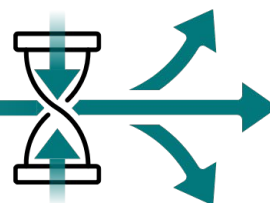


# Graduate Student Symposium 2024

## EDUCATION IN TIMES OF CHANGE



23rd March 2024 - Department of Education, Concordia University  
1610 Saint-Catherine Street West, Montreal, QC H3H 1L9

### General schedule

Time	Activity		
09:00-09:30	<b>Registration and breakfast</b> Room: FG 5.405 (Faculty Lounge)		
09:30-10:45	<b>Keynote Panel: <i>Education in Times of Change</i></b> Room: FG 5.225		
10:45-11:00	<b>Short break</b>		
11:00-12:00	<b>Presentation session 1: <i>Digital Technologies and Education</i></b> Room: FG 5.225	<b>Presentation session 2: <i>Educational Policies and Politics</i></b> Room: FG 5.315	<b>Presentation session 3: <i>Activism and Resistance in Education</i></b> Room: FG 5.335
12:00-13:00	<b>Lunch</b> Room: FG 5.405 (Faculty Lounge)		
13:00-14:00	<b>Presentation session 4: <i>Education, Language and Cultural Changes</i></b> Room: FG 5.315	<b>Presentation session 5: <i>New Generations in Changing Environments</i></b> Room: FG 5.335	
14:00-14:15	<b>Short break</b>		
14:15-15:30	<b>Closing Panel: <i>Research in Education: Where are we headed?</i></b> Room: FG 5.225		

## Detailed schedule

### Keynote Panel: *Education in Times of Change*

09:30-10:45 FG 5.225

Panel with alumni of the Department of Education, Concordia University

Keynote speakers: *Michael Barcomb, Nadine Bekkouche, Manasvini Narayana*

Moderator: *Vitor Yano*

### Presentation Session 1: *Digital Technologies and Education*

11:00-12:00 FG 5.225

[Bilinguals' credibility perceptions in the age of AI](#) - *Noga Broitman*

[Une quête de fondements didactiques pour la formation à l'éthique de l'IA](#) - *Adèle Aubin*

[Developing 'Digital Decodings': Facilitator reflections on the co-creation of a discussion-based gaming circle](#) - *Ian McPhail*

[Intrinsic Motivation in Game-Based Learning \(GBL\)](#) - *Tania Nguyen*

### Presentation Session 2: *Educational Policies and Politics*

11:00-12:00 FG 5.315

[Critical Policy Analysis of Homeschooling in Quebec](#) - *Aimee St-Hilaire*

[Does Public Legal Information on 'X' Engage the Public? A Critical Literature Review](#) - *Alison Mazoff*

[Peace Education in current times: an analysis of Mexican Education Policy Documents](#) - *Jessica Perez*

[Empowering Literacy: Unveiling Paulo Freire's Pedagogical Method in Brazilian Adult Education](#) - *Patricia Rodrigues Chagas*

### Presentation Session 3: *Activism and Resistance in Education*

11:00-12:00 FG 5.335

[Black Homeschooling Self-Directed Learning Practices as Authentic Resistance and Disruption to Neoliberal Schooling Discourse](#) - *Renee Tougas*

[Building Blackness: How Curriculum Can Shape The Phenomenological Understanding of One's Black Identity](#) - *Ian Klaus Springer*

[Exploring Participant Experiences of Human Rights Education for Transformative Action in Montreal](#) - *Jacee Forsythe*

[The Role of Political Education in Palestinian Youth Activism in Montreal, Quebec](#) - *Zeina Jhaish*

#### **Presentation Session 4: Education, Language and Cultural Changes**

13:00-14:00 FG 5.315

[Exploring Accent Hierarchy: Student Perceptions of English Teachers in Montreal](#) - Aya Halliday & Lin Lu

[The Heart, The SpiRitual, The Material, & The Home: Centering Translingual Practices of Three Montreal-Based Singers](#) - Bianca Gonzalez

[Get into the groove: Exploring engagement strategies to support students through high school music education](#) - Jessica Traynor

[Higher Education & Change: Pedagogy and the Transformation of Classroom Spaces in Cultural Studies](#) - Safeera Jaffer

#### **Presentation Session 5: New Generations in Changing Environments**

13:00-14:00 FG 5.335

[The value of exploring adolescents' perspectives about peer harm in schools](#) - Laura Pareja Conto & Holly Recchia

[Digital Media Culture at a French Waldorf School in Quebec](#) - Jenna Rose

[Infants and Their Educators in a Nature-based Educational Context](#) - Justine Pronovost & Nina Howe

[Confronting Higher Education Institutions: Youth Leadership and Transformative Climate Justice](#) - Vanja Lugonjic

#### **Closing Panel: Research in Education: Where are we headed?**

14:15-15:30 FG 5.225

Panel with professors of the Department of Education, Concordia University

Speakers: Jennifer Burton (*Applied Linguistics*), Cara Singh (*Child Studies*), Mitchell McLarnon (*Educational Studies*), Saul Carliner (*Educational Technology*)

Moderator: Kim McDonough

## Keynote speakers

### ***Transforming Pedagogy with Widely Available Technologies: Digital tools that support teaching and learning***



**Mike Barcomb** is an Educational Technologist at Concordia's Centre for Teaching and Learning, dedicated to enhancing pedagogy through the application of technology. His expertise encompasses a wide range of tools, including learning management systems, virtual reality, augmented reality, and generative artificial intelligence. At the core of Mike's current research agenda lies the investigation of the impact that low-cost and open-source materials can have on teaching and learning, and teacher and students' perceptions of these tools. With a background in teaching and research, Mike aims to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation. Through his role at the Centre for Teaching and Learning, Mike collaborates closely with faculty members to design and implement technology-enhanced learning initiatives that foster student engagement and a lifelong passion for learning.

### ***Systems thinking: How social and cultural change affects student experiences and mental health***

**Nadine Bekkouche** holds a PhD in Education and a MSc in Medical Psychology. She has published a number of papers and reference texts in the fields of education, psychology, behavioral science and health. Her doctoral thesis centered on applying systems thinking to understanding master's students' experiences and mental health. She currently works as a pedagogical counsellor at the Université de Montréal.



### ***Shift happens! Examining how you know what you know***



**Manasvini Narayana** has spent over 25 years in the areas of educational technology, learning design, teaching, research, program, and product management. She has worked with and led teams of designers, teachers, and facilitators in several domains: K-12, university, workplace training and lifelong learning. She is currently a consultant on projects at the intersection of learning, technology, and research. Manas is a map nerd and her doctoral research considered spatial ways of knowing and its implications for higher education curriculum. She remains continually fascinated by the interplay between the processes of knowing, doing, and being. Manas is a South Asian immigrant to Canada and is investigating what it means to be an immigrant settler on unceded indigenous lands.

## **List of Abstracts**

(Ordered by the first author's last name)

## **Une quête de fondements didactiques pour la formation à l'éthique de l'IA**

*Adèle Aubin, Concordia University*

Dans le contexte où la recherche en intelligence artificielle (IA) connaît un essor fulgurant depuis quelques années, il apparaît primordial de s'intéresser au type de formation que reçoivent les personnes qui seront amenées à travailler dans cette industrie afin de s'assurer qu'elles comprennent bien les enjeux socio-éthiques qui découlent de cette technologie. Il est notamment pertinent, et inquiétant, de remarquer que l'intégration d'une dimension éthique aux programmes techniques en IA ne représente encore qu'une tendance embryonnaire. Avec cette communication, je montrerai que l'une des causes qui expliquent l'insuffisance des efforts en matière d'enseignement de l'éthique de l'IA se situe dans l'absence d'une orientation didactique solide dans l'élaboration de ces approches éducatives. Pour ce faire, je décrirai d'abord les résultats d'une revue de littérature qui a tâché de produire un portrait complet des initiatives concernant les formations à l'éthique dans les programmes universitaires techniques en IA. Ensuite, selon une méthode de recherche philosophique et en réponse aux lacunes didactiques identifiées, je proposerai une piste de solution ancrée dans une perspective féministe de complexité et de care. En conclusion, je suggérerai un exemple d'activité pédagogique basée sur l'apprentissage par le service communautaire afin d'illustrer de manière concrète comment mettre en œuvre les principes didactiques dont j'aurai discuté.

## **Bilinguals' credibility perceptions in the age of AI**

*Noga Broitman, Concordia University*

The world stands at a transformative juncture, marked by the advent of artificial intelligence (AI) with profound implications for education. Inspired by recent research on the influence of bilingualism on fake news detection (Fernandez-Lopez & Perea, 2020; Muda et al., 2023), this study explores the credibility judgments of young bilingual adults in a technological climate where the distinction between credibility and falsehood becomes increasingly blurred (Ali et al., 2022; Arguedas & Simon, 2023; Bermes, 2021; ). This work seeks to investigate the perceptions of 24 Spanish–English bilinguals regarding Facebook-like posts related to housing or jobs generated by ChatGPT. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, examining quantitative data such as credibility ratings for each post, likelihood of sharing, identification of less versus more credible words, reading time, and responses to background questionnaires. Additionally, qualitative data is gathered through in-depth interviews of 10 - 15 minutes. These interviews explore participants' perspectives on distinguishing credible from less credible information, their insights on performance in their first language (L1) versus their second language (L2), and their overall strategies for assessing credibility when exposed to information online. Ongoing quantitative and qualitative analyses indicates participants' language affects credibility assessments, uncovering distinctions in reasoning when distinguishing fake from real information in L1 versus L2 media use. The study aims to contribute insights into how bilingualism shapes information judgments, while refining how credibility is assessed by the youth, pointing at possible avenues to promote media literacy in the era of AI.

## **Empowering Literacy: Unveiling Paulo Freire's Pedagogical Method in Brazilian Adult Education**

*Patricia Rodrigues Chagas, Concordia University*

This paper explores the potential of Paulo Freire's pedagogical method to enhance literacy in Adult Education in the Brazilian context. Freire's educational legacy, deeply rooted in his experiences of poverty and oppression, emphasizes dialogue, critical reflection, and empowerment. Examining Freire's life and philosophy, the paper outlines the Paulo Freire Method, which prioritizes the political nature of education and the importance of dialogue between educators and learners. This method, comprising phases such as investigating learners' realities, thematizing relevant issues, and problematizing simplistic views, aims to foster critical consciousness among adult learners. The paper highlights the transformative potential of Freire's method within adult education frameworks, challenging traditional notions of education and advocating for an approach that empowers learners to become agents of change. By centering on learners' experiences and encouraging them to engage with their reality critically, Freire's method offers a pathway to addressing adult learners' complex literacy challenges. It underscores the importance of dialogue, critical reflection, and collective action in pursuing social justice and liberation in adult education.



## **The value of exploring adolescents' perspectives about peer harm in schools**

*Laura Pareja Conto & Holly Recchia, Concordia University*

Our research is fueled by a large body of scholarship documenting the detrimental effects of punitive discipline in schools (particularly for students from minoritized groups)—an approach typically implemented to address peer harm. To explore adolescents' reasoning about different ways to address harms in school, 33 students in an urban low-SES high school in Bogotá, Colombia (M age = 14.96 years, SD = .90; 18 girls, 14 boys, 1 other gender) participated in individual interviews and focus groups. As key actors in their schools, adolescents provided us with rich narratives about their lived experiences with punitive and restorative approaches to address peer harm. These narratives revealed how the need for safety at times resulted in youths' endorsement of punishments. Yet, adolescents also expressed concerns with punishments not being equally imposed, not promoting learning or an end to conflict, and resulting in a culture of secrecy. In their narratives, adolescents shed light on harms that may result from strategies conceived as more restorative, such as asking a student, who may not have the financial means, to compensate a peer for damaging their personal belongings. Youth also reflected on how their experiences in their neighborhoods encouraged them to use violence to protect themselves. In their group conversations, adolescents discussed ways to start to promote the change they wanted to see in their schools and neighbourhoods to stop cycles of violence via punishments or revenge. We will highlight benefits of using adolescents' perspectives as a starting point to implement restorative models in schools.

## **Exploring Participant Experiences of Human Rights Education for Transformative Action in Montreal**

*Jacee Forsythe, McGill University*

Human rights education (HRE) is essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4. Human rights education for transformative action (HRETA) is a specific HRE model directed at fostering agency and solidarity in learners, with the aim of compelling learners to engage in transformative action through social change. This aim aligns with the intra-personal competence for sustainability education (SE) determined by Redman and Wiek (2021). Intra-personal competence is defined as the ability to avoid personal health challenges and burnout through resilience-oriented self-care. (Redman & Wiek, 2021, p. 6). However, during the HRETA process, facilitators of learners' intra-personal competence may come into tension with barriers to learners' intra-personal competence. This tension potentially undermines the intra-personal competence associated with, and the sustainability of, HRETA. Therefore, I am interested in researching how learners of HRETA experience their HR education, what facilitators of and barriers to their intra-personal competence are experienced during the HRETA process, and what strategies they employ to remain engaged with HRETA despite tensions between said potential barriers and facilitators. My research will contribute to understanding how to better structure HRETA for sustainable development. The aim is to learn how HRETA educators may increase the sustainability and viability of its educational process. This research also has the potential to benefit HR educational programs that encourage transformative action. My presentation will consist of my research framework and design which includes the Activism-Transformation Model of HRE and social constructivism, critical narrative inquiry as a methodology, and drawing and storytelling methods for the interview process.

## **The Heart, The SpiRitual, The Material, & The Home: Centering Translingual Practices of Three Montreal-Based Singers**

*Bianca Gonzalez, McGill University*

This study is about the language practices embedded within the cultural production of three Montreal-based singer-songwriters, musicians, and women who write, sing, and perform in more than one language. More specifically, this project brings to light how music production and cross-cultural processes of creativity made space for organic dimensions of language practice, particularly when one's language has been minoritized and when one exists amongst multiple shifting cultures. This study is guided by the theoretical framework of critical-creative writing to center the intersectional, translingual, non-static components of these women's writings and cultural production. This project was carried out using an ethnographic multiple-case study methodology, was bounded by the context of Montreal's community of musical cultural producers, and looked to the cases of three non-blinded knowledge holders and artists: Willows, Noé Lira, and Ultra K. The main findings of this study center affective, spiritual, and material dimensions of these women's language practices. This includes intergenerational, embodied, land-based, and organic dimensions of language engagement. By bringing to light these rich, often-overlooked modes of communication, this project demonstrates ways in which we can learn from the loving and transformational meaning-making and language practices being mobilized by three women of our local creative community in face of shifting individual, cultural, and power-relational dynamics.

## **Exploring Accent Hierarchy: Student Perceptions of English Teachers in Montreal**

*Aya Halliday & Lin Lu, Concordia University*

People say that a good teacher is a life-changer. At the same time, there are always standards set by our society for a good teacher to reach. For language teachers, however, there is always one more standard that is implicit yet often non-negotiable: possessing a standard accent. The current study, within the multicultural city of Montreal as the research background, aims to investigate the perception of English teachers' accents from a student's perspective and to explore whether an accent hierarchy exists among five different English accents (Arabic, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, and Canadian-French, and Canadian-English). 100 undergraduate participants in Montreal will be divided into 5 groups, with participants in each group commenting on a 10-minute audio recorded by one of five differently accented English teachers. Based on previous research results, we anticipate that students will have biased attitudes towards different English teachers and that the Mandarin Chinese-accented teacher will be rated lowest in an accent hierarchy. The importance of current study lies in the fact that accent bias perpetuates negative stereotypes against individuals from certain linguistic backgrounds, marginalizing groups that are already marginalized and discriminated against. Being aware of this, we expect to help foster an educational environment where diversity and inclusivity—of language and beyond language—are valued.

## **Higher Education & Change: Pedagogy and the Transformation of Classroom Spaces in Cultural Studies**

*Safeera Jaffer, McGill University*

Education and change are linked in distinct and inseparable ways. As higher education is widely shaped by racism, capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism, points of resistance must be prioritized. This presentation will draw on insights from my MA thesis research about the role of critical, engaged pedagogy and alternative teaching practices in Cultural Studies undergraduate education. My research questions asked: How do university faculty members use engaged, critical pedagogical practices to disrupt institutional hierarchies in Cultural Studies? What impacts do these approaches have on students who self-identify as Indigenous, Black, or a person of colour? The theoretical frameworks that guided this research were critical theory and critical race theory. Institutional ethnography also inspired the methodology. Through semi-structured interviews with both faculty members and students in the field of Cultural Studies, my qualitative study examined everyday experiences in relation to institutional and structural forces. The university space is one of change that is highly dependent on faculty decision making and ingrained institutional limitations, which have the unique ability to shape the life trajectory of racialized students. Investigating the concept of educational change more specifically, I will explore my study findings in relation to how change occurs within and beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom.

## **The Role of Political Education in Palestinian Youth Activism in Montreal, Quebec**

*Zeina Jhaish, McGill University*

The continuous refugee crisis of Palestinians worldwide is leading to a collective loss of Palestinian cultural and historical knowledge. This displacement has also led to a loss of political knowledge among Palestinian youth worldwide. As more Palestinian youth move further away from Palestine, they become integrated into other societies where they may not be offered opportunities to be educated about their homeland. This presentation's main focus is highlighting how political education as an informal method of education engages young Palestinians in Montreal to achieve political action. The theoretical framework of the research stems from Paulo Freire's (1970) premise that education is needed for those in political struggle to achieve their goals. Assman and Czaplicka's (1995) characteristics of cultural memory drive the research's goal of explaining the activists' narratives. Social Movement Theory (Kornhauser, 1959) relates to the project in understanding how social movements require educating activists about Palestine and why. The methodology of narrative inquiry will detail the experiences of the Palestinian activists. The narrative inquiry methodology will be achieved by an interview process. Answers will be addressed by collecting semi-structured interviews from participants about their experiences with Palestinian activism. Answers from participants will be synthesized into a conclusion through thematic analysis. The final stage will be conducted by holding a focus group where the role of political education in the collective work of the activists is studied. The outcome of the research is to contribute to the Palestinian cause by exemplifying political learning for Palestinian youth activists.

## **Confronting Higher Education Institutions: Youth Leadership and Transformative Climate Justice**

*Vanja Lugonjic, McGill University*

Canadian higher education institutions (HEIs) must better equip undergraduate and graduate students for the climate crisis. Scholars urge HEIs to use their power for a sustainable transition, emphasizing educational resources. Addressing the gap may involve sustainability leadership programs. In this context, it means individuals assume partial responsibility for climate engagement with communities (Ferdig, 2007). Youth prioritize climate justice in leadership, recognizing global power structures perpetuating injustices. This research is situated in Newell et al.'s (2021) framework for transformative climate justice. Acknowledging youth as potent agents of change, this research explores the knowledge held by local climate leaders to help close the learning gap. It aims to offer a platform for young climate justice leaders to share experiences navigating HEIs and identify opportunities for improving sustainable leadership programs. Six to eight young climate justice leaders will be interviewed using narrative inquiry to delve into their experiences. The interviewees will be selected with the maximum variation method to give insight from different corners of action. Subsequently, the same individuals will participate in a focus group to collaboratively develop recommendations for HEIs, fostering understanding and response to sustainability and climate justice on campus. In times of change, this research hopes to aid in the construction of relevant and just investments in the transformation of higher education for the students and their following peers, who will bear the brunt of the consequences of ill-informed strategies. Furthermore, such students are often cognizant of critical climate justice and turn to more transformative, rather than reformatory, engagement. This is a work-in progress research project, and the presentation will feature current work I do in my institution in terms of climate justice engagement.

