

Editorial

And the Times Keep Changing: Yet Neoliberalism Marches On

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How time flies! This is our final editorial as Anglophone Co-Editors for CJE as our 3-year appointment comes to an end this summer. We start by expressing our deep gratitude to the authors who have submitted their manuscripts. It has been an honour to engage with your scholarship. Three years ago, we noted the historic time nationally and internationally in which educators were finding themselves. COVID-19 was front and centre at the time, but there was also more widespread awareness of long-standing systemic racism and social exclusions, intensifying climate change, Indigenous resurgence in Canada, and shifting global conflict. We noted our priority to engage timely, critical, and socially relevant educational research, theory, and analysis in CJE with a view to supporting educational researchers, leaders and practitioners to engage their work in a complex world. In our priority on timeliness, we also introduced the ‘online first’ opportunity of the journal, to ensure that articles are not sitting waiting to be put into an issue and can reach the scholarly community in a timely way.

As we look back on the last three years, we are particularly honoured to have been trusted to support greater space in the journal for educational issues impacting Indigenous, Black, racialized and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and by scholars that are members of those communities. This was also our priority in calls for Special Issues. The

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Spring 2025 Special Issue Edited by Carrie Karsgaard and Patrick Howard brought scholars together to bridge social and ecological justice and furthered greater consideration of the responsibilities of educators to the entangled human and more-than-human communities. We also supported an upcoming Fall Special Issue Edited by Lucy Delgado focused on Métis futurities in education. We feel that CJE has continued to be a place where, through regular and special issues, educational scholars and practitioners can find critical, timely and socially relevant research, theories, and analyses. Yet, nothing stands still, and we find ourselves in a Canada that looks radically different in 2025 than in 2022, and a geo-political world that is growing increasingly hostile. We look forward to continuing to see CJE as a place where educational scholars and practitioners with diverse concerns and forms of analyses can make sense of their changing realities and contribute to insights and research that can be critically responsive to educational communities in Canada.

In this summer issue, we are excited to share articles focused on educational issues that negatively impact students from diverse communities and experiences through a frame of critical analyses of neoliberal influences on educational settings. In her critical commentary, Eve Tuck (2013) posits neoliberalism as the nihilistic “insertion of market values into non-market sectors of human activity” (p. 326). Ee-Seul Yoon (2024) critiques neoliberal reforms for their “maddening effects” that undermine the values and goals of the public education sector (p. 16). Neoliberalism is one of those terms and theoretical orientations that can be taken up quite differently by diverse scholars. The articles in this issue shed light on the different ways that assumptions of inevitability of market capitalism in all manner of our lives have inappropriately infiltrated educational settings and impacted students and communities. The authors in this issue provide timely insight into the experiences of rural students pushed out of mainstream schools, students experiencing mental health challenges, 2SLGBTQIA+ students, with each of the articles showing incredible overlap in analysis of neoliberal ideology in relation to student and community harm and deprofessionalization of teachers.

Shannon Moore and Kevin Lopuck’s article “Discursive Decoys: The Legitimation of Homophobia and Transphobia, Educational Neutrality, and Teacher Deprofessionalization in Mainstream Media’s Coverage of the ‘Parental Rights’ Movement in Manitoba” examines the discursive strategies that were being deployed by a conservative provincial government, and related mainstream media, to legitimize homophobic and transphobic views through the use of discourses of *parental rights*. They position these

tactics within a longer history of neoliberal and neoconservative discourses that work to foster “suspicion about public education” with a broader goal of privatization of public education (p. 696). They document the growing power and root ideologies of groups that express purported concern over *sexualization* and *indoctrination* of children and the related campaigns of disinformation. The authors consider how a provincial conservative government mobilized the related disinformation and violent speech, but importantly how mainstream media largely took up this framing; thus legitimizing homophobic and transphobic speech under the auspices of parental rights. Through critical discourse analysis Moore and Lopuck draw particular attention to the role of media, noting that in “many of the mainstream news accounts, journalists repeated (without critique, fact checking, or legal challenge) the claim that 2SLGBTQIA+ stories and resources were explicit or pornographic” (p. 697). Their article brings a unique understanding to complex processes where discrimination, hate speech, and slander is legitimized through particular reframings that are then taken up by neoliberal and neoconservative governance and mainstream media, while also neutralizing organizations that should engage in more vocal and poignant outrage. The potential impact on provincial curriculum is clear and troubling, as well as what the authors note as the contingent deprofessionalization of teaching through a discourse of *parents know best*.

