theoretical framework focuses on how violence influences victim-blaming discourses and how attitudes are fundamental to assisting persons experiencing cyber violence. Addressing the research findings through themes and conversations with key stakeholders, Waite postulates that this research can contribute to the degradation of ideological belief in victim-blaming and reframe the severity of cyber violence to open future dialogue towards change.

In the fourth article, “Systemic barriers to French immersion: The impact of COVID-19”, Julianne Gerbrandt reflects on experiences as an elementary school teacher during the pandemic, acknowledging the failure of increased access to provide equitable education in French Immersion. In this article, the author utilizes theories of social reproduction, habitus, and cultural capital to explain why more than educational policy is needed for marginalized students to overcome the disproportionate challenges they face in French Immersion. Throughout the article, Gerbrandt promotes the importance of supporting students in their language development regardless of their abilities or access to cultural capital and the ways educators and policymakers can achieve this objective.

In the final paper of the 2021 AEGSC proceedings, “Queering queer educational absences”, Amelia Thorpe draws upon their doctoral research to highlight the importance of educators having the knowledge and resources to engage in meaningful conversations about sexual diversity in the classroom. In this article, Thorpe utilizes queer autoethnography to inform the need to elevate 2SLGBTQ+ lived experience, to disrupt the absence of queer education, and resist normative and oppressive discourses. By reflecting on experiences from high to graduate school, Thorpe explores experiences common to 2SLGBTQ+ experiences. Thorpe also proposes three interconnected strategies to elevate 2SLGBTQ+ knowledge. These strategies include 2SLGBTQ+ created resources, youth voices, and community resources.

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