## Does Public Legal Information on 'X' Engage the Public?: A Critical Literature Review

*Alison Mazoff, Concordia University*

**Purpose:** Notwithstanding Canadian statutes being available online since 2002, Canada's access to justice problems, with legal illiteracy being at the crux, persist. This critical literature review surveys X (formerly known as 'Twitter'), distributed Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) literature, contributing recommendations to improve Canada's PLEI engagement and digital legal literacy in this era of frequent technological disruption. **Perspective:** This paper employs a multi-disciplinary approach integrating legal literacy, PLEI, Public Health, and Communications to assess the Canadian Court's X Profiles' efficacy, with implications for other types of digital public information. Educational importance: This paper highlights the necessity of face-to-face relationship building in enhancing digital legal literacy and digital PLEI's efficacy. Methods and data sources: The methodology consisted of reviewing and synthesizing UK, Australian, and Canadian PLEI, communications, and public health literature to clarify the challenges of engaging the public with PLEI. The reviewed studies, from different literature sets, concur that incomprehensible PLEI, no matter its format, does not increase public engagement. Further, they suggest that expert-public interactions online and offline are critical public's accurate legal understanding. **Conclusion:** This study concludes that public engagement with Canadian PLEI posted on 'X' is minimal if existent. Engaging the public with PLEI requires more than posting it on a popular platform. More qualitative studies involving PLEI users and creators to understand their needs are required. Finally, it strongly recommends that the legal community foster interactions with the public to engage them with PLEI online and offline.



## **Developing 'Digital Decodings': Facilitator reflections on the co-creation of a discussion-based gaming circle**

*Ian McPhail, Concordia University*

As the world changes, so do the forms of popular media we engage with. Educational efforts at dismantling the hegemonic myths present in popular media must keep up with these changes to stay relevant. Discussion-based learning inspired by the Freirean “cultural circle” can be used to deepen critical consciousness through reflexive dialogue on popular media. While this method has been studied for its ability to generate critical discussion around popular books (Brown, 2011), movies (Charlebois, 2008) and music (Akom, 2009), little is known about how it works with popular video games. Most critical gaming research tends to follow the legacy of early games scholars such as Frasca (2001) and Flanagan (2006) who emphasize the design and creation of more socially just video games. While this is important work, there remains a need to deepen people’s critical engagement with existing popular games. To this end, I have been co-developing a discussion-based “gaming circle” around seven different popular role-playing video games with a small group of participants. This qualitative project aims to reveal some of the benefits and challenges of working with popular video games in a Freirean cultural circle-style setting. I will provide preliminary results that draw from my field notes and research journal entries taken during the project’s early development. I will highlight how the development of a dialogic gaming circle has unique considerations that differ it from working with other media formats or pedagogical approaches. This research is pertinent to both critical pedagogues and games studies scholars interested in discussion-based learning with popular video games.

## **Intrinsic Motivation in Game-Based Learning (GBL)**

*Tania Nguyen, Concordia University*

This study features a game prototype titled "Clare" and explores, through the lens of self-determination theory (SDT) and intrinsic motivation, if game-based learning (GBL) might have a greater impact on student engagement than traditional classroom methods like lectures and formal evaluations. "Clare" was developed based on the principles of tangential learning and intrinsic integration proposed by Habgood and Ainsworth (2011) and Mozellus (2017). Once completed, students were recruited from the Research Methods graduate class using a purposive convenience sampling method: the first participant had little experience with digital games, while the second participant had extensive experience. Both participants were asked to complete a comprehensive pre-game survey and, after playing the prototype, a post-game survey that asked participants about their previous experience with games, and their intrinsic motivation in traditional classroom settings versus during gameplay. The findings indicated that players' past experience with games had a high degree of correlation with their intrinsic motivation when playing the prototype (whether positive or negative). The less experienced gamer felt that they had more autonomy during gameplay and that the choices they could make in-game empowered them as a learner, while the more advanced gamer felt limited in their choices and less immersed in the game as a result. However, all participants felt that the GBL intervention, with some tweaks, had greater potential to engage them than traditional classroom methods. The researcher concluded that, ultimately, serious games must be designed in a way that creates immersive experiences for all diverse learners equally.

## **Peace Education in current times: an analysis of Mexican Education Policy Documents**

*Jessica Perez, McGill University*

In recent times violence has been exacerbated in international contexts. Amidst the rising violence observed in the central Mexican region of Guanajuato, immersed in drug-trafficking issues, it is imperative to explore how education can contribute to promoting peace. Peace Education (PE) is a promising venue for such an aim. PE is described as an orientation that highlights human dignity and seeks to develop awareness, knowledge, abilities, values, and behaviours to help children and youth interact peacefully within society. While many initiatives implemented in Mexico promote peace, it is necessary to analyse the dimensions of such promotion, specifically in policy education documents. This study analyzed Mexican education policy documents through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), an approach that integrates a critical examination of social experiences and language to highlight human-made social realities, that benefit dominant groups and affect negatively marginalized ones. This study aimed at identifying the types of discourse embedded in official education documents to understand whether they align with PE premises. Among the main findings, this study revealed that discourses of human rights, globalisation, neoliberalism, change, and omission are the most common patterns in educational policy. While this study acknowledges that Mexican educational policies allude to PE, they simultaneously mirror international and global demands over contextual Mexican needs. Thus, current educational policies fail to address the specific violence that affects Mexican society. In current times of change and violence it is imperative to consider alternative forms of education to address social issues that perpetuate injustice.

## **Infants and Their Educators in a Nature-based Educational Context**

*Justine Pronovost & Nina Howe, Concordia University*

Nature-based education appear as a powerful response to the increase of an indoor and sedentary lifestyle, as well as the climate crisis. Nature-based education refers to a practice where nature is central to children's daily experiences, such as routines, exploration, and play, and includes opportunities to connect and become comfortable with nature. It offers multiple benefits for children's whole development (e.g., Kuo et al. 2019). Literature on infants' experiences with nature is limited (e.g., Jørgensen, 2018; Monti et al., 2019), yet educators are curious to apply such an approach with the youngest age groups. The present qualitative study explored the experiences of infants younger than 18-months-old and their educators in two not-for-profit Québec daycare: one urban and one semi-rural centre that integrated regular nature-based practices. Observations examined the infants' actions and interactions with the outdoor natural setting and with their educators. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each educator to investigate their perspectives and experiences. Observations showed that infants focused their attention during multiple occasions through their senses, gross and fine motor experiences. Also, the natural environment offered a rich context for language development opportunities as well as child-child and group interactions. Educators offered a secure base in a child-led pedagogy by being responsive, sharing attention, and supporting infants' learning experiences. The findings have important pedagogical and policy implications for the well-being of Quebec's youngest citizens as exemplary practices and recommendations will be identified and available for educators around the province and elsewhere.

## **Digital Media Culture at a French Waldorf School in Quebec**

*Jenna Rose, Concordia University*

In Waldorf pedagogy, technology is not part of the curriculum until high school, and media use is discouraged both at home and at school. In an increasingly digital society where online civic engagement is becoming more relevant, it is important to understand the broader social implications of a low-tech school, especially given that the central goal of Waldorf education is to encourage children to become engaged citizens who contribute to the overall progress of humanity. My ethnographic research project will explore the culture surrounding digital media at a Waldorf school in Québec. Based on observations of the students from within the school, my thesis will seek to answer two interrelated research questions: (1) How are Waldorf students engaging with digital media? (2) In which ways do students have access to digital media at school and at home? Expanding upon my previous work at the school, I will use a cellphilm project (a research video made with a cellphone) as an entry point to investigate the digital media relationships of grade 8 students, their parents, and their teachers. I will gather detailed observations of the process and of the cellphilm produced, and will conduct a focus group with the students. This research will provide pertinent data for teachers and learners, and it will lay the groundwork for further investigation of the link between Waldorf education, social justice, and democracy and civic engagement via digital media.

## **Building Blackness: How Curriculum Can Shape The Phenomenological Understanding of One's Black Identity**

*Ian Klaus Springer, Concordia University*

This project asks the question can curriculum shape an understanding of one's own racial identity and one's Blackness within Canada? Education and colonialism have been interconnected for centuries. The project will see how curriculum impacts current and former Black students and educators. There is a gap in Canadian literature regarding this. The first step of the project is to develop a theoretical framework to understand both race and Blackness. This will be accomplished by synthesizing three philosophers of race and Blackness (Alcoff, Jeffers and Gilroy) as a foundation. The scaffolding will demonstrate that race ought to be a malleable concept that has the capacity to shift and change depending on the geographical, and temporal circumstance that is primarily founded on the visual, ancestral and cultural. The thesis will assert that curriculum can be viewed as a cultural tool in the race-making process. The last stage of the study will be interviewing former Black students, current students and educators about how Canadian curriculum has shaped their understanding of Blackness. Interviews will be qualitative in nature and the methodology used will be phenomenology, Black existentialism and Black phenomenology. Black phenomenology and existentialism will be deployed simultaneously as these socially lift participants. Noting how curriculum may have a direct impact on the framing of individuals' own racial identity, it will be important for the roles and responsibilities of school boards and universities to create curriculum that strives towards social justice and equity, ensuring that racialized and Black stakeholders are present in creating curriculum.

## **Critical Policy Analysis of Homeschooling in Quebec**

*Aimee St-Hilaire, Concordia University*

This paper looks at the history of Quebec's homeschooling policies in relation to how the government defines homeschooling and what homeschooling is understood to be. The purpose of this research is to understand the context within which the policies related to homeschooling have been created and to understand the problems the province believed they were solving by implementing such policies. Prior to 2017, homeschooling was essentially unrestricted in method and content. Then, the policy changes of 2017 drastically changed the experience of homeschooling for parents and children with the implementation of mandatory testing and evaluations for all homeschooled children. There are many reasons why parents may choose to homeschool their children. While some choose homeschooling for religious or philosophical reasons or others may simply prefer the flexibility of making their own schedule. For elementary and high school, the province has a provincial curriculum to which all school must adhere. With the implementation of the 2017 policy on homeschooling in Quebec, the expectation is now that homeschooling parents teach this same curriculum. This critical policy analysis asks why the imposition of restrictive educational policy is seen as necessary by Quebec for the development of an educated population. The new policies potentially limit parent's personal freedoms and forces them to perpetuate the provincially mandated ideologies, which may be in direct conflict with their family values.

## **Black Homeschooling Self-Directed Learning Practices as Authentic Resistance and Disruption to Neoliberal Schooling Discourse**

*Renee Tougas, Concordia University*

One of the recent changes in education, facilitated partly by the COVID-19 pandemic, is the increasing number of homeschooling families. Contemporary homeschooling encompasses various philosophical orientations and educational practices, including self-directed learning (SDL) and self-directed education (SDE) pedagogies where learners control their learning processes. Where mainstream education is dominated by the competition, individualism, and testing of a neoliberal ethos, the discursive SDL communities of homeschooling and unschooling can appear and outright claim to be inherently resistant to neoliberalism. There is a legitimacy to this claim in that these pedagogies seek to develop children's autonomy and self-determination while eschewing standardized curriculum, mandatory attendance, and high-stakes testing. However, where a central feature of neoliberal subjectivity is an individualized, self-disciplined, and self-regulated self, the author of this paper, herself a homeschool parent, SDL proponent, and practitioner, questions the authenticity of SDL's neoliberal disruptive potential. By reviewing relevant literature and reflecting on markers of neoliberal subjectivity, this paper responds to the question: What kinds of conceptions of self inform an SDL practice that authentically resists and disrupts neoliberal subjectivity? By evaluating the practices of critically conscious Black homeschooling and unschooling families as discussed in the literature, this paper explores conceptions of self that resist neoliberal-attenuated SDL. The experiences of these families illustrate that where SDL practices are informed by conceptions of self as accountable to a community and oriented towards collective liberation, SDL does resist and disrupt neoliberal subjectivity in education.



## **Get into the groove: Exploring engagement strategies to support students through high school music education**

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In a world with an ever-changing sociopolitical climate, music education has the opportunity to give many mental, cognitive and social benefits to students, and can also provide them with an outlet to process and respond to their climate. However, many students aren't continuing to pursue music education post-grade nine, thereby limiting exposure to the benefits and supports learning music can provide. Despite the strong intent of teachers to support their students, opportunities may be missed for teachers to truly understand what motivates their students to stay connected to music. My research aims to fill the gap in Ontario high school engagement research by exploring the engagement needs and trends across a schoolboard in the Niagara region. In my SSHRC-funded qualitative study, instrumental music classes from a variety of grade levels were observed, and then each participating educator was interviewed to learn more about their experiences. This work explores what motivates students to participate in, and stay engaged with, music and music education. This research is framed using a phenomenological and Self-determination Theory lens. Findings suggest that teachers use a wide range of strategies to engage their students, and that engaging classes comes from shaping and growing students' initial engagement and interest in learning about music in accordance with their individual needs and interests. The results implicate teachers to learn from their students' behavioural and emotional reactions to content, and also tailor their support and teaching strategies to the dynamic emotional needs of their classes.