Melanie Janzen, Christine Mayor, and Hafizat Sanni-Annibire similarly draw attention to the continuing neoliberal trend of privatization of public education and teacher deprofessionalization. Their article “Outsourcing Mental Health Programs: Harms to Public Education and Students” engages a critical policy analysis of curriculum documents and related resources over the last five years produced by the Manitoba provincial government and the association for school superintendents. They found that almost \$9 million “of public funds were funneled out of the public system for private organizations for mental health” (p. 723) They note that outsourced programming is related to teacher deprofessionalization through technocratic approaches that “are not necessarily appropriate and fail to put the systemic sources of mental distress in context” (p. 726). The authors call attention to the lack of transparency of programming and availability of content for review by the public and stakeholders due to the profit-based nature of the organizations.

Matt Ormandy, Alexa Ferdinands, and Maria Mayan engage in a critique of neoliberal individualism in rural school settings and offer an interesting examination of a rural alternative school. The authors engage student and school staff views in their article

“Exploring Youth’s Experiences of Attending a Rural Outreach School in Alberta.” The authors provide greater context for the provincial mandate of outreach schooling and complexify the understanding of students who are often portrayed through a problematic neoliberal discourse “as ‘dropouts’ or ‘failures’” (p. 770). The authors take a critical view in providing pointed critique of the failures of mainstream schooling itself that serve to push students out of the mainstream path through neoliberal assumptions of individual accomplishment and merit, while highlighting the agency of the students as they strategize their educational plans responsive to economic challenges and limited opportunities in an oil and gas-based economy in a rural setting. The authors note the diversity of reasons for students choosing to attend an alternate school (bullying, trans/homophobia, social anxiety, COVID, flexibility of schedules, picking up courses, being expelled), and also the increased optimism about their futures that students shared, noting the supportiveness they experienced while attending this alternative school. Their research serves to challenge problematic narratives of students produced within a neoliberal orientation and the inevitability of those narratives to produce closed horizons.

Bringing many of the themes together, Lana Parker’s article “When Idle Talk is Idealized: Thinking with Heidegger’s Existential Analytic in a Time of Neoliberalism” theorizes the ideological power of neoliberalism’s “central premise of individualism, competition, and capital creation into all manner of non-market spaces including politics, health care, and education (p. 783). Calling out problematic narratives of market efficiency, meritocracy, and individualistic competition for capital, Parker engages an existential analytic through Heideggerian phenomenology to better understand the ubiquitousness of neoliberal ideology throughout contemporary life and in education. Centring in on the everyday idle talk that serves to reproduce neoliberal narratives and limits other imaginations, she suggests engaging critical conversations in public spaces as well as research that seeks to “hear students’ lived experiences with the ready-to-hand, with idle talk, in their average everyday life in the classroom” (p. 798). While Heidegger’s horrific support of Nazism casts a problematic lens on his philosophical contributions, Parker works to address how his work in care may be repurposed for liberatory ends. We appreciate that there needs to be a continued critical questioning of the theorists who are held up in educational scholarship. This is not to draw abyssal lines on who is or is not allowed to be called into theoretical work, but more to address the complexities of identity, politics, history and ethics within efforts to understand that can concurrently open possibilities and create foreclosures of meaning and purpose.

One major critique of neoliberal reforms that runs through these four articles in this issue is the growing emphasis on individualism by valorising private values and interests, while moving away from education as a common and collective good. Education marketization and privatization are increasingly eroding resources available in the education sector, especially for those who are most vulnerable and come from underprivileged backgrounds (Poole et al., 2022). Emphasis on individual values, through parental rights, school choice, outsourcing, and underfunding, among others, erodes open and agonistically democratic spaces in education. Indeed, multiple ways through which marketization and privatization create inequities and undermine democratic processes in education have been globally researched, as well as here in Canada (Yoon & Winton, 2020).

In closing, we take this opportunity to thank you for all of your contributions in being an author and/or reader of the journal. We are honoured to have been engaged in this generative space with scholars and practitioners in Canadian education settings. We extend our very heartfelt appreciation to Managing Editor Sharon Hu who has supported us through our transition into and out of the role and has been a wonderful colleague throughout. The CJE has been able to support emerging scholarship in Canadian education through open-source initiatives, thanks to generous funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Society for the Study of Education. We look forward to continued engagement with the journal as readers and hopefully as authors.